VOLUME 40

SCOTTISH STUDIES

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Scottish Studies

The Journal of the School of Scottish Studies
University of Edinburgh

Volume 40

2024

About the journal

First published in 1957, *Scottish Studies* has striven to reflect the mission of the University of Edinburgh's School of Scottish Studies, founded in 1951 to preserve and explore Scotland's rich and diverse cultural and linguistic heritage. For over six decades, contributors to the journal have enriched our knowledge of Scotland and its peoples from Galloway to Shetland, from Stonehaven to St Kilda, and from Scotland to Gaelic Canada. Research topics have included archaeology and pre-history; demographics; ethnography and ethnology; history (especially the impact of significant events on ordinary people); land use and distribution; fishing and seafaring; material culture; onomastics; oral culture and traditions; and spiritual beliefs, customs and observances. Today, in addition to these topics, we welcome research centering on Scotland's evolving landscapes, physical and social, and the peoples who call Scotland home in the twenty-first century.

Publication

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Scottish Studies is published online at journals.ed.ac.uk/ScottishStudies.

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Submissions

Scottish Studies encourages submissions of original research, in English or Gaelic, from affiliated and independent scholars worldwide. Prior to submitting, researchers should contact the editor directly to request the Author Guidelines. Following initial editorial scrutiny, articles are subject to double-blind peer review.

Please note that all submissions and other communication should be sent by email directly to the editor, Virginia Blankenhorn, at virginia.blankenhorn@ed.ac.uk., using the subject-line 'Scottish Studies'.

Reviews

Reviews are normally commissioned, but we welcome readers' suggestions of works that they would like to see reviewed.

If you have published a work that you think should be reviewed in *Scottish Studies*, or if you would like to suggest a work suitable for review, please contact the Editor by email at virginia.blankenhorn@ed.ac.uk, using the subject-line 'Scottish Studies'.

Cover photograph: Thurso Town Band, c. 1900. Reproduced courtesy of Caithness Horizons Museum and Art Gallery, Thurso.

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Editor's Note

With this volume of *Scottish Studies*, long-time readers will see some changes. The cover has turned blue. The journal is under new editorship. Most important, *Scottish Studies* has at last fully embraced the need – driven mostly by financial exigencies – to publish solely in an online format.

We understand that many people will regret the lack of a proper 'book'. So do we! But the financial and logistical cost of managing all this paper – printing the volumes, corresponding with subscribers, sending invoices, posting copies to subscribers worldwide, and accommodating excess stock – eventually became too much for what has become, in the past number of years, an entirely volunteer operation. Readers who would prefer a paperbound volume will find it easy to download the full volume in PDF format and have it printed to their specifications by a printer near them.

In addition to saving trees, there are considerable advantages to online publication which we believe more than compensate for the lack of a printed volume. First and foremost, reduced costs will make it possible to publish more frequently – at least once every eighteen months to start with. Second, digital publication will allow easy access from the content of an article to other online resources. An author writing about song, for example, will be able to supply hyperlinks to sung performances available online, thereby allowing readers to hear the songs themselves – a gift to readers unable to read musical notation, and an added benefit to those who do, but who understand how much information such notation typically leaves out. Finally – and, as editor, I deeply appreciate this feature – digital publication will allow errors to be easily and silently corrected as soon as eagle-eyed readers point them out.

Volume 40 contains a wide selection of articles by a diverse group of scholars. Katherine Campbell and Emily Lyle, both long associated with the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University, have added to their recent study of Robert Burns' traditional song sources; we very much hope to publish a review of their 2020 book, *Robert Burns and the Discovery and Re-Creation of Scottish Song*, in an upcoming volume of this journal. Gaelic poetry and song are topics for two contributors: writing in Gaelic, Iain Howieson reassesses the literary and social importance of *bàrdachd baile* – the poetry of local 'village bards' in Gaelic-speaking areas; and Frances Wilkins examines the social context of the spiritual songs, singing and musical life associated with twentieth-century religious 'awakenings' in the Hebrides. Andrew Fleming explores the nineteenth-century stories concerning the extinction of the great auk, the last of which was reportedly killed in St Kilda in the 1840s; and Jane Pettegree's article on the emergence of brass bands in nineteenth-century Caithness affords a fascinating glimpse into the social and political life of communities in Scotland's far north, and shows how their association with the Volunteer militia movement helped foster a sense of 'British' identity and patriotism in the decades preceding the First World War. Lastly, we've appropriated a feature common to other sorts of journalism – the interview. As editor, I was delighted to talk with three scholars about very different projects that nonetheless share an important common feature: they all use computing not just to expand knowledge in our field, but to transform how we engage with and benefit from it. Finally, we have assembled a bumper crop of book reviews.

It gives me great pleasure to invite you to explore volume 40 of *Scottish Studies*, and to let us know what you think.

VIRGINIA BLANKENHORN
Editor, *Scottish Studies*
4 January 2024

The Traditional Sources of Four Burns Songs: 'The Posie', 'Craigie-burn Wood', 'Ae day a braw wooer' and 'A waukrife Minnie'

KATHERINE CAMPBELL and EMILY LYLE

Abstract

Robert Burns devoted much effort to the collection of tunes which he expected to be published in James Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* and George Thomson's *Select Collection*. The tunes were often accompanied by the words of songs and Burns related to these sources in different ways. This article studies in detail his relationship to four songs and demonstrates how the partial information that he gives explicitly can be developed to give an impression of these source songs as wholes, so increasing our knowledge of traditional Scottish song in the eighteenth century. The study also throws light on Burns's method of composition when he was using a traditional base.

Robert Burns supplied the four songs discussed here – 'The Posie', 'Craigie-burn Wood', 'Ae day a braw wooer' and 'A waukrife Minnie' – for publication in *The Scots Musical Museum* which was nominally edited by James Johnson but had Burns as co-editor.[1] The songs come from the period from 1788 to 1796 when Burns was farming at Ellisland on the River Nith about six miles from Dumfries or was resident in Dumfries. At this time Burns was working in collaboration with the musician, Stephen Clarke, who was based in Edinburgh but paid visits to Nithsdale in order to link up with him.[2] The song 'Ae day a braw wooer' and a different version of 'Craigie-burn Wood' to the same tune were also published in George Thomson's *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs.* The Burns contributions to this publication and details of its various editions are now conveniently available in volume 4 of *The Oxford Edition of the Works of Robert Burns* edited by Kirsteen McCue (2021).

These four songs can serve to open up discussion of a number of aspects of the relationship of Burns's compositions to earlier songs and to the broader fields of the interconnections between Scottish and English song traditions and of the parallel contributions to current knowledge available through orally received songs and the texts preserved in the broadside and chapbook press.

Burns's principal aim as a collector from tradition was to capture previously unpublished tunes, which were normally found as the tunes of songs. When he heard a new song tune that appealed to him, he considered whether or not he found the words of the source song worthy of being retained along with the music. In the case of the first two tunes discussed here, he dismissed the folksong words out of hand but the songs he composed to them still retain traces of his sources. In the third case, he seems to have appreciated the traditional song text and accepted it as it stood, while composing fresh words for its tune. In the last case, the tune was published with an approximation to the folksong text, but comparison with other versions of the folksong along with an awareness of Burns's mode of working indicate that the song as Burns would have heard it has been converted into something rather different.

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[1] Murray Pittock, ed., *The Oxford Edition of the Works of Robert Burns, Vols 2–3: The Scots Musical Museum, Part One, Introduction and Text; The Scots Musical Museum, Part Two, Notes and Appendices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). For Burns as co-editor, see especially 2.1, 10, 12–13, 18.

[2] For Clarke, see Katherine Campbell and Emily Lyle, *Robert Burns and the Discovery and Re-Creation of Scottish Song* (Glasgow: The Musica Scotica Trust, 2020), chs 7 and 8.

Burns was not generally concerned to preserve in their original form the folksongs that he heard or read.[3] He appreciated the high quality of some of the traditional verses that he knew but he was prepared to extract them and re-compose around them. For him folksongs were primarily the raw materials to be drawn upon in his own compositions, often with the aim of providing respectable alternatives to bawdy verses. However, a crucial point for the study of tradition is that Burns, despite his lack of interest in preserving the folksongs, actually does give us, directly or indirectly, a considerable amount of information about folksongs in Scotland in the late eighteenth century. Occasionally he is the sole source of an item and quite frequently he is the only eighteenth-century source and further instances of the songs he treats are not found until considerably after this time. The four cases discussed below throw light in various ways on eighteenth-century folksong in Scotland as well as illuminating Burns's methods of collection and composition.

The Posie

The first song to be discussed, 'The Posie', was composed for a tune that Burns had taken down from the singing of his wife, Jean (née Armour), who was an exceptionally fine singer. Speaking of the psalms sung in family worship, Burns says of her that she 'has a glorious "wood-note wild" at either old song or psalmody'.[4] Jean Burns also had an extensive repertoire. When Burns noted that the tune of 'A Southland Jenny' in *The Scots Musical Museum* had come from her, he observed that many of the ballad tunes in this collection were 'written from Mrs Burns's voice'.[5] When Burns speaks of a song he knew coming from a 'country girl', it may be from Mrs Burns although this is not necessarily the case.

Fig. 1 'The Posie', *Scots Musical Museum,* no. 373

The opening verses and the last verse of 'The Posie' are given here with Jean Burns's tune to which the song was published in *The Scots Musical Museum* in 1792.[6] Note that in Figure 1 and the other music examples only the melody line is given.

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[3] He did, however, note down a batch of songs from his own memory for William Tytler. Campbell and Lyle, *Discovery and Re-Creation*, Ch. 3.

[4] G. Ross Roy, ed., 2nd edition of *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. J. de Lancey Ferguson, 2 vols (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985), 1.415, no. 346.

[5] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum,* 3.235, no. 373.

[6] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 2.453, no. 373.

2. The primrose I will pu', the firstling o' the year;
     And I will pu' the pink, the emblem o' my Dear,
   For she is the pink o' womankind, and blooms without a peer;
     And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.
   …………………………………………………….

7. I'll tie the posie round wi' the silken band o' luve,
     And I'll place it in her breast, and I'll swear by a' abuve,
   That to my latest draught o' life the band shall ne'er remuve,
     And this will be a posie to my ain dear May.

Writing to Thomson about this song on 19 October 1794, Burns comments both on the words Jean had sung and on the tune, which he places in the context of one already known to him:

> 'The Posie,' is my composition; the air was taken down from Mʳˢ Burns's voice. – It is well known in the West Country, but the old words are trash. – By the by – take a look at the tune again, & tell me if you do not think it is the original from which Roslin Castle is composed. – The second part, in particular, for the first two or three bars, is exactly the old air. [7]

Burns here identifies a folksong melody which has a relation in instrumental tradition. He knew the tune he calls 'Roslin Castle' in volume 4 of Oswald's *Caledonian Pocket Companion*.[8]

Fig. 2. 'Roselana Castle', *Caledonian Pocket Companion*, vol. 4, p. 3.

That tune does indeed bear similarities to the one he obtained from Jean Burns; however, it is in two contrasting parts, rather than one. It is worth pointing out that the tune of 'The Posie' corresponds to the second part of the air only, and even here there are differences. As it is relatively unusual to find song melodies built on the second part of an instrumental air in Scottish tradition, we might tentatively suggest that Burns has provided us with an independent folksong melody which may, at some point in the past, have provided the base for the instrumental melody. The transcribed tune of 'Roslin Castle'

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[7] Roy, *Letters*, 2.316, no. 644.

[8] James Oswald, *The Caledonian Pocket Companion*, Vol. 4 (London: Printed for the Author, 1752), 3. Burns mentions the Oswald collection in connection with this tune though noting that Oswald did not claim it as his own; see Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum* 3.134, 213. The tune appeared earlier in William Macgibbon's *Second Collection of Scots Tunes* under the title of 'House of Glams' (Edinburgh: Printed by R. Cooper, 1746), 3.

given in Figure 2 does not include the variation sets provided by Oswald following the initial statement of the two-part melody.

In the Laing MS,[9] Burns repeats his low opinion of the old words Jean sang to the tune in his comment on 'The Posie', but here he actually gives the first three verses before breaking off impatiently with '&c. &c. &c.' Clearly, he knew the whole song but felt no need to write it out in full.

> The old verses to which it was sung, when I took down the notes ↑from a country girl's [singing, (*deleted*)] voice↓ had no great merit. The following is a specimen:

> > There was a pretty May & a milkin she went;
> >   Wi' her red, rosy cheeks & her coal black hair:
> > And she has met a young man a comin o'er the bent;
> >   With a double & adieu to thee fair May.

> > O whare are ye goin, my ain pretty May,
> >   Wi' thy red, rosy cheeks & thy coal-black hair;
> > Unto the yowes a milkin, kind Sir, she says,
> >   With a double & adieu to thee fair May.

> > What if I gang alang wi' thee, my ain pretty May,
> >   Wi' thy red, rosy cheeks & thy coal black hair;
> > Wad I be ought the warse o' that, kind Sir, she says,
> >   With a double and adieu to thee fair May. –
> >   &c. &c. &c. –

Fig. 3 'There was a pretty May' set to the tune of 'The Posie',
Scots Musical Museum, no. 373.

In composing 'The Posie', Burns has not echoed the second-line refrain of the folksong, but his last line is repeated as in the folksong, either exactly as in verses 2–6, or in slightly modified form as in the first and last verses. In Figure 3, the tune he used for 'The Posie' is restored to the opening of the folksong that Jean Burns sang.

Although a complete text from Burns is lacking, we can get a good impression of how the song known to him would have continued from a nineteenth-century song text published without music in

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[9] Robert Burns, 'Laing MS'. Edinburgh University Library MS La.II.210(9), 7.

Robert Ford's *Vagabond Songs and Ballads of Scotland*.[10] This opens with two verses that correspond to Burns's verses 2–3 and continues the narrative to its conclusion with the maid's retort. Ford's source was Hugh M'Aulay, of Johnstone, Renfrewshire, who told him that he had learned it more than twenty-five years previously 'from the singing of a girl named Bathgate, who had quite a host of these simple old wandering songs'.

Where Are You Going, My Pretty Fair Maid?

'Where are you going, my pretty fair maid,
    With red rosy cheeks and coal black hair?'
'I'm going a-milking, kind sir,' she replied,
    'Rolling on the dew makes a milkmaid fair.'

'May I go with you, my pretty fair maid,
    With red rosy cheeks and coal black hair?'
'O, just if you're willing, kind sir,' she replied,
    'Rolling on the dew makes a milkmaid fair.'

'What is your father, my pretty fair maid,
    With red rosy cheeks and coal black hair?'
'My father's a farmer, kind sir,' she replied,
    'Rolling on the dew makes a milkmaid fair.'

'And what is your mother, my pretty fair maid,
    With red rosy cheeks and coal black hair?'
'A wife to my father, kind sir,' she replied,
    'Rolling on the dew makes a milkmaid fair.'

'And what is your fortune, my pretty fair maid,
    With red rosy cheeks and coal black hair?'
'A coo an' a wee calf, kind sir,' she replied,
    'Rolling on the dew makes a milkmaid fair.'

'Then I won't go with you, my pretty fair maid,
    With red rosy cheeks and coal black hair.'
'And naebody asked ye, kind sir,' she replied,
    'Rolling on the dew makes a milkmaid fair.'

The song has been widely known in England under the titles 'Rolling in the Dew', 'Roving in the Dew' and 'Dabbling in the Dew',[11] and the 'double and adieu' of the repeated last line of each verse in the Burns version evidently arose from a mishearing in transmission of 'dabbling in the dew'. The song is less well known in Scotland, but the Greig-Duncan collection has two tunes, one with a verse of song,[12] and fragmentary versions were sung by the Travellers Jeannie Robertson and Duncan Williamson.[13] None of these versions has the tune collected by Burns.

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[10] Robert Ford, ed., *Vagabond Songs and Ballads of Scotland*, 2 vols (Paisley and London: Alexander Gardner, 1899–1901), 1.149–50.

[11] Steve Roud, Roud Folk Song Index, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (2006), no. 298 (https://www.vwml.org/roudnumber/298); Steve Roud and Julia Bishop, eds, *The New Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* (London: Penguin, 2012), no. 67 'Dabbling in the Dew'.

[12] Patrick Shuldham-Shaw et al., eds, *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, (Aberdeen and Edinburgh: Aberdeen University Press and Mercat Press, 1981–2002), 4.203, GD 812 'Rolling in the Dew' A and B.

[13] See 'Dabbling in the Dew' (https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/34278?l=en) and John D. Niles, *Webspinner: Songs, Stories, and Reflections of Duncan Williamson, Scottish Traveller* (Jackson: University

The Ford version reflects a change in farming practice. In the eighteenth-century version, the girl is milking ewes while in the Ford version it is apparent that she is milking cows since she says that her fortune consists of a cow and a calf. In most versions of the song, the girl says that her fortune consists only of her face and the parallels suggest that the song sung by Jean Burns mentioned a dowry that consisted only of the girl's good looks as in the phrase 'my face is my fortune' included in Williamson's version or, if taking a hint from Ford, of a yowe and a lamb.

The meeting of a high-born young man and a low-born shepherdess as found in this song is in the *pastourelle* tradition as discussed in a study by Charles B. Lewis.[14] The equivalent to Burns's first verse is not commonly found and is probably an early feature of the song that was later generally dropped, as Lewis indicates. A twentieth-century version of the meeting of the man and the maid does occur, however, in a sea-shanty from Captain Vickery of Minehead called 'Heave Away, My Johnny' published by Cecil Sharp.[15] Without the shanty repeats, its opening verses run:

> As I walked out one fine morning
>   All in the month of May,
> I overtook a fair pretty maid,
>   And unto her did say.
>
> O where are you going to, my pretty maid?
>   I unto her did say.
> I'm going a milking, sir, she said,
>   All in the month of May.

The encounter with a shepherdess and the prelude to the conversation are early features found in the Burns version. Burns quotes a sufficient part of the song for its direction to be quite apparent and for its complete form to be sketched out in general although the precise wording of the later verses cannot be recovered. Burns also captured in print the tune to which his wife sang the song.

Craigie-burn Wood

Writing to Thomson about his song 'Craigie-burn Wood' as published in *The Scots Musical Museum*, Burns states that 'the Chorus [is (*deleted*)] was not my work, but a part of some old verses to the air',[16] and in a note to the song he expresses his low opinion of the 'old verses', saying, 'The chorus is part of an old foolish ballad.'[17]

Burns told his excise friend, John Gillespie, in a mutilated letter tentatively dated January 1791, that his song was composed on Jean Lorimer, to whom Gillespie had formed an attachment, and he notes: 'She was born [near Craigiebur]n-wood, a beautiful place still in her [father's posse]ssion.'[18] Jean was born in 1775 and her father was 'William Lorimer of Craigieburn, merchant in Dumfries'.[19] When Burns was at Ellisland, the Lorimer family was living two miles away at the farm of Kemmishall and Mrs Burns recorded that 'Jean used to visit at Ellisland'.[20]

Craigieburn Wood is near Moffat, and Burns comments on his song and its location in a letter to Thomson of 7 April 1793:

Press of Mississippi, 2022), 35–7, and 'Bonnie One' (https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/AB2ZUH657JMBMZ8B).

[14] Charles B. Lewis, 'The Part of the Folk in the Making of Folklore,' *Folklore* 46, no.1 (1935), 37–75.

[15] Cecil J. Sharp, ed. *Folk Songs from Somerset*, Fifth Series (London: Simpkin, 1909), 58–61.

[16] Roy, *Letters*, 2.326, no. 646.

[17] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 3.235.

[18] Roy, *Letters*, 2.67, no. 432.

[19] Joseph Jackson Howard, ed., *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, vol. 2, new series, (1877), 421–3 'Lorimer, Scotland' (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1877), 423.

20 P. Hately Waddell, *Life and Works of Robert Burns*, 2 vols (Glasgow: David Wilson, 1867–69), 2.Appendix xxiv.

> There is also one sentimental song, of mine, the first in the 4th Vol. of the Museum, which never was known out of the immediate neighbourhood, untill I got it taken down from a country girl's singing. – It is called, Craigieburnwood; & in the opinion of M[r] Clarke, is one of the sweetest Scots Songs. – He is quite an enthusiast about it; & I would take his taste in Scots music against the taste of most connoisseurs.[21]

Since Burns says that he 'got it taken down from a country girl's singing' he clearly arranged for the tune to be recorded. It seems that the 'country girl' in this case was Jean Lorimer, since Burns claims that the song 'never was known out of the immediate neighbourhood' until he had it taken down and it was she who was his 'country girl' contact with that area.

The tune was evidently one of sixteen bars accommodating eight lines of text, since Burns says in a letter to Johnson tentatively dated 1791:
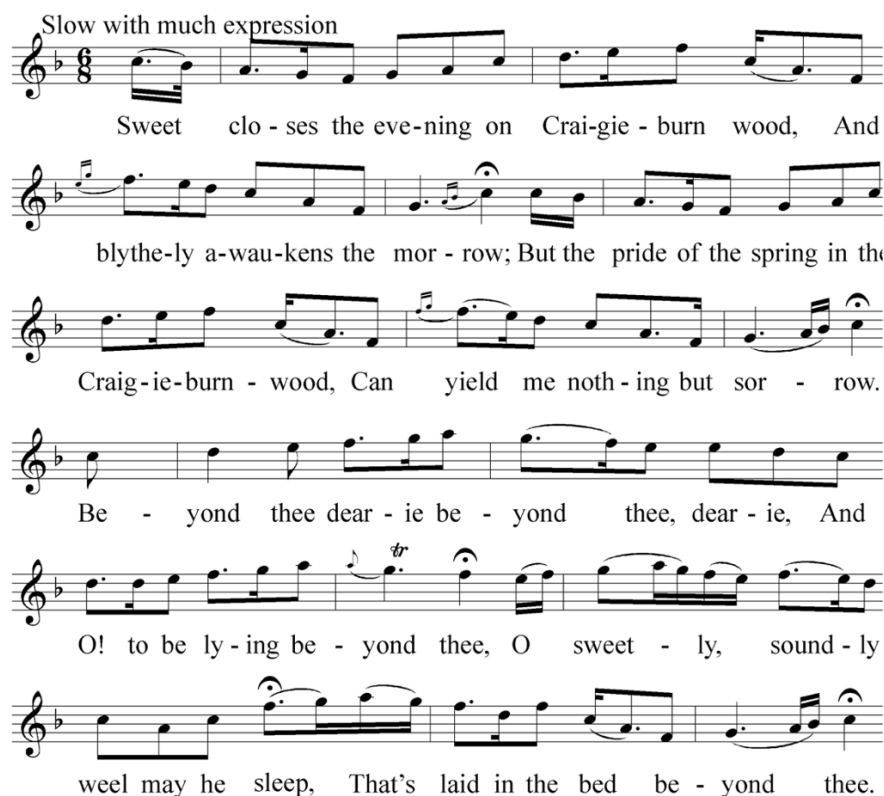
> I received your letter with the Proofs of two songs, but M[r] Clarke has mistaken one of them, the song, Craigieburnwood, sadly, having put the Chorus to the wrong part of the tune – so I have given it him to correct.[22]

Burns took great care over this song as is evident from his letter to Johnson of about May 1792:

> I inclose you another & I think a better set of Craigieburnwood, which you will give to M[r] Clarke to compare with the former set, as I am extremely anxious to have that song right.[23]

The first stanza and chorus of Burns's song are given in Figure 4 as in *The Scots Musical Museum* volume published in August 1792.[24]

Fig. 4. 'Craigie-burn Wood', *Scots Musical Museum*, no. 301.

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[21] Roy, *Letters*, 2.206, no. 557.
[22] Roy, *Letters*, 2.91, no. 452.
[23] Roy, *Letters*, 2.141, no. 503.
[24] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 2.378, no. 301.

The melody as presented here is quite difficult to sing and would be more suited to playing on an instrument. Singers evidently made changes to simplify the melody, as John Glen indicates in *Early Scottish Melodies* when he says, 'It is really a beautiful tune: the set now in use is slightly altered from that given by Johnson, and is more vocal.'[25] There is a real puzzle here. It is to be expected that the tune as taken down from the country girl would have been vocal and yet the tune published from this ultimate source appears instrumental. A solution to this puzzle is suggested by the information in Burns's comments quoted above. First, he supplied the music as taken down from the singer and then later he sent another set that he thought a better one. This implies an intervening step, and it seems possible that the musician who took down the tune at Burns's request went on to play the tune himself and develop it for his instrument and then gave this embellished form to Burns who preferred it for publication.

If this was what happened, there are several indications that Robert Riddell of Glenriddell could have been the intermediary. He resided on the estate of Friars' Carse which bordered on Ellisland[26] and so could easily have been brought together with the singer from the same locality. Unlike Burns, he had an antiquarian interest in ballads and he contributed material to *The Scots Music Museum* from his manuscript collection,[27] and so would have taken an interest in a ballad if he had heard about it. He was a fiddler who published a volume of tunes that he had gathered, and another volume of tunes composed by himself.[28] Four of Burns's songs were written to tunes that were certainly or probably composed by him,[29] and a tune of 'Ay Waking oh!' 'was received by Mr Stephen Clarke from Captain R. Riddell of Glenriddell'.[30] There is no direct evidence of Riddell's involvement in the case of 'Craigie-Burn Wood' but Burns must have had assistance from some musician other than Clarke and it may perhaps have been Riddell.

Glen stated in 1900 that 'The melody of this song is not contained in any collection previous to the Museum',[31] and his statement has been followed in the editions by Kinsley and Pittock while McCue has no reference to any music before Burns's song.[32] However, as Anne Gilchrist observed, the tune appeared in Playford's *English Dancing Master* in 1651 as no. 93 'Lulle Me Beyond Thee'.[33] Comparison of the 'Lull Me Beyond Thee' and 'Craigie-burn Wood' tunes shows that it is really the second part they have in common, where Burns has his chorus. It is worth noting too that 'Lull Me'

[25] John Glen, *Early Sottish Melodies* (Edinburgh: J. & R. Glen, 1900), 158.

[26] Roy, *Letters*, 2.475–6.

[27] Robert Riddell of Glenriddell, 'Ballad Collection' contained in MSS 581–9, vols 8, and 11. Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, National Museums Scotland Library, Edinburgh. Items in *The Scots Musical Museum* related to this collection are Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, vol. 2, no. 155 'Where Helen Lies', no. 411 'Tam Lin' and no. 579 'O heard ye e'er of a silly blind Harper'. See further Emily Lyle, 'The Burns Text of "Tam Lin"', *Scottish Studies* 15 (1971), 53–65.

[28] Robert Riddell, *A Collection of Scotch Galwegian & Border Tunes for the Violin and Piano Forte* [*…*] *Selected by Robert Riddell of Glenriddell* (Edinburgh: Johnson & Co., [1794]) and *New Music for the Piano Forte or Harpsichord; composed by a Gentleman* (Edinburgh: J. Johnson, c. 1785).

[29] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum,* 2.365, no. 294 'The blue-eyed Lassie', 2.366, no. 295 'The Banks of Nith', 2.391, no. 314 'The Whistle' and 2.442, no. 364 'Nithsdall's welcome hame'.

[30] Stenhouse, William, ed., *Illustrations of the Lyric Poetry and Music of Scotland.* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1853), 352. For 'Ay Waking oh!', see Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 2.463, no. 382.

[31] Glen, *Early Scottish Melodies*, 158.

[32] James Kinsley, ed., *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), no. 483, Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 3.100, Kirsteen McCue, *Robert Burns's Songs for George Thomson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 368–70.

[33] Anne G. Gilchrist, 'Some Additional Notes on the Traditional History of Certain Ballad-Tunes in the "Dancing Master" (1650)', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 3, no.4 (1939), 279–80.

would have been performed at a faster tempo for dancing to than the air of 'Craigie-burn Wood', which is marked in *The Scots Musical Museum* to be performed 'Slow with much expression'.

Fig. 5. The broadside words of 'The Northerne Turtle'
with tune from Chappell (1859), l.260.

The 'Lull Me Beyond Thee' tune given in Figure 5 was studied by William Chappell who noted that a number of broadside ballads were sung to it.[34] Chappell gave the tune with the first verse of 'The Northerne Turtle: / Wayling his unhappy fate, / In being deprived of his sweet Mate' which occurs on a broadside printed in London for I. H. and provisionally dated 1628,[35] and the opening of that ballad with Chappell's melody runs as shown in Figure 5. The Chappell tune is the same as the one presented in Playford's early form of notation although it is in a different key.[36]

'The Northerne Turtle' includes the lines comparable to those in the Burns chorus: 'Good Lord, so soundly I could sleep, / if that I lay lulling beyond her' (2.1–2), 'Nay soundly will I never sleepe, / till I lye lulling beyond her' (6.7–8) and 'Then soundly, soundly shall I sleepe / when as I lay lulling beyond her' (7.7–8). It can be noted that the 'John Barleycorn' broadside ballad to this tune gives the tune title simply as 'Shall I lie beyond thee' without the word 'lulling' and this is even closer to the Burns form.[37]

The Playford title and the lines quoted from 'The Northerne Turtle' are similar to the Burns chorus, and clearly there is a verbal as well as a musical line of connection going back to the

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[34] William Chappell, *The Ballad Music and Popular Literature of the Olden Times*, 2 vols (London: Chappell, 1859), 1.259–60. See EBBA (Early English Broadside Ballads) under Standard Tune Titles: 'Lull Me Beyond Thee'. https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/

[35] EBBA 20021, from Pepys Ballads 1.372, Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge. See also EBBA 20022 for another edition and EBBA 30219 for this ballad as a second part which is preceded by 'The paire of Northerne Turtles. / Whose love was firme till cruell Death, / Deprivd them both of life and breath'.

[36] A transcription of the Playford tune by Chris Partington is available on the Traditional Tune Archive (https://tunearch.org/wiki/Annotation:Lull_Me_Beyond_Thee).

[37] See, e.g., EBBA 20199.

seventeenth century. However, there is a more immediate connection with a ballad (an 'old foolish' one in Burns's opinion) known in the eighteenth century which is untitled but can be called 'The Earl and the Shepherd's Daughter'. It is only the chorus of Burns's 'Craigieburn-wood' song, and not his verse text, that is relevant to the comparison, and his chorus occurs in variant forms that are explored here before the ballad is introduced.

The text in Burns's hand in the version of the song that he gives at folio 58 in the Hastie MS[38] adds his chorus separately at the end, as shown:

Old   –   Chorus
Beyond thee, Dearie, beyond thee, Dearie,
    And Oh to be lying beyond thee!
Sweetly, soundly, weel wad I sleep,
    Were I laid in the bed beyond thee.

It is clear from the layout, with 'Old' placed in the margin, that Burns is not speaking of an 'old chorus', that is, words that had formed a chorus in his traditional base, as erroneously indicated in the Kinsley text and commentary,[39] but only that the words which he is giving as chorus are old ones. Burns also gave the chorus at the end of his song when he wrote it out for John Gillespie in the letter already quoted. The letter is mutilated but the following words are visible and it can be seen that Burns is again making the point that the chorus is not his own work:

– Old words –
<xxxxx> Dearie, beyond thee Dearie,
    <xxxxx> be lying beyond thee
<xxxxx>y weel may he sleep
    <xxxxx> laid in the bed beyond thee![40]

Burns moved from the first person ('wad I sleep') to the third person ('may he sleep') when he revised from the Hastie MS form to the form in the letter to Gillespie and the *Museum*. It is a first-person form that occurs in the ballad that was apparently his source, of which a fragment is included in Herd:

'O my bonny, bonny May,
    Will ye not rue upon me;
A sound, sound sleep I'll never get,
    Until I lye ayont thee.

I'll gie ye four-and-twenty gude milk kye,
    Were a' caft in ae year, May;
And a bonnie bull to gang them by,
    That blude-red is his hair, May.

I hae nae houses, I hae nae land,
    I hae nae gowd or fee, Sir;
I am o'er low to be your bryde,
    Your lown I'll never be, Sir.'[41]

Hans Hecht comments on the Herd fragment 'The first verse of this beautiful piece seems to have suggested the chorus of Burns's *Craigieburn Wood*' and notes that Child quotes it in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* and finds 'that it belongs to a ballad of a shepherd's daughter and an earl,

[38] Robert Burns, 'Hastie MS', British Library Additional MS 22307, f. 58.
[39] Kinsley, *Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, 2.599, 3.1384.
[40] Robert Burns, 'Letter to John Gillespie, ?January 1791'. Robert Burns Birthplace Museum MS 3.6069.
[41] David Herd, ed., *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Printed by John Wotherspoon, for James Dickson and Charles Elliot, 1776), 2.6–7.

which is preserved in two copies in Motherwell's MS.'[42] Kinsley, commenting on 'Craigie-burn Wood' says that the chorus is related to the first verse of the Herd fragment and adds: 'This is part of a ballad of an earl and a country girl, which is given a local habitation and a name in *The Laird o Drum* (Child, no. 236).'[43] This ballad, however, is distinct from 'The Laird o Drum', and Child gives it separately as an appendix to that ballad. Child's version B of 'The Laird o Drum' from the 'old lady's MS' from Aberdeenshire also includes elements of this song.

The first two stanzas of the Herd fragment correspond to the first two in the text which William Motherwell recorded from Mrs Crum, Dumbarton, on 7 April 1825, which is given in full below.[44] The third of the Herd stanzas corresponds to the sixth stanza in the other version noted by Motherwell which came from a Paisley smith called Thomas Risk who learned it in Stirlingshire in his youth:

> 'Oh no, oh no,' the fair maid says,
>   'Thou'rt rich and I am poor;
> And I am owre mean to be thy wife,
>   Too good to be thy whore.'

The following is the version from Mrs Crum.

1. 'O fair maid and true maid,
        Will ye not on me rue, maid?
    Here's my hand, my heart's command,
        I'll come and go by you, maid.

2. 'I've four-and-twenty good milk-kye,
        A' calved in a[e] year, maid,
    And a bonnie bill to eisin them,
        Just as red as your hair, maid.'

3. 'Your kye go as far in my heart
        As they go in my heel, sir;
    And, altho I be but a shepherd's dochter,
        I love my body weel, sir.

4. 'I love my body weel, sir,
        And my maidenhead far better;
    And I'll keep it to marry me,
        Because I'm scarse o tocher.'

5. This knicht he turned his bridle about,
        While the tear stood in his ee;
    And he's awa to her father gane,
        As fast as he could dree.

6. 'Gude een, gude een, you gude auld man,'
        'Gude een, you earl's knicht, sir;'
    'But you have a fair dochter,' he says,
        'Will you grant her to me, sir?

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[42] Hans Hecht, ed., *Songs from David Herd's Manuscripts* (Edinburgh: William J. Hay, 1904), 301, referring to *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. Francis James Child, 5 vols (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1882–98), 4.322.

[43] Kinsley, *Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, 3.1384.

[44] William Motherwell, 'Ballad Book', Glasgow University Library MS 5001, pp. 37–40 Thomas Risk version; pp. 252–4 Mrs Crum version. The Motherwell texts are given here from Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 4.330–2, except that in 8.1 of the Crum version Child's readings 'would' and 'not' are corrected from manuscript to 'wuld' and 'out'.

O silks and satins she shall wear,
   Indeed and so shall ye, sir.'

7.   'I have a fair dochter,' he says,
   'She's fair of blood and bane, sir;
But an ye had your will o her
   Ye wud leave her alane, sir.'

8.   'Ye wuld steek her out your chamber-doors,
   And bar her at your yett, sir;
And an ye had your will o her
   Ye wud her soon forget, sir.'

9.   This knicht he turned his bridle about,
   While the tear stood in his ee,
And he's awa to this fair maid gane,
   As fast as he could drie.

10.   'O fair maid and true maid,
   Will ye not on me rue, maid?
Here's my hand, my heart's command,
   I'll come and go by you, maid.

11.   'Cast aff, cast aff your gay black gowns,
   Put on your gowns of silk, maid;
Cast aff, cast aff your gay black snoods,
   Put the garlands on your hair, maid.'

12.   'It's I can bake, and I can brew,
   And good kye can I milk, sir;
But I was neer born in the time o the year
   To wear the gowns o silk, sir.

13.   'Yestreen I was a shepherd's dochter,
   Whistling my hogs to the hill;
But the nicht I am an earl's lady,
   I may wear what I will.'

Although the quatrain that Burns echoes is not a chorus, it does occur twice in the Crum version (sts 1 and 10) and three times in the old lady's version of 'The Laird o Drum' (sts 5, 7 and 11) and so it has some similarity to a chorus. Since it appears from the Burns record of the tune that the ballad as he knew it had eight-line stanzas, it seems likely that the repeated plea for the woman's pity was present in the same position as Burns's chorus and was sung to the second half of the tune.

To give an impression of how a source ballad in eight-line stanzas might have been sung, stanzas 9–10 of the Crum version are given on the next page (Figure 6) to the air of 'Craigie-burn Wood'. The melody has been simplified to make it more suited to vocal performance (cf. Glen's earlier comment).

Burns localises the 'sweet old tune'[45] of 'Craigie-burn Wood' precisely when he comments:

It is remarkable of this air, that it is the confine of that country where the greatest part of our Lowland Music, (so far as from the title, words, &c. we can localise it,) has been composed. – From Craigieburn, near Moffat, untill one reaches the West Highlands, we have scarcely one slow Air of any antiquity.[46]

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[45] Roy, *Letters*, 2: 67, no. 432.
[46] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 3.235.

Burns's comment has an important implication for the content of the ballad since it must have included 'Craigieburn' in its title or words for Burns to be able to localise it as he does. So far as the Burns song is concerned, 'Craigie-burn Wood' is a place but, in the context of the ballad, it seems that Craigieburn or Craigieburn Wood would probably have been a man's name taken from his property. There is some likelihood that the ballad began with the name of the protagonist as in the Risk version which opens: 'Montrose he had a poor shepherd, / And a poor shepherd was he'. It can be suggested that the version known to Burns began with a line like 'Craigieburn had a poor shepherd'.

Fig. 6. Stanzas 9–10 of Mrs Crum's words from Motherwell
set to tune of 'Craigie-burn Wood', *Scots Musical Museum*, no. 301.

In the Herd fragment quoted above, the end of the verse, like the Burns chorus, takes the form: 'A sound, sound sleep I'll never get, / Until I lye ayont thee.' This may be compared with the lines in Burns's Hastie MS version: 'Sweetly, soundly, weel wad I sleep, / Were I laid in the bed beyond thee.' So far as our evidence goes, only the Herd fragment of the ballad has the concept expressed in the last two lines. It seems possible that Burns, while familiar with the ballad as sung by Jean Lorimer, was attracted to the Herd lines from it and based his chorus on Herd. If so, he has adapted the last two lines and extrapolated from them, addressing the woman by the term 'Dearie' which would have been inappropriate in the ballad context and omitting the 'rue' motif stressed in the ballad.

It is not possible to be certain about what Burns had available to him, but he clearly regarded his chorus as old as opposed to his own fresh composition and, as noted above, the name 'Craigieburn' or 'Craigieburn Wood' must have been present in the traditional song. The slim information derived from Burns and Herd can be filled out by reference to the nineteenth-century texts and the seventeenth-century tune to give an impression of the form that the ballad took in the eighteenth century.

Ae day a braw wooer

Burns composed this song to the tune called 'The Lothian Lassie'. In May 1795 he sent Thomson the words and music of the traditional song with the following remarks:

> 'The Lothian Lassie,' I also inclose: the song is well known, but was never in notes before. – The first part is the old tune. – It is a great favorite of mine, & here I have the honor of being of the same opinion with STANDARD CLARKE. – I think it would make a fine Andante ballad.[47]

Fig. 7. 'Ae day a braw wooer', *Scots Musical Museum*, no. 522, first text.

On 3 July he sent Thomson the song he had composed to this air with the heading, 'Scottish Ballad. – Tune the Lothian lassie – / Clarke has this air'.[48] Thomson published it in his *Select Collection* in 1799 with the title 'Last May a Braw Wooer Cam' Down the Lang Glen', noting that the air was 'The Lothian Lassie'.[49] When the Burns song was published in 1803 in *The Scots Musical Museum*, with the title 'Ae day a braw wooer, &c.', it was paired with the traditional song which was given as a second set of words to the tune. The opening of the Burns song as published in *The Scots Musical Museum* runs as shown in Figure 7 above.[50]

Burns has followed his source in having a set of five lines which matches the music but, in using the device of repeats of the fourth line of each stanza, he has diverged from the form of the original narrative which is in couplets with a nonsense chorus following each of the two lines.

Burns wrote out the source song in a manuscript that was acquired by the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum as part of the accession from the Blavatnik Honresfield Library in 2022 and, with the kind permission of the National Trust for Scotland,[51] we are able through a scan to make direct use of this manuscript for the text of this song which had previously been available only through the transcript

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[47] Roy, *Letters*, 2: 356, no. 670.
[48] Roy, *Letters*, 2: 359, no. 673.
[49] McCue, *Robert Burns's Songs for George Thomson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 58–9, 390–1, ST32 (T52).
[50] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 2.618–9, no. 522.
[51] We are very grateful to Ian Riches, Archivist – Collections Management, National Trust for Scotland, for his assistance.

published by Davidson Cook in 1926.[52] The manuscript consists of a single folded sheet with four unnumbered pages. Burns first wrote out the whole song on pages 1–2 with abbreviated indications of the chorus lines which appear as 'Fal lal &c.', 'Fal &c.' or 'Fall &c.' He then noted 'Mr Clarke has this tune – The chorus goes as follows' and gave the first verse in full. Page 2 is faced by page 3 which is blank except for see-through of the title. Page 4 has only the title 'The queen o' the Lothians' which is written on the right rather more than half-way down the sheet which shows signs of folding in such a way that the title would have been visible. If this title is to be correlated with the tune title 'The Lothian Lassie', it seems that the word 'queen' is to be understood in the sense of 'girl, lassie' which is generally spelt 'quean' or, with a different pronunciation, 'quine'.

The first verse as written by Burns at the end of his text is given with the *Scots Musical Museum* tune as above. The rhythm in the seventh bar has been altered to fit the syllables of the chorus. Burns is very specific about where the stresses occur as he underlines the stressed syllables in the manuscript, as shown in Figure 8.

Fig. 8. 'The Lothian Lassie', *Scots Musical Museum*, no. 522, second text.

Although Burns says that 'the song is well known', the only known text is the one he provides. As it stands, its narrative line is incoherent and puzzling. It opens, as shown, with a young woman travelling into Fife in search of a husband. The problem arises in relation to the lack of connection with the rest of the song which is on the theme of a bashful wooer called Jockie who makes an indirect approach to a young woman called Jenny who was already aware of his interest. Their meeting takes place at Lochnell which is near Oban and is introduced in a couplet which refers back to the quean:

> She had na been lang at the brow o' the hill,
> Till Jockie cam down for to visit Lochnell,

The solution to the problem of the apparent lack of connection may be that verse 2 is actually the beginning of a different song, but this solution would require a revision in its opening line. The location at 'the brow o' the hill' would be appropriate for a natural phenomenon, as in the Burns song which begins 'The lazy mist hangs from the brow of the hill',[53] and it may be that the song opened with a reference to a time in the morning and that the line originally ran 'The sun had na been lang at the brow o' the hill'. If that had been so, by changing 'The sun' to 'She' the two texts could readily

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[52] Davidson Cook, 'Unpublished Manuscripts of Burns: Mr A. J. Law's Collection', *Burns Chronicle and Club Directory*, second series, 1 (1926), 67–8.

[53] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 2.302.

have been cobbled together. There seems no reason for Burns to have done this cobbling and the probability is that the fusion, if indeed it took place, had already occurred in the song as he found it.

The text given below (Figure 9), with the reading 'The sun', is offered as a free-standing song with the editorial title 'Jockie's Wooing'. Since Burns mentions that Clarke had the tune it seems likely that it was Clarke who took it down. There is no record of the source singer. In the music, the rhythm in bar seven has again been altered to comply with Burns's indications of the stresses.

Fig. 9. 'Jockie's Wooing' (editorial title), text from Burns's holograph copy (with adaptations), set to tune of 'The Lothian Lassie', *Scots Musical Museum*, no. 522.

2.   He took the aunt to the neuk o' the ha',
      Whare naebody heard, & whare nae-body saw.

3.   Madam, he says, I've thought on your advice,
      I wad marry your niece, but I'm fley'd she'll be nice.

4.   Jockie, she says, the wark's done to your hand,
      I've spoke to my niece, & she's at your command.

5.   But troth, Madam, I canna woo,
      For aft I hae tried it, & ay I fa' thro'.

6.   But, O dear Madam, & ye wad begin
      For I'm as fley'd to do it, as it were a sin.

7.   Jenny cam in, & Jockie ran out,
      Madam, she says, what hae ye been about.

8.   Jenny, she says, I've been workin for you,
      For what do ye think. Jockie's come here to woo.

9.   Now Jenny tak care, & dash na the lad,
      For offers like him are na ay to be had.

10.   Madam, I'll tak the advice o' the wise,
     I ken the lad's worth, & I own he's a prize.

11.   Then she cries but the house, Jockie come here,
     Ye've naething to do but the question to spier.

12.   The question was spier'd, & the bargain was struck,
     The neebors cam in, & wish'd them gude luck.

As Adam Fox notes, 'Jockey' and 'Jenny' were typical names in broadside songs given a Scottish setting though of English derivation,[54] but in this case the song seems to be authentically Scottish and to belong to a Scottish tradition of which other examples are 'Robeyns Iok come to wow our Iynny' in the sixteenth-century Bannatyne MS and 'Hey, Jenny come down to Jock' beginning 'Jocky he came here to woo'.[55] It is an unusually lively and warm-hearted treatment of the theme of the bashful wooer which is more clearly focussed when the 'queen o' the Lothians' verse is removed. In isolation, that verse would then be understood as a surviving fragment of a largely lost song appropriately entitled 'The Lothian Lassie'. It can be suggested that the two texts were drawn together by being sung to the same tune as well as by their common theme of courtship.

A waukrife Minnie

Concerning 'A waukrife Minnie', which was published in *The Scots Musical Museum* in 1790, Burns remarks: 'I pickt up this old song & tune from a country girl in Nithsdale. – I never met with it elsewhere in Scotland. –'[56] It seems from this comment that Burns made the record of both the words and tune of the song himself. It is noteworthy that Burns names the country girl as his sole source and so ascribes it to her although, as will be discussed below, he had a very active role in modifying the song before publication. When this case is taken into account, it can be seen that, when Burns ascribed 'Auld Lang Syne' to an old man, his statement would in his mind have been compatible with his having made substantial revisions to the text he had received, as has been thought likely.[57]

Although Burns had encountered 'A waukrife Minnie' only in Nithsdale, the song belongs to a widely distributed type called 'Seventeen Come Sunday'.[58] Steve Roud and Julia Bishop, commenting on the ninety-four English entries they have for it, note that it has two different forms and ends either with the young man and the girl staying together or with the young man deserting the girl. They make no mention of another major difference found within this type as described by G. Malcolm Laws with reference to American versions from British broadsides. Speaking of the young man, Laws says: 'In some versions [the girl's] mother does not hear him arrive; in others she does and gives the girl a beating.'[59] In the version published in Roud and Bishop the mother is mentioned but does not make an appearance, and the song has only two characters.[60] The Burns text, on the other hand, belongs to a form which has three characters.

In the three-character form which occurs traditionally in Scotland in addition to the two-character form, the mother's entrance upon the scene is the focus of the story. The Burns version is atypical in some ways that imply authorial reworking, as discussed below, but it is true to the spirit of the three-character form of the story by naming the song from the mother – 'A waukrife Minnie' (a wakeful or vigilant mother). The 'mother' form is a rough and farcical narrative, and it seems that this was the older form (perhaps known all over Britain) which has been smoothed down in the two-character form to a meeting and parting of the lovers without the violent interaction with the mother.

The information about the song as probably heard by Burns comes partly from later tradition and partly from a previously undiscussed version entitled 'The lassie lost her maiden-head for a' her

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[54] Adam Fox, 'Jockey and Jenny: English Broadside Ballads and the Invention of Scottishness', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 79, no. 2 (2016), 201–20.

[55] See Janet Hadley Williams, ed. *Textual and Bibliographical Studies in Older Scots Literature: Selected Essays of Priscilla Bawcutt* (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 2022), 137–8, and Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 2.227, 3.51, no. 167.

[56] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 3.234.

[57] M. J. Grant, *Auld Lang Syne: A Song and its Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2021, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0231), xi, 21, 41–5, 50, 88, 232 and 253.

[58] G. Malcolm Laws, Jr., *American Balladry from British Broadsides* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1957), 234, O 17 'Seventeen Come Sunday'; Roud, *Index*, no. 277.

[59] Laws, *American Balladry*, 234.

[60] Roud and Bishop, *English Folk Songs*, 87–9, no. 37.

waukrif mammie' which is found in a Scottish chapbook with an estimated date of 1795.[61] When Allan Cunningham and Thomas Lyle published the song in 1825 and 1827, they included Burns's text but they knew that the song as they had heard it in Nithsdale and in the Ayrshire and Renfrewshire area differed from this and they supplied extra verses.[62] The only full traditional text from the south-west is the version in the Crawfurd collection recorded in Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire, about 1829, by William Orr from an unnamed source,[63] and this text corresponds verse by verse with the chapbook form except that the order of two verses is reversed and one of the chapbook verses (the girl's retort to her mother) is lacking. The Greig-Duncan collection made in the north-east of Scotland in the early twentieth century includes two full versions of the three-character form. One version (Ba) is from the Reverend James B. Duncan's sister, Mrs Margaret Gillespie, who learned it from their mother, née Elizabeth Birnie, and the other (L) is from Bell Robertson, who learned it from her mother, née Jean Gall.[64]

The Burns text is given below on the right in parallel with the chapbook text on the left.

As I went o'er the highland hills,
   I met a bonny lassie,
She looked at me and I at her,
   and vow but she was saucy.
    To my rou tou fal de lal, &c.

Where are you going, my bonny lass?
  where are you going my honey?
Right modestly she answer'd me,
  an errand for my mammie.
	Whare are you gaun, my bony lass,
	  Whare are you gaun, my hiney.
	She answer'd me right saucily,
	  An errand for my Minnie.

What is your age, my bonny lass?
  what is your age, my honey?
Right modestly she answer'd me,
  I'm fifteen years come Sunday.	

Will you take a man, my bonny lass?
  Will you take a man, my honey?
Right modestly she answer'd me,
  I dare not for my mammie.	

Where do you live my bonny lass?
  where do you live my honey?
Right modestly she answer'd me,
  in a wie house wi' my mammie.
	O whare live ye, my bony lass,
	  O whare live ye, my hiney.
	By yon burn-side, gin ye maun ken,
	  In a wee house wi' my Minnie.

I went into my love's chamber,
  to see if she was wauking:
But we had not spoke a word or to
  till her mother heard us talking.
	But I foor up the glen at e'en,
	  To see my bony lassie;
	And lang before the grey morn cam,
	  She was na hauf sae sacey.

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[61] National Library of Scotland Ry.III.e.16(25) *Four excellent new songs. The lassie lost her maiden-head for a' her waukrif mammie. Johnie Cope, Rinordin; or The mountains high. The general toast.*

[62] Thomas Lyle, *Ancient Ballads and Songs, Chiefly from Tradition, Manuscripts, and Scarce Works* (London: Printed for L. Relfe, 1827), x, 155–6.

[62] Allan Cunningham, *The Songs of Scotland, Ancient and Modern*, 4 vols (London: Printed for John Taylor, 1825), 2.244–6.

[63] Emily Lyle, ed., *Andrew Crawfurd's Collection of Ballads and Songs*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1975–96), 2.140–1.

[64] Shuldham-Shaw, *Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, 4.149–57 and notes 4.542–3, GD 791 'The Soldier Lad' versions A–M.

Then she began to blaw the coal,
　to see if she could ken me,
But I creep'd out at the bed-foot,
　and took the fields to screen me.

The she took her by the hair of the head,
　and to the floor she brought her;
And with a good green hazel rung,
　she made her a well paid daughter.

O haud your hand, mother, she says,
　you're like for to devour me;
For I would ne'er have done the like,
　if you had not dont't before me.

Blink o'er the burn, my bonny lass,
　blink o'er the burn, my honey;
For you've got the clod that will not cling,
　in spite of your waukrif mammie.

So fare you well, my bonny lass,
　so fare you well, my honey;
For I would come and see you again,
　were't not for your waukrif mammie.
　　With my rou tou dam dail, all, all to my
　　rou.

O weary fa' the waukrife cock
　And the foumart lay his crawin!
He wauken'd the auld wife frae her sleep,
　A wee blink or the dawin.

An angry wife I wat she raise,
　And o'er the bed she brocht her;
And wi' a meikle hazel rung
　She made her a well pay'd dochter.

O fare thee weel, my bony lass!
　O fare thee well, my hinnie!
Thou are a gay and a bony lass,
　But thou has a waukrife minnie.

Burns is alone in giving 'minnie' not 'mammie' or 'mammy' in the title and text. This difference affects the rhyme-scheme, and Lyle has 'my lammy' rather than 'my honey' or 'my hiney' as in the chapbook and Burns. It seems possible that Burns's source had the non-rhymes 'honey' and 'mammie' and that Burns converted to the rhymes 'hiney' and 'minnie'. Perhaps by doing this he was restoring an earlier form before the rhyme was lost.

Considering the first part of the song and assuming that the source was similar to the chapbook text given above, the following points can be made. Burns omits the first verse, reduces the number of question-and-answer verses to two and varies the wording in the third line on the second occasion to 'By yon burn-side, gin ye maun ken' instead of using formulaic repetition. Lyle notes that the Burns text lacks 'the commencing stanza' which he gives as:

As I gaed o'er the Highland hills,
　I met a bonnie lassie;
Wha' look'd at me, and I at her,
　And O but she was saucy.[65]

This verse is found widely in tradition, and it seems that it was available to Burns and that Burns is actually echoing it when he says, 'She answer'd me right saucily'. In the traditional texts, the replies are generally made 'modestly' but Crawfurd has 'scornfully' which comes closer to Burns's word.

The equivalents of the chapbook verses beginning 'Will you take a man?' and 'Where do you live?' are given in the reverse order in Crawfurd and the Crawfurd order is more forceful since the girl implies her consent through basing her reluctance on her fear of her mother and the man's immediate response is to visit her. It is interesting to see that the 'But' which opens Burns's verse 3 appears to relate to a verse like the 'Will you take a man?' one that is no longer present in his text; despite the girl's refusal, the young man makes his way to her home.

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[65] Lyle, *Ancient Ballads and Songs*, 155.

Burns's lines 'But I foor up the glen at e'en / To see my bonnie lassie' differ from the chapbook lines and this difference relates to divergent traditional forms of the two stanzas that cover the encounter with the mother. In the one in this chapbook and also in Crawfurd and Robertson, the young man arrives in the girl's chamber and later creeps away to escape the mother while in the other the young man travels to the girl's home and later knocks the mother into the fire. This form, found in an isolated verse from Nithsdale tradition given by Cunningham and fully in Gillespie, is shown below.

I gid to see that bonnie bonnie lass
    I gid to see my Annie
But the auld wife she got out o her bed
    An came slippin ben fu cannie.

Up banged the wife to blow the coal,
    To see gif she could ken me –
I dang the auld wife in the fire,
    And gaur'd my feet defend me.

She took the claw to clear the clow
    To see gin she could ken me,
But I dang the auld wife into the fire
    An bade my heels defend me.

It was this form that was known to Burns who has the 'travel' lines. The idea of an 'I' travelling was in the unused opening 'Highland hills' verse of the song and its rhymes of 'lassie' and 'saucie' have been caught up in Burns's travel verse. In Gillespie, the girl is named and this involves the need for an earlier 'What is your name?' verse which occurs in Gillespie just before the 'What is your age?' one found in the chapbook and also in the same position in Robertson where the girl gives her name as Nanny. By replacing with the generalised 'lassie', Burns has obviated the need for the 'name' verse which would have been present in this particular expression of the song.

The passage at 3.3–5.1 of Burns's song containing the evocative 'O weary fa' the waukrife cock' lines has no parallel in the traditional versions and is evidently Burns's substitution. It eliminates the violent action of pushing the mother into the fire which he may well have found inappropriate for publication in his work. There would have been a strong association in Burns's mind between a night visit and interruption by the crowing of a cock through his acquaintance with the song 'O Saw ye my father?'.[66] As Child indicates, the separation of the lovers by the coming of dawn in that song belongs to the genre of the *aubade*.[67] A good approach to Burns's major change is to see that he has converted the narrative into one where the lovers are interrupted after their night together by the coming of daylight. In the *aubade*, the approach of dawn is responded to directly by the lovers themselves but here it is the indirect cause of their separation through the mother's response to the crowing of the cock. Before the cock crows, the mother is sound asleep and oblivious, in contradiction to the song's title 'A waukrife Minnie'. In the traditional song, on the other hand, the mother becomes aware of the lovers in the night-time. Since the Burns version defers the introduction of the old woman until the cock crows, it has a line after that devoted to her response, 'An angry wife I wat she raise' (5.1), which replaces the line expressing the vivid action of seizing the girl's hair, which is the norm for the opening line of this stanza.

At the close of the song, Burns has only a single verse where the chapbook has three. He may quite likely not have met the verse containing the girl's response since this has not been found elsewhere than in the chapbook, but he quite probably heard two closing parallel verses of farewell and decided to reduce repetition by giving only the final one announcing that the lover will not return. Incidentally, the Robertson version has the alternative positive outcome mentioned by Roud and Bishop and concludes, 'The time will come that ye sall be mine, / For a' yer waukrife mammy.'

The first verse of the song as published in *The Scots Musical Museum* in 1790 is given in Figure 10.[68]

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[66] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 2.123, no. 76.
[67] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 4.390.
[68] Pittock, *Scots Musical Museum*, 2.359, no. 288.

Fig. 10. 'A waukrife Minnie', *Scots Musical Museum*, no. 288.

Thomas Lyle commented on the traditional song he knew, 'The air is a very pretty one, with two lines of nonsensical chorus, sung after each stanza.'[69] Since this song normally has a chorus it seems likely that the version Burns heard had one which he chose to omit, and probably it would have been of the type found in the chapbook which also occurs with the Gillespie text quoted above as 'Wi' my row dum tow dum tarra reedle ow; / Wi' my row dum tarra reedle ah-dee' and with the Robertson version as 'To my rowdum towdum, fala reedle ee, / To my rowdum tow fal dee'.

However, Gillespie knew another tune for the song with a different chorus (version Bb that she learned from George Park). This tune, which bears more similarity to the Burns version, is presented in Figure 11. An interesting point regarding the Gillespie tune is that, when the refrain is omitted, the melody ends on the dominant (fifth) degree of the scale, giving the song an unfinished feel. This is also a characteristic of the melody in *The Scots Musical Museum* which ends on the dominant. Although there is nothing unusual about ending on the dominant, the addition of the refrain does serve to finish off the tune so that it ends on the tonic. The melody itself then may provide further evidence that a refrain has been omitted in the Burns version.

Fig. 11 'My Rolling Eye', Mrs Gillespie, Greig-Duncan 791 Bb.

There is considerable reason to think that the song as Burns heard it in Nithsdale ran something like the following (Figure 12) in both tune and text, although some of the verses might not have been present, and the melody of the chorus might not have been exactly like this. The text is based on the

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[69] Lyle, *Ancient Ballads and Songs*, 156.

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chapbook form, which has been edited here by the revision of 'dont't to 'done't, the addition of capitals and the omission of the indication of a chorus after each verse following the first. The chorus is an estimate on the basis of the 'row tow' syllables in the chapbook and other sources and on the musical treatment in Gillespie. It should be noted that the final chorus in the chapbook is on a single line at the bottom of the page and runs right to the edge of the paper, which suggests that there was no room to complete a longer form and that it was simply cut off. The order of the verses beginning 'Will you take a man' and 'Where do you live' has been reversed. The two Gillespie verses dealing with the encounter with the mother have been substituted for the two equivalent verses in the chapbook, and the associated additional verse on the girl's name is given in the chapbook form found in similar verses and concludes with a line from Gillespie. The tune employs the *Scots Musical Museum* melody (Figure 10) plus the chorus melody from Mrs Gillespie (Figure 11), presented in E minor rather than E major.

As I went o'er the high-land hills, I met a bon-ny las - sie, She looked at me and I at her, An vow but she was sau - cy. To my rou tou tou fal de lal de day rou tou dam de lal, al to my rou tou.

Fig. 12. Chapbook text of verse plus editorially revised chorus syllables set to tune of 'A waukrife Minnie', *Scots Musical Museum*, no. 288, and chorus melody adapted from Gillespie Bb.

2. Where are you going, my bonny lass?
  Where are you going my honey?
Right modestly she answer'd me,
  An errand for my mammie.

3. What is your name, my bonny lass?
  What is your name, my honey?
Right modestly she answer'd me,
  My mammie ca's me Annie.

4. What is your age, my bonny lass?
  What is your age, my honey?
Right modestly she answer'd me,
  I'm fifteen years come Sunday.

5. Where do you live my bonny lass?
  Where do you live my honey?
Right modestly she answer'd me,
  In a wie house wi' my mammie.

6. Will you take a man, my bonny lass?

> Will you take a man, my honey?
> Right modestly she answer'd me,
>   I dare not for my mammie.

7.   I gid to see that bonnie bonnie lass
>   I gid to see my Annie
> But the auld wife she got out o her bed
>   An came slippin ben fu cannie.

8.   She took the claw to clear the clow
>   To see gin she could ken me,
> But I dang the auld wife into the fire
>   An bade my heels defend me.

9.   Then she took her by the hair of the head,
>   And to the floor she brought her;
> And with a good green hazel rung,
>   She made her a well paid daughter.

10.   O haud your hand, mother, she says,
>   You're like for to devour me;
> For I would ne'er have done the like,
>   If you had not done't before me.

11.   Blink o'er the burn, my bonny lass,
>   Blink o'er the burn, my honey;
> For you've got the clod that will not cling,
>   In spite of your waukrif mammie.

12.   So fare you well, my bonny lass,
>   So fare you well, my honey;
> For I would come and see you again,
>   Were't not for your waukrif mammie.

Burns's modification and the traditional song both remained current in Scotland, and the two were hybridised to produce versions with a base in the traditional form which incorporated the Burns 'waukrife cock' passage, as can be seen in the 1827 Lyle text, which is copied in a chapbook of c. 1830–40,[70] and in the version called 'My Rolling Eye' sung by the street singer, Sandy Smith, published by Ford in 1899.[71] A similar hybridisation can be demonstrated in the case of 'MacPherson's Farewell' in the Greig-Duncan collection. The Duncan family sang Burns's song, a version of the broadside song, and a song that contained elements of both.[72] In these cases, items in the Burns corpus, as well as having their own distinct identities, were absorbed into the continuing song tradition.

Concluding Remarks

One conspicuous feature that calls for comment is the prominent role played by women both in Burns's sources for these songs and in their contents. Writing to Thomson in April 1793, Burns spoke

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[70] *Two old songs. The perjured maid, and The waukrife mammy.* Falkirk: Printed for the booksellers. [1830–40?].

[71] Ford, *Vagabond Songs and Ballads*, 1.102–5.

[72] Shuldham-Shaw, *Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, 3.594–6 and notes 3.697, GD 697 'Macpherson's Rant' versions A and B. Katherine Campbell, 'Enactments and Representations of the National Bard: Burns and the Folk Context' in *Performing Robert Burns: Enactments and Representations of the 'National Bard'* ed. Ian Brown and Gerard Carruthers (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp. 164–82.

of having 'several M.S.S. Scots airs by me, which I have pickt up, mostly from the singing of country lasses', and he sent him 'There was a lass, & she was fair', the tune of which was taken down by Clarke from Mrs Burns.[73] In the set of four discussed here, two can be identified as from Mrs Burns and Jean Lorimer, and one is from an unnamed 'country girl'.

The first two songs deal with a young man's advances and show the young woman exerting her right of refusal. This is final in the first case when she takes down the over-confident young man. In the second case, she yields to the man's entreaties, but proclaims at the end that, as the earl's lady, she has acquired freedom of choice. The 'quean of the Lothians' in the fragment about her takes the initiative and sets out in search of a partner. In the last two songs, a woman of the generation before the young couple controls the action. In 'Jockie's Wooing', it is the intervention of the young woman's aunt that brings about the anticipated wedding, and the 'waukrif mammie' aims to keep her daughter safe from the advances of young men outside marriage and reacts vigorously when she finds that her guardianship has been in vain.

In general, the traditional songs took longer to sing than the typical Burns replacements. Not only did they contain extended narratives, but they slowed the action by including verses of incremental repetition and favouring choruses, including ones consisting of nonsense syllables that Burns was inclined to reject. Burns in his compositions and revisions was setting up a new range of songs that was suited to the changed conditions of his time but, paradoxically, because of his use of tunes that already had associated words, he had ties to the past that allow us insight into the world he was leaving behind.

Glossary of Scots Words

a', all
ae, one
aft, often
ain, own
ance, once
an, **and**, if
auld, old
awa, away
ay, always
ayont, beyond
banged, jumped
ben, to the inner part of the house
bent, rough grass
bill, bull
blaw, blow
blink n., while
blink v., look
bonnie, bonny, good-looking
braw, fine
brocht, brought
brow, top
burn, stream
burn-side, side of a stream

but the house, to the outer part of the house
by, beside
ca's, calls
caft, calved
canna, cannot
cannie, stealthily
claw, scraper
cling, shrink
clod, little thing, foetus
clow, fused dross
crawin, crowing
creep'd, crept
cries, calls
cruisin, seeking a sexual partner
cud, could
dang, knocked, pushed
dash, discourage
daur, dare
dawin, dawn
deave, weary
deuce, devil
devour, destroy
dochter, daughter

dree, drie, go
ee, eye
e'en, een, evening
eisin, pleasure
fa' thru', fail
fare thee/you weel/well, farewell to you
fee, money
fley'd, afraid
foor, went
foumart, polecat
frae, from
fu, full, very
gae, **gaed**, go, went
gane, gone
gang, go
gaun, going
gaur'd, caused to, let
gay (gey), very
gid, went
gie, give
gif, if
gin, if
gowd, gold
gude, good

[73] Campbell and Lyle, *Discovery and Re-Creation*, 174–8.

hae, have
haud, hold
hauf, half
hinnie, hiney, honey
hogs, young sheep
ken, know
knicht, knight
kye, cattle, cows
lang, long
lass, lassie, girl
lay, silence
low, low-born
lown, whore
maun, must
may, maid
meikle, big, sturdy
milk-kye, cows
minnie, mother
morrow, morning
na, not

nae, no
naebody, nobody
naething, nothing
neebors, neighbours
neuk, recess
nice, particular
nicht, the, tonight
o, of
or, before
owre, over
pink, carnation, the finest
   example of excellence
pu', pull
quean, queen, quine, girl
rung, rod
sair, sorely, extremely
screen, hide
snoods, hair ribbons
spier, spier'd, ask, asked
spoke, spoken

steek, close
tocher, dowry
troth, indeed
vow, oh, wow
wad, **wud, wuld**, would
waukrif, waukrife,
   wakeful, vigilant
warse, worse
wat, I, indeed
wauking, awake
wauken'd, woke
weary fa', a curse on
wee, wie, little
well paid, well-chastised
wi', with
wife, woman
yestreen, yesterday
yett, gate
yon, that, yonder
yowes, ewes.

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The last of the great auks: oral history and ritual killings at St Kilda

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Abstract

The story of the killing of the 'last' great auk (*Pinguinus impennis*) in Britain, apparently put to death as a witch at Stac an Armin in the St Kilda archipelago c. 1840, is well known. However, other accounts claim that an auk was killed on the main island, Hirta, having been condemned to death by the celebrated men's 'parliament'. The historical veracity of three differing stories, which recount discreditable deeds in a deeply Christian community, is evaluated; it seems that fewest difficulties are raised if *two* great auks were killed, one on Hirta and the other on Stac an Armin. It is argued that this kind of avicide was a 'ritual' killing, to be understood in its historical context. The auk-killing probably took place in the mid to late 1840s, after the St Kilda minister had departed in the wake of the Disruption of 1843 – a particularly unsettling time within this small island community. A possible sighting of a pair of great auks on Soay (St Kilda) in 1890 is also briefly discussed.

Naturalists and readers of the St Kilda literature will know the story of the killing of a great auk (*Pinguinus impennis*) in the middle of the nineteenth century.[1] The auk in question is widely accepted as the 'last' certainly recorded in Britain, and perhaps on the planet (depending upon when the killing is dated). The story, as retailed by John Love on the basis of nineteenth-century accounts, is that five men (three of whom have been named) went to Stac an Armin, a 196m tall rock stack within the St Kilda archipelago, having noticed a strange bird there. Spotting the creature asleep on a ledge, they crept up on it and caught it. They then kept the bird tied up at the bothy on the stack for three days; it made a great noise, not least by the frequent opening and closing of its bill. A storm arose. Thinking that the bird must be a witch and had called up the bad weather, the men beat it to death either with a stick or with two large stones (the latter process taking an hour); the same man, Lachlan McKinnon, was apparently the informant concerning both versions of the mode of killing.[2] The men then threw the body behind the bothy. Naturalists have satisfied themselves as far as possible that the bird in question *was* a great auk, and not a great northern diver, and that the configuration of Stac an Armin makes it quite possible that this flightless bird could have made its way halfway up its side, where it is said to have been seen.

Taking our source literally would place this event in July 1840, plus or minus a couple of years. However, in 2009 Love suggested that the killing is more likely to have occurred in the mid-1840s, after the island's minister, Rev. Neil Mackenzie, had departed from Hirta (St Kilda's main and only permanently habitable island) in the late spring/early summer of 1844. Mackenzie was very interested in birds; it is hard to believe that he would not have recorded such an ornithologically significant happening, either in his notes and diary[3] or indirectly, in conversation with visitors arriving in 1840 or 1841 whose accounts have been preserved or published.[4] More recently, Love has pointed to a note

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[1] Errol Fuller, *The Great Auk* (privately printed, 1999), 75–6; John A. Love, *A Natural History of St Kilda* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2009), 127–30.

[2] J. A. Harvie-Brown and Thomas Edward Buckley, *A Vertebrate Fauna of the Outer Hebrides* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1888), 158–60.

[3] later partially published; cf. Neil Mackenzie, 'Notes on the Birds of St Kilda", in *Annals of Scottish Natural History* 14 (1905), 75–80; and J. B. Mackenzie (ed.), *Episode in the Life of Neil Mackenzie, at St Kilda from 1829 to 1843* (privately printed, 1911).

[4] Love, *A Natural History*, 129.

made by the folklorist Alexander Carmichael which dates the auk killing to 'about 1847', which Carmichael later amended to '1848'.[5] Love noted that one of the named participants in the killing, Malcolm MacDonald, apparently died in October 1846, which led him to suggest a date in the summer of 1846.[6] However, noting that there was more than one Malcolm MacDonald on Hirta in 1846, and that there was a summer storm in July 1848, he tells me that he now prefers the 1848 date.[7] His basic point is that the killing occurred after 1844, and thus *after* the killing, in Iceland, of the supposedly 'last' great auks on the planet.[8]

The story as summarised above was first published by Harvie-Brown and Buckley in 1888. It was based on information supplied to Professor Alfred Newton, ornithologist and Professor of Comparative Anatomy at Cambridge University, by Henry Evans, an English banker and naturalist from Darley Abbey in Derbyshire, who regularly sailed his yacht in the Hebrides and visited St Kilda several times. In the 1870s and 1880s the main informant was evidently Lachlan McKinnon (1808–95), one of the auk-killers. By the summer of 1880 another man involved in the Stac an Armin killing, Donald McQueen (1804–80), had lost all memory of the incident,[9] though the previous summer he had been very much *compos mentis*.[10]

Other versions

There are, however, two other previously unrecognised stories. Story 2, which I will call the 'parliament' story, appeared in several newspapers in March 1898.[11] It came from Kenneth Campbell, who had been the schoolteacher on Hirta in 1884–5; in 1898 he was a doctor practising in Oban. According to Campbell, as reported:

> [A]bout fifty years ago a strange bird was seen one day on St Kilda. It was agreed to try and catch it, as, though it had an enormous beak, it seemed to have very small wings. Several of the natives, who were adepts at bird-stalking, managed to get so near the strange monster that they threw themselves on the bird, and, after a successful struggle, were successful at capturing it alive. 'When the huge bird was taken to the township, the "Island Parliament" was assembled to deliberate on the strange visitor, and it was agreed to tie its legs securely with strong cords, and to tether it for the night to a stout pin fixed in the ground near the houses, and to decide its fate next day. On the morrow the Parliament was called very early, as the bird had made such hideous noises during the night that hardly anybody could sleep. The bird was undoubtedly considered an evil emissary. After serious consideration the verdict was given to have the vile bird stoned to death, and the sentence was at once carried out.

To their chagrin, the islanders were told 'months later' that the bird's carcass would have been worth £300–400 if they had preserved it; some of them then started to search for its bones. In the 'parliament' story, then, both the decision to tether the bird and the later decision to kill it were taken by the men's assembly; details were given of how it was kept tethered for only one night, and then stoned to death.

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[5] John A. Love, 'The Last Great Auk?' in *Scottish Birds* 31, no. 4 (2011), 346; and 'St Kilda's claim to the last ever great auk', in *Hebridean Naturalist* 19 (2019), 19–26.

[6] Bill Lawson, *Croft History: Isle of St Kilda* (Northton, Isle of Harris: Bill Lawson Publications, 1993), 29.

[7] *Personal communication,* 8 August 2021.

[8] Recounted in Fuller, *The Great Auk,* 80–85; and Love, *A Natural History*, 130–1.

[9] L. W. Rennison, 'A Visit to St Kilda', *Alloa Advertiser*, 5 February 1881.

[10] 'St Kilda: the place and the people: Part III', *Greenock Advertiser* 5 July 1879.

[11] 'The last great auk', *Westminster Gazette* 7 March 1898; 'The last great auk', *Dundee Evening Telegraph* and others, 8 March 1898. For several similar articles on the same topic, search the British Newspaper Archive, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/.

Story 3, which combines the key elements of Stories 1 and 2, was published on 21 August 1890 in a letter written by 'Hirst', of Oban, to *The North British Daily Mail*. Its publication was probably induced by a report of a great auk sighting on Soay (St Kilda) published three weeks earlier in the same newspaper.[12] It is quite likely that 'Hirst' was the pseudonym of Kenneth Campbell, and that the name plays on the pronunciation of *Hiort* (Hirta) by Gaelic speakers. 'Hirst' wrote:

> [O]ne of the keen-sighted cragsmen directed his comrades' attention to an object high up on the stack….after a bit of careful stalking they got near enough to see that it was a very large bird, and fast asleep. Two were upon it in an instant, and after a struggle, fiercer than they had bargained for, it became their defiant prisoner. Carried back to St Kilda in triumph, it was tethered in a small enclosure behind one of the cottages, there to spend the night. All night long the village resounded with its wild, hoarse, despairing cries. The St Kildans, who are exceedingly superstitious, were terrified. Could it be that something uncanny had visited them? They had heard from their fathers of a very large bird, possessed of very small wings. But did it roar like that? Satan was as powerful and vindictive as ever…what more likely than that he should visit them in the form of a sea-bird?

The 'so-called Parliament' met the following morning. 'What was to be done with the wingless though feathered monster? The St Kildans are courageous, and know their Bibles well. "Kill it" was the verdict. With sticks and stones they set upon it… keen was the St Kildans' disappointment when told some time after that they might have been £200 richer'.

Story 3 was also recorded by Alexander Carmichael, and is quoted in detail by Love.[13] Carmichael visited St Kilda in 1865 and 1878. That his record dates by implication from c. 1887 is not necessarily anomalous; anywhere on his travels he could have encountered a St Kildan or someone who knew a St Kildan. Carmichael places the auk killing on Stac Li rather than Stac an Armin, which is a physical impossibility for a flightless bird; this does not inspire confidence. Apparently 'they brought it home but did not know what bird it was, what to do with it nor what to make of the bird'. What followed does not essentially differ from the newspaper account quoted above, although it adds detail to the account of the killing:

> Every man in the community set upon the poor bird with sticks and stones and staves and attacked him till he was dead. And as the bird took a deal of killing the people were the more confirmed that he was possessed of a demon and they belaboured him accordingly. The body of the bird was then thrown to the dogs of the village and torn asunder by dogs and children.

The killing of the 'last' great auk is a profoundly depressing tale, especially heard from the vantage point of the early twenty-first century. What happened was hardly in keeping with the finer instincts of late Victorian Christianity, and it is hard to believe that the islanders enjoyed telling the tale to visiting naturalists, especially after they saw how they reacted. It may well be that they talked about the demise of the great auk only occasionally and with reluctance.

Context: ritual killing
Before discussion of the relationship between the three stories, the historical context requires further explanation. Rev. Neil Mackenzie's ministry lasted fourteen years, from 1830 to 1844. His writings demonstrate that he was in many respects a rational man, possessing considerable intellectual and scientific curiosity, and very interested in birds; in the early years at least, he accompanied the islanders on some of their fowling expeditions, and 'did not hesitate to go with them into what they

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[12] See the Appendix to this article, below.
[13] Love, 'The Last Great Auk?', 346, and 'St Kilda's claim', 345.

considered the most dangerous places'.[14] He believed that his preaching and teaching had a beneficial effect on the islanders' morality and behaviour. However, he did not consider himself truly successful as a preacher until he broke through to them on a deeper emotional level, an effect which he first achieved in 1841.[15] According to Mackenzie:

> [T]he whole congregation became so agitated that they could not restrain themselves. The noise became so great that I could not be heard; some cried with vehement energy, some fainted, others sobbed…. the tears were not in drops, but in copious streams down their cheeks….our evening and Monday meeting were of similar cast. This state of things continues unabated to the present time. Many a troubled meeting we had during the season…the general cast of them was weeping aloud, crying for mercy with such pathos and energy as beggars description – women frequently fainting, some rolling themselves along the floor….

Mackenzie was scientifically curious about the effects he had created, seeking a detailed account from 'a very intelligent man' – who told him that the experience was 'highly disagreeable'.[16]

By 1844, Satan would have been firmly installed in the islanders' pantheon, as it were, of the forces of darkness. The emotional tenor of their experiences in church must have reinforced the St Kildans' belief in the power and ineffability of supernatural forces. After his departure in that year, Mackenzie was no longer available to dispel his flock's darker thoughts by deploying Christian teaching or his version of rationality. If a live auk had appeared on Hirta during his time there, we may be sure that his ornithological interest would have prevailed over the islanders' witch-finding instincts. After he left, in the wake of the Disruption of 1843, the Established and the Free churches tussled for nine years for control on Hirta.[17] Their efforts resulted in sectarian strife, which culminated in the demographically disastrous emigration to Australia of one-third of the island's population in 1852. The mixture of island politics and sectarian dissension had proved toxic. Given this background, it should come as no surprise that sometime between 1856 and 1863 the islanders apparently wanted a woman put on trial for witchcraft. Their catechist, Duncan Kennedy, took no action.[18]

Among the islanders, the fairly recent arrival of an intense and uncompromising version of Christianity had by no means fully displaced older concepts of the supernatural and ways of counteracting its malign forces. This particular case of avicide was evidently a ritual killing. Why did people bother to capture the bird, and after they had done so, why did they not simply let it go? In the Stac an Armin story, why did they not kill the bird in a normal way, rather than beating it to death with sticks, or alternatively (the question is unresolved) taking an hour – presumably an exaggeration – to crush it between stones? Surely they could simply have broken or wrung its neck, like the men who killed the 'last' pair of auks on Eldey in Iceland?[19] On Hirta, teenage girls were accustomed to killing dozens of puffins every year with their bare hands. In the 'parliament' and composite stories, the killing of the auk was evidently done by *several* persons (which was also unnecessary in practical terms). The parliament story mentions death by stoning; the composite story mentions sticks, stones and staves; the Stac an Armin story mentions both that it was killed with a stick and that it was crushed between two stones.[20] It may be worth noting that a female great auk was apparently stoned to death on Papa Westray in Orkney not long before 1812, though conceivably this was done for 'fun'.[21]

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[14] N. Mackenzie, 'Notes on the Birds of St Kilda', 75.

[15] J. B. Mackenzie, *An Episode*, 32–8; 'Revival in St Kilda', *The Witness* (Edinburgh), 29 July 1843.

[16] Both quotes Anon, 'Revival'.

[17] Michael Robson, *St Kilda: Church, Visitors and 'Natives'* (Port of Ness, Isle of Lewis: Islands Book Trust, 2005), 385–411.

[18] J. Sands, 'The witch finder', *Glasgow Herald,* 13 November 1885.

[19] Fuller, *The Great Auk*, 82

[20] Love, *A Natural History*, 128.

[21] Love, *A Natural History*, 125.

In the St Kilda case it seems to have been important that the killing was a collective action, and that it was a long drawn-out affair, as the auk, being possessed by demonic forces, would naturally be hard to kill. It appears that the despatch of a witch demanded not only a special form of killing but also a 'twofold' death, analogous to the 'threefold killing' (stabbing, strangling, and a knock on the head) inflicted on some late prehistoric victims who became 'bog bodies', such as 'Lindow Man'.[22] Such killings may be categorised as comprehensive, holistic or emphatic killings. In this context it may be noted that in England the practice of hanging, drawing and quartering lasted into the 1780s, with the last hanging plus beheading occurring in 1820. The last *sentence* of hanging, drawing and quartering was handed down in 1839, though it was commuted. The punishment remained on the statute book until 1870.[23]

Eighty years before the religious revival, Kenneth Macaulay recorded the islanders' hatred of great black-backed gulls, and their strenuous efforts to catch them, which he described as 'a task far from being easy'.[24] A captured bird had its eyes plucked out and its wings sewn together before being cast into the sea. This was a twofold mutilation; either of the prescribed actions would have been enough to ensure the death of the gull, which in any case could have been dispatched more quickly and efficiently by other means. The islanders would also delicately extract the content of the gulls' eggs and then return them to their nests, so that the parent birds would waste their efforts sitting on them before 'pining away', as Macaulay put it. (The egg-blowing technique must have been later put to good use, indeed monetised, when visiting naturalists required samples of eggs). Although the eggs of the black-backed gull were 'among the largest and best' locally available, it was strictly taboo to eat them. The treatment of these birds clearly went beyond mundane pest control or occasional gratuitous cruelty; these were ritual killings.

The 'parliament' version recalls an episode which apparently took place sometime before the arrival of Mackenzie, whose promotion of a confessional atmosphere in the early 1840s was probably responsible for its coming to light. A woman, an outsider who had married into the community, was suspected of being the laird's spy, and consequently strangled with a loop of rope around her neck. The rope was wielded by 'all the men', and the important point is that the people took collective responsibility for the decision and for the deed, as well as for keeping quiet about it.[25] Sentencing a great auk to death by stoning would provide precisely the kind of long drawn-out event in which everyone present evidently had the opportunity, and perhaps the duty, to participate, sharing an infectious bloodlust and also demonstrating the community's celebrated solidarity. As Martin Martin wrote after his visit, 'the voice of one is the voice of all'.[26]

Context: credibility and storytelling

The Stac an Armin story has been taken to be an account of a real historical event. What are we to make of *three* great auk stories? After the inauguration of the summer steamship service in 1877, naturalists visited the archipelago in much greater numbers than previously. Knowledgeable visitors may well have been asking about the great auk, perhaps showing the islanders pictures in their bird books; some St Kildans may have been tempted to make stories up. It is worth noting, however, that stories commonly told on Hirta were not private property, even if some self-evidently derived from the creativity of a particular individual. Several tales were duplicates of those told elsewhere (Harman 1997, 230). The oral transmission of history was firmly rooted in the community. In 1892, the Rev.

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[22] I. M. Stead, J. Bourke and D. Brothwell, *Lindow Man: The Body in the Bog* (London and Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

[23] *Wikipedia*, 'Hanged, drawn and quartered', https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanged_drawn_and_quartered.

[24] Kenneth Macaulay, *The History of St Kilda* (Edinburgh: James Thin, [1764] 1974), 158–9.

[25] J. B. Mackenzie, *An Episode*, 30

[26] Martin Martin, *A Voyage to St Kilda* (Edinburgh: James Thin, [1698] 1986), 38

Angus Fiddes, minister of St Kilda 1890–1902, described 'an established institution of old standing':[27]

> at the close of the harvest season generally each family has its "love feast" to which the nearest of kin are invited, when both apartments of the dwelling are filled – the men in one and the women in the other. The tables are spread with all the luscious varieties that these islands can produce of the fruits of the field. While willing hands are serving round goblets of wine from the teaplant, conversation flows freely on the days of yore. In this way we spread the close of the harvest evening until all the houses are gone over. On these occasions the old men repeat the traditions of their ancestors in the hearing of the youthful portion of the community, and by these means the feats of bravery and heroism on sea and land, with the unwritten history of bygone ages, are handed down from sire to son.

The oral transmission of history was thus in essence a communal tradition, and questions of accuracy and veracity would certainly have come under scrutiny in the wake of such occasions. As Bill Lawson's genealogical work demonstrates, quite a few islanders born in the first couple of decades of the nineteenth century, who would have been in the prime of life in the 1840s, were still alive in the 1880s, able to tell stories or critique them.[28] Although the great auk killing hardly showed the islanders in the most Christian light, some visitors *were* told about it, even if perhaps rather shamefacedly.

Of the three tales, the Stac an Armin story is most convincing as an account of a historical event. It contains quite a lot of circumstantial detail – the spotting of the bird from far away, the frequent snapping of its bill, the worsening weather which sealed its fate, the mode(s) of killing and the disposal of the carcass. The tale has survived naturalists' scrutiny of the great auk's known habits and of the physiography of Stac an Armin: this was a flightless bird, awkward on land, first seen halfway up the stack. It shows the islanders in a relatively creditable light, attributing the 'superstitious' killing to a small group of men, rather than to a collective decision made in the name of the community.

What of the 'parliament' story? This account makes no mention of Stac an Armin, merely stating that the bird was 'seen on St Kilda' and that it was 'taken to the township'. But it does contain circumstantial detail, mentioning the cries of the bird which robbed people of a good night's sleep, the two decisions of the 'parliament', details of the tethering of the bird, and its unnatural stoning. It should also be noted that it was Hirta, rather than Stac an Armin, which could – and evidently once did – supply territory suitable for the flightless great auks to establish one or more breeding colonies. In 1900 Norman Heathcote was told that a rock where the garefowl used to breed was still called 'the rock of the garefowl'; Henry Evans placed this rock at the mouth of *Loch a' Glinnhe* ('Glen Bay'), where the bare rock surface, although highly vulnerable to human predation, would have seemed a promising colony site for the birds.[29] The map of Hirta marks more than one shingle beach (*mol*) which might once have served such a purpose.

Kenneth Campbell, the teacher to whom Story 2 was told, was described as 'very intelligent and obliging'.[30] He spent the best part of a year (1884–5) on Hirta. Campbell was a Gaelic speaker, so nothing in the story would have been lost in translation. By contrast, Henry Evans, seemingly the most prominent collector of great auk stories, was an occasional visitor, albeit one who developed a good relationship with the islanders.[31] Evans had an estate on Jura, and a large steam yacht on which

[27] Rev. [A.] Fiddes, 'St Kilda and its wants', *North British Daily Mail* 1 August 1892.

[28] Lawson, *Croft History*.

[29] see Love, *A Natural History*, 133 for sources.

[30] Bailie Ross, 'St Kilda or Hirt: No II: scenery and people', *Northern Chronicle* 7 January 1885.

[31] Harvie-Brown and Buckley, *A Vertebrate Fauna*, 88.

he spent two or three months in the summer.[32] His stays at St Kilda were relatively short, however, and he would have needed a translator.

So, did the killing of the great auk take place on Stac an Armin or on Hirta? It might be thought that this question could be resolved to general satisfaction by accepting Story 3 – the composite story, in which the bird is found on Stac an Armin and killed on Hirta by parliamentary decree. However, Story 3 adds almost no extra circumstantial detail to its predecessors. We hear nothing of what should have been a dramatic part of the tale – the transport of the large bird across four miles of open sea. Was it tethered in the (presumably loaded) boat with four or five men, and perhaps a hoisted sail, or did they tie a rope to its leg and tow it? It needs to be remembered that events which took place at Village Bay were usually witnessed by the entire population, apart from those who might have been in Gleann Mór or on outlying stacks and islands at the time. If no auk killing had taken place in Hirta at the behest of the men's assembly, stories to that effect would have been swiftly discredited if aired in public – especially if the Stac an Armin version was already in circulation. On the other hand, if the killing *did* take place on Hirta, such an event would have been lodged firmly in the memories of several dozen people; a couple of old men claiming to have been on Stac an Armin when the killing actually took place could hardly have contradicted them successfully. At first sight, one might imagine that the composite story is the 'original' one, which, over forty years or so, developed two different versions. However, it seems more likely to be a blend, created by someone who knew both stories and sought to resolve the differences between them. Its airing in 1890 – or perhaps a little earlier if one accepts the implied date of Carmichael's note ('about 40 years ago or so say about 1848') – does demonstrate that the 'parliament' element of the story was established within Hirta's oral tradition by the late 1880s.

What if one of the two main stories is true, and the other one false? If the story that the auk was killed on Stac an Armin by a small party of fowlers is the correct one, could the 'parliament' story have been invented in order to transfer responsibility for the deed to the community as a whole? This seems an unlikely initiative for a late-nineteenth-century Christian community which came under the regular critical scrutiny of respectable tourists. What if the parliament story is the true one? In that case one would have to ask why Lachlan McKinnon and Donald McQueen colluded in claiming responsibility for the killing by telling Story 1, which would have been repellent to visitors and, if untrue, contradicted by any islanders who heard of it. This might, of course, have been a story told only to the most inquisitive naturalists. It may have been financially rewarding to tell such tales to visitors, presumably through a translator. But why would these old men have agreed to lie about the circumstances of the killing? Is it really likely that they were mandated by the community to take the blame for the incident?

One may readily envisage circumstances in which no single enquirer acquired full and accurate historical information. At the Gaelic/English interface there might have been misunderstanding or mistranslation. Furthermore, most visiting naturalists had other things to do on their short stays than enquire after extinct birds: they had observations to make, eggs or bird-skins to acquire, and birds to shoot. Likewise, the local people had more financially rewarding things to sell than stories. And as already noted, auk-killing stories did not show the islanders in a good light, especially among naturalists; they would hardly have been eagerly volunteered. As the St Kilda literature and contemporary newspapers make clear, the people preferred to tell stories about the exploits of historical personages, fairies and quasi-mythological figures. If stories of the great auk killing/s were told infrequently, it is entirely conceivable that no outsider ever heard more than one version – except possibly Kenneth Campbell, who, as we have seen, promulgated Story 2 and quite possibly Story 3 as well. Evidently Campbell either did not know the full version of Story 1, or chose to ignore it. In any event, it is quite likely that the first non-St Kildan to debate the historical veracity of these differing stories is the author of this article.

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[32] 'Obituary: Mr Henry Evans, Darley Abbey', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* 28 July 1904.

Discussion and conclusion

There is one solution to the conundrum described above which avoids many of the difficulties noted. What if there were *two* great auks - one killed on Stac an Armin and the other on Hirta, not necessarily in the same year? There would then be two stories – 'Stac an Armin' and 'parliament', respectively more credible for circumstantial detail and source respectability. Neither story would have been told frequently enough for outsiders to have subjected it to contentious comparison with its alternative. The fact that there is no record of dissension among the St Kildans themselves over the veracity of the stories may suggest that *both* were accepted as true. If so, the islanders would have been relaxed about hearing or telling Story 3, the blend.

If there were two birds, would they have been a pair, or two unrelated individuals? Professor Tim Birkhead tells me that 'it is EXTREMELY unlikely that a pair of birds (i.e. those that are bonded) would occur at different sites during the same breeding season. Two "unbonded" birds could occur at two different locations, but two unbonded birds seems a bit unlikely at a time when Great Auks were so scarce generally'.[33] However, the Stac an Armin killing took place in July, after the breeding season. It is a matter for conjecture how frequently and in what circumstances garefowl would have been seen during the period when the species was close to extinction. In 1812, visitors to Papa Westray in Orkney were told that for many years a single male bird had visited the island.[34] In considering such matters, the longevity of these birds must also be noted.

If some St Kildans knew that *two* killings had taken place, one on Stac an Armin and the other on Hirta, why hasn't a 'double killing' story survived? The answer to this question may be that not many naturalists visited St Kilda before the regular steamship service commenced in 1877 – after which they did turn up in numbers, soon 'discovering' the St Kilda wren[35] and the St Kilda mouse. Great auk stories, then, were probably not much *sought* until something like thirty or forty years after the killing/s took place. By that time, the Free Church version of Christianity had grown deeper roots; discreditable stories would hardly have been eagerly volunteered or openly discussed in an atmosphere of dispassionate historical enquiry. Indeed, enquiries may have been resisted or deflected, especially during the ministry of Rev. John Mackay (1865–89), who was regularly described as interpreting his role in a despotic or controlling fashion. It is possible that Donald McQueen's amnesia in 1880, noted earlier, may have been influenced by the minister's attitude. In such circumstances, a naturalist might have been fortunate to find out anything much on this topic.

It is quite possible that two auks were present in the archipelago in the mid 1840s. The suggestion that both birds were ritually killed has wider implications. The notion might seem surprising, given that in 1821 a great auk captured on a ledge on the east side of Hirta (perhaps near the shingle beach *Mol Ghiasgeir*) was sold for 10 shillings to the tacksman.[36] Knowing that the bird was greatly prized by ornithologists, and worth a good deal of money, should not senior members of the community have taken a more clear-headed and materialistic approach twenty years later?

Neil Mackenzie had been working hard, in pulpit and classroom. Nevertheless, it should be recalled that in the mid-1840s the islanders had had their purpose-built church and evangelical minister for only a decade and a half (from 1830; Mackenzie left in 1844). The twenty or so people over the age of forty-five at this time had spent their formative years under the ministry of Lachlan MacLeod, who had inherited the post from his father; the office had been held in the family since 1741. Lachlan was described as 'a pleasantish, flattering, weak man' who apparently liked to play the fiddle, took snuff, smoked tobacco and drank heavily. He spent a good deal of time away from Hirta, trying to secure better pay and accommodation. Eventually, MacLeod's employers, the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), pointedly invited him to attend a

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[33] Tim Birkhead, personal communication, 28 July 2021; his emphasis.
[34] Love, *A Natural History*, 125
[35] Love, *A Natural History*, 186
[36] Love, *A Natural History*, 127; Anon, 'St Kilda', *Glasgow Evening Citizen* 4 May 1881

refresher course – an opportunity which he did not accept. They then pressed for his retirement, though he didn't formally resign until March 1822.[37] During the 1820s, John MacDonald, the 'Apostle of the North', conducted a series of missions to St Kilda, which formed a prelude to Neil Mackenzie's arrival in 1830. By the later years of Mackenzie's ministry, Christianity had made impressive progress on Hirta. However, its roots were evidently shallower than its promoters hoped.

It is not known when the first colony of great auks became established at St Kilda, or when humans started to exploit these birds. It seems that for a long time the islanders limited their predation in order to ensure the colony's survival. This self-restraint presumably included a time, probably in the Middle Ages, when they were apparently land-hungry enough to construct a field system, with a recognisable head dyke, on the steep slopes of the island of Boreray.[38] The 'Robert Sibbald manuscript' mentions garefowl oil as 'none of the meanest' of St Kilda's exports,[39] whilst Martin's description of the bird says nothing which implies that it was not a regular member of St Kilda's avifauna.[40] A preserved song mentions the auk and the gannet together, both as harbingers of spring and as desirable presents for a woman to receive from a suitor or husband.[41] Presumably such a song was composed or set in a time well before the disastrous epidemic of c. 1727, after which the diminished Hirta population was augmented by the settlement of people from Skye and other parts of the Western Isles.

Available information suggests, then, that a St Kilda garefowl colony still existed in the late seventeenth century, presumably in a diminished state. The first half of the eighteenth century evidently saw its extinction. Few if any of the new colonists of c. 1730 would have seen a garefowl; by the early nineteenth century the bird would have been a folk memory. Anyone who saw it would have been startled and puzzled; even if they identified it correctly, it would still have been an anomalous bird, whose presence required interpretation. The ambiguous status of the great auk in decline is reflected in the life experience of Donald McQueen (1804-1880) who in 1821 was a member of the party which captured an auk on the east side of Hirta and sold it to the factor, who in turn gave it to two men who intended and attempted (unsuccessfully) to preserve the bird for science.[42] In middle age, the same man took part in the Stac an Armin killing. McQueen was thus implicated in two very different responses to a garefowl sighting.

This is not the place for an inexpert survey of the anthropological and historical literature on witchcraft and ritual killing. The St Kilda literature itself says little about witchcraft. However, this near-silence is almost certainly deceptive. Witchcraft-related practices are not the kind of phenomena which visitors would normally encounter. Such matters were probably concealed from men of the cloth, who may well in any case have chosen to look the other way, being preoccupied with other explorations of spirituality; they would not have wished to draw attention to the continuing existence of 'superstitious' practices on their watch. Under Lachlan MacLeod's regime – and after Neil Mackenzie's departure – traditions and beliefs around witchcraft must have gone largely unchecked. They may indeed have flourished after Mackenzie left, with organised Christianity facing an uncertain future and sectarian tensions rising. In this context, the ritual killing of a great auk (or auks) may seem not so much reprehensible as cathartic.

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[37] For an account of MacLeod, see Robson, *St Kilda*, 231–57

[38] Angela Gannon and George Geddes, *St Kilda: The Last and Outmost Isle* (Edinburgh: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, 2015), 63-4

[39] quoted by Fuller, *The Great Auk*, 44

[40] Martin, *A Voyage to St Kilda,* 27

[41] Mary Harman, *An Isle called Hirta: History and Culture of the St Kildans to 1930* (Waternish, Isle of Skye: Maclean Press, 1997), 241

[42] Love, *A Natural History*, 125–6

Appendix

It is worth noting a series of articles relevant to this discussion which appeared in the popular press in July and August, 1890.

First, an article from the *North British Daily Mail*, published 30 July 1890, reported that during the previous May a sheep-shearing party on the island of Soay (St Kilda) had disturbed a pair of large birds by their shouts and the barking of their dogs. The birds eluded their grasp, and 'made for the sea, taking a northerly course'. Apparently two men who had taken part in the killing on Stac an Armin said that the birds answered 'in every respect' to the one which they had killed on that stack. The St Kildans said they had never seen such a large bird before, but having compared it with a picture of the garefowl in their possession, were 'persuaded that these were a pair of the same species'. The newspaper's correspondent, writing under the *nom de plume* 'One of Mother Carey's Chickens', discussed the precipitousness of the places where the auk was seen, both on Stac an Armin and on Soay, and concluded that the great auk could not, after all, have been flightless. He challenged 'Nether Lochaber' (the pseudonym of Dr Alexander Stewart, a respected scholar and minister of Ballachulish) to respond.[43]

Two days later, on 2 August 1890, the same paper published Stewart's response.[44] He evidently read the account carelessly, for he mentioned only 'the pair of birds recently seen on *Stac an Armin* by the St Kildians' [my italics]. Stewart suggested that, since the great auk was flightless, and could not have managed to reach such a precipitous site, the birds must have been great northern divers.

On 9 August 1890 an interview with The Rev. Angus Fiddes, minister of St Kilda, who had been a member of the May sheep-shearing party on Soay, was published in *The Northern Scot and Moray and Nairn Express*. He described how

> we came across a pair of birds which answered in every respect to the description given in the text book and otherwise. The men viewed them from a distance of 100 yards. The male bird was black on the back; the other of a dark grey colour. They both had a small white spot upon the neck, with breasts all white. Their bills and feet were of a darker colour. These we could not see so well, as they frequently kept them hidden in their feathery breasts or the long grass in front of them. …this pair were larger than any living person had seen before, and on comparing them with pictures of the gairfoul in their possession, they are fully persuaded that these were a pair of the same species. As near as they could reckon they were about the size of a Soa lamb….The pair we had seen escaped falling into our hand by means of their powers of flight. Therefore this fact of itself disproves the theory of the naturalists that the gairfoul cannot fly.[45]

The final story connected with these events appeared on 21 August 1890, when *The North British Daily Mail* publishes Story 3 (see above), in the form of a letter from 'Hirst' of Oban.

Although the descriptions of the 'flight' of the birds seen on Soay leaves a great deal to be desired, the fact that the encounter was held to disprove the great auk's flightlessness suggests that they were probably not great auks. Could they have been great northern divers? Love writes that 'Newton has convincingly argued that the bird [on Stac an Armin in the 1840s] could not have been a great northern

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[43] One of Mother Carey's Chickens [pseud.], 'Notes on St Kilda: The Great Auk or Gairfowl', *North British Daily Mail,* 30 July 1890.

[44] Nether Lochaber [Dr Alexander Stewart], 'The gairfowl or great auk at St Kilda', *North British Daily Mail* 2, August 1890.

[45] 'Affairs of St Kilda: a chat with the minister of the island', *The Northern Scot and Moray and Nairn Express,* 9 August 1890. As this interview, as transcribed, uses some of the same wording to describe the Soay sighting as was used in the article by 'One of Mother Carey's Chickens' ten days earlier, we may speculate that either the Rev. Fiddes was the pseudonymous author of the first article, or that the interviewer made use of that article in writing the follow-up story. Such practices were common in the nineteenth century.

diver, which just would not be capable of landing on such a rocky shore let alone moving up the slope'.[46] Would the same argument apply to the sighting on Soay, where the birds were apparently seen in long grass? On the other hand, Charles Dixon, writing in 1885, evidently believed that great northern divers had been mistaken for great auks more than once.[47]

Both the capacity and the propensity of great auks to scramble up steep slopes seem to be matters of surmise. Love cites the ornithologist Stuart Murray who has landed several times on Stac an Armin and who 'knowing the capacity of some penguins such as rock-hoppers, reckons that great auks were just as nimble'.[48] There is, of course, a risk of circular argument here. However, in the context of this possible sighting it may be noted that there was a 'ledge' on Soay which was also named after garefowl and associated with its breeding there.[49] In the St Kilda literature, then, 'ledges' (rather than shingle beaches) are associated with garefowl three or four times – which may provide confirmation of the bird's hopping or scrambling capabilities and affect our estimate of the credibility of the Stac an Armin and Soay sightings.

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[46] Love, *A Natural History*, 129.
[47] Love, *A Natural History*, 129.
[48] Love, 'The Last Great Auk?', 346.
[49] Love, *A Natural History*, 133.

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Bàrdachd Baile – Ath-mheasadh

IAIN G. HOWIESON

Abstract

In the twentieth century, some Gaelic scholars held the view that "bàrdachd baile" (often called "township poetry") of the nineteenth century was of limited literary merit, and in particular that it was full of cliché. However, these scholars tended not to support such opinions with detailed analysis.

In this article, a representative sample of the poetry is considered from two points of view. Firstly, a close analysis shows the range of literary techniques which are used to convey meaning and sentiment. Secondly – and perhaps more importantly – the argument is made that expressions which some have considered to be no more than clichés are in fact vital to the effect of the poetry. This argument is illuminated by an understanding of thoughts from the field of ethnopoetics, and by a detailed consideration of the imagery used.

The aim of the author is to show the sort of criteria which should be applied in an evaluation of this type of poetry, composed as it was by people who grew up in a society in which the oral tradition was still strong.

Anns an fhicheadamh linn, bha cuid de sgoilearan litreachas na Gàidhlig den bheachd nach robh mòran luach ann am bàrdachd baile, agus gu h-àraidh gun robh cus *cliché*an innte, ach cha do dh'fhoillsich iad mòran sgrùdaidh a bhiodh a' dearbhadh an cuid bhreithneachaidhean le fianais.

Gus eisimpleirean den bheachd a bh' aig na sgoilearan sin fhaicinn, 's fhiach coimhead air saothair nam bàrd a dh'ainmicheas Ruaraidh MacThòmais[1] ann an *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*, is iad an fheadhainn a chruthaich "the staple verse of the nineteenth century",[2] .i. Iain MacLachlainn, Eòghann MacColla, Iain Caimbeul, Dòmhnall MacEacharn, Calum MacPhàrlain, Niall MacLeòid agus Iain MacPhàidein. San alt seo, cuirear riutha triùir a bharrachd air adhbharan a thèid air ais chun an aon leabhair: Iain MacGill-Eain, a chruthaich bàrdachd a tha "similar", a rèir MhicThòmais, ach nach do dh'fhàg an t-eilean far an do rugadh agus an do thogadh e;[3] Màiri Mhòr nan Òran, mar as fheàrr as aithne i, air an dèan MacThòmais iomradh mar "[a] poet of note" san linn sin;[4] agus Ailean ("An Rids") Dòmhnallach, a chaidh a thaghadh air sgàth 's gun do rinn e às-imrich a dh'Alba Nuaidh, far an robh "occasional new themes suggested by the new environment, but no new voice or style" ann am beachd MhicThòmais.[5]

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[1] Seallar spèis mar bu chòir do Ruaraidh MacThòmais: rugadh e ann an Steòrnabhagh ann an 1921 agus bha Gàidhlig aige bhon ghlùin. Bha athair, Seumas, ri sgrìobhadh agus ri bàrdachd, agus bha e gu mòr an sàs ann am foghlam Gàidhlig aig ìre àrd-sgoile. Fhuair Ruaraidh fhèin dreuchd ann am foghlam cuideachd, agus bha e ag obair ann an oilthighean Dhùn Èideann, Obar Dheathain agus Ghlaschu, far an do thòisich e mar àrd-ollamh na Ceiltis ann an 1963. Ron àm sin, bha e air an iris bhuadhmhor *Gairm* a stèidheachadh agus ruith e fad leth-cheud bliadhna i, a' dèiligeadh ri litreachas agus cultar na Gàidhlig. Mar a chanar anns *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* (Derick S. Thomson, *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* [Glasgow: Gairm, 1994],192) "As poet, academic, and father of modern Gaelic publishing, it was widely recognised during the 1960s and 1970s, that he had (in George Campbell Hay's words) 'done more for Scottish Gaelic than any other man living'."

[2] Derick S. Thomson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1974), 223.

[3] Thomson, *Introduction*, 232.

[4] Thomson, *Introduction*, 245.

[5] Thomson, *Introduction*, 221. Chaidh Eòghann MacColla a Chanada cuideachd, ach – eu-coltach ri Ailean an Rids – cha deach mòran den bhàrdachd aige a chaidh fhoillseachadh a dhèanamh san dùthaich ud. Faic Liosta nam Bàrd: Breith agus Bàs, shìos.

Is iad sin an deichnear bhàrd a thig fon phrosbaig san ath-mheasadh seo. A' coimhead air an cuid saothair, nithear meòrachadh air na seòrsaichean breithneachaidh a bhiodh freagarrach, ruigear co-dhùnaidhean, agus seallaidh corra eisimpleir ciamar a dh'obraicheas dlùth-sgrùdadh gus innealan litreachail na bàrdachd a shoilleireachadh.[6]

Beachdan Ruaraidh MhicThòmais air Bàrdachd Baile

Tha Ruaraidh MacThòmais am measg nan sgoilearan ann an saoghal na Gàidhlig a bha den bheachd nach eil mòran luach ann am bàrdachd baile. Chan eil e feumach air mòran fhacal airson a' mhòr-chuid den bhàrdachd a chaidh a dhèanamh san naoidheamh linn deug a chur dhan dàrna taobh.[7] Nì e iomradh air "the simple and unambitious nature of so much of the verse of this period".[8] Cuiridh e a' choire air na h-atharrachaidhean sòisealta a thug air iomadh Gàidheal às-imrich a dhèanamh chun nam bailtean mòra no a-null thairis, agus canaidh e, "All this is reflected in the 'new' Gaelic verse of the nineteenth century, which largely turns its back on its relatively learned, aristocratic tradition, and grovels contentedly in its novel surroundings".[9] Leanaidh e air le iomraidhean air "spurious emotion" agus air an "defect of simulated emotion issuing in sentimentality" a chì e ann an aon dàn, anns nach bi "the emotional experience...deeply imagined".[10] Na bheachd-sa, "a similar perfunctoriness of identification is common in the popular verse of the period". Ar leis gun deach dàn eile a shàbhaladh "from total failure by the vitality of its rhythm and some clarity of observation"[11]. Le moladh suarach, canaidh e gur e "a pretty picture postcard of a song" a th' ann am "Mo Dhachaigh"[12] le Calum MacPhàrlain, agus cleachdaidh e faclan mar "desultory", "inert", "long-winded", "dull" agus "pedestrian" air a' bhàrdachd a rinn Iain MacPhàidein agus Dòmhnall MacEacharn.[13]

Beachdan Dhòmhnaill MhicAmhlaigh air Bàrdachd Baile

San aon dòigh, anns an ro-ràdh aige ann an *Nua-Bhàrdachd Ghàidhlig*, sgrìobhaidh Dòmhnall MacAmhlaigh gun robh "sgìrealas ro-chumhang" agus "claon-fhaireachdainn agus claon-shamhail" aig bàrdachd thradaiseanta, le "crìonadh air so-labhairt", "dìth adhnuachais" agus "marbh-riaghailt".[14] Ann am briathran sìmplidh, 's e beachd MhicAmhlaigh gur ann tuilleadh is gnàthach a tha i, le cus *cliché* innte. Gu mì-fhortanach, cha do lean MacAmhlaigh air le sgrùdadh no mìneachadh a bhiodh a' dearbhadh nam beachdan ud.

Beachdan Eile air Bàrdachd Baile

Bho chionn ghoirid, tha sgoilear no dhà air a bhith na bu dòchasaiche mu bhàrdachd baile. Anns an ro-radh anns *An Tuil*, nì Raghnall MacilleDhuibh coimeas eadar nua-bhàrdachd agus bàrdachd thradaiseanta san fharsaingeachd, gun a bhith a' sealltainn dìmeasa idir air taobh sam bith.[15] Mar an ceudna, nì Dòmhnall Meek iomradh anns an ro-ràdh ann an *Caran an t-Saoghail* air na beachdan a bha air a bhith aig mòran gur e linn caillte gruamach a bh' anns an 19mh linn, le tòrr maoth-fhaireachdainn anns a' bhàrdachd, le cion-fala romansach agus le cus cianalais, a bheireadh air duine

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[6] Airson nan abairtean litreachail a chleachdar sa phròiseas seo, faic Sanas Briathar, shìos.

[7] San alt seo, cha dèanar deasbad mu na ceistean "Dè th' ann am bàrdachd baile?", "Cò na bàird baile?", no "An e tiotal freagarrach a th' ann am 'bàrdachd baile'?"

[8] Thomson, *Introduction*, 223.

[9] Thomson, *Introduction*, 223.

[10] Thomson, *Introduction*, 225.

[11] Thomson, *Introduction*, 225.

[12] Thomson, *Introduction*, 232.

[13] Thomson, *Introduction*, 231.

[14] Dòmhnall MacAmhlaigh, *Nua-bhàrdachd Ghàidhlig* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1995), 20. Bhon a chaidh an leabhar seo fhoillseachadh an toiseach ann an 1976, thug e buaidh air leth air bàrdachd agus air sgoilearachd. B' e fear de na sgoilearan a bu chudromaiche ann an saoghal litreachas na Gàidhlig san fhicheadamh linn a bh' ann an Dòmhnall MacAmhlaigh, cuide ri Somhairle MacGill-Eain agus Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn, cho math ri Ruaraidh MacThòmais. Tha iad uile airidh air spèis mhòir airson na rinn iad.

[15] Ronald Black, *An Tuil* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2002), xliv.

gòmadaich;[16] ach san aon àite canaidh e gun robh cuid air a bhith ro chruaidh air an linn air fad.[17] Ann an alt eile, cuideachd, canaidh e nach eil an dìmeas a th' air a bhith aig corra sgoilear ceart idir.[18]

Tha an t-àm ann airson ath-mheasaidh air bàrdachd baile, ma-thà, agus nithear seo tro dhlùth-sgrùdadh mar a mhìnichear anns na leanas.

Dlùth-sgrùdadh agus Bàrdachd Baile

A thaobh bàrdachd baile, 's e *Òrain Dhòmhnaill Ailein Dhòmhnaill na Bainich* le John Angus Macdonald an leabhar as fheàrr a sheallas na buannachdan a thig à dlùth-sgrùdadh. Anns a' chaibideil "A Critical Assessment", seallaidh an deasaiche gum bi saothair a' bhàird an sàs ann an dualchas a thèid air ais linntean agus a bha a' sìor-fhàs na bu chumanta bho dheireadh an 16mh linn.[19] Às dèidh iomraidh air na cuspairean agus gnèithean a tha rim faicinn innte,[20] tha e a' dol air adhart a dhèanamh sgrùdadh air na feartan bàrdail, le beagan eisimpleirean agus mìneachaidh, is e a-mach air ìomhaigheachd, caractar, aithrisean, gairmeachas, pearsa, tràthan, structair, geàrr-fhaclan, ruitheaman, reim agus eile.[21] Seallaidh seo gu bheil beairteas de dh'innealan litreachail fiù 's ann an saothair a rinn bàrd baile mar Dhòmhnall Ailean Dhòmhnaill na Bainich.

Slatan-tomhais

Ma thèid aontachadh gum b' fhiach dlùth-sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air bàrdachd baile, feumar smaoineachadh air dè na slatan-tomhais a bhiodh iomchaidh don obair. 'S dòcha nach adhbhraichear clisgeadh gun do sgrìobh Calum MacPhàrlain – is e fhèin na bhàrd baile – gum b' fheàrr leis bàrdachd Eòghainn MhicColla agus Iain MhicLachlainn na saothair Alasdair mhic Mhaighstir Alasdair no Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir.[22] Ar leis, gur i an slat-tomhais as cudromaiche cho "taitneach" 's a tha dàn sam bith dhà-san no dhan neach-leughaidh fa leth. Canaidh e, "ciamar a dh'aithnichear deagh bhàrdachd o dhroch bhàrdachd? Is duilich a ràdh. Tha cuid ag ràdh gu 'm bheil bàrdachd math ma ghabhas an sluagh rithe". Leanaidh e air gu bheil, "caochladh bheachd" ann "mu bhàrdachd: chan eil barail sheasmhach oirre", agus tha e den bheachd "gur i a' bhàrdachd is feàrr ann, a' bhàrdachd is feàrr leam-sa".[23]

Cho tràth ri 1985, ann an alt mu dheidhinn bàrdachd Màiri Mhòr, sgrìobhaidh Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn, "[T]ha mi den bheachd gu bheil sinn dualtach air a' Ghàidhealtachd a bhith tomhais ar bàird ann an dòighean ceàrr".[24] Gu mì-fhortanach, chan innis e dè na bu chòir a bhith ann de thomhas. Dh'fhoillsicheadh *An Lasair* ann an 2001, agus anns an ro-ràdh canaidh Raghnall MacilleDhuibh gun robh slatan-tomhais nam Bhictòrianach ceàrr,[25] agus gun robh breithneachadh litreachais a rinn Somhairle MacGill-Eain agus Ruaraidh MacThòmais fo bhuaidh bàird na Beurla, m.e. Eliot agus Auden.[26] A' sgrìobhadh ann an 2003, bha Michel Byrne den bheachd gun robh "corrective to those of us who let the published works of city poets unduly influence our thinking on the nineteenth

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[16] Donald E. Meek, *Caran an t-Saoghail,* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2003), xiv–xvi.

[17] Meek, *Caran an t-Saoghail,* xxxviii.

[18] Donald E. Meek, "Gaelic Literature in the Nineteenth Century", *Passages from Tiree* (blog). 30.03.2013. http://meekwrite.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/nineteenth-century-gaelic-studies.html.

[19] John Angus Macdonald, *Òrain Dhòmhnaill Ailein Dhòmhnaill na Bainich*, (An Gearasdan, Comuinn Eachdraidh nan Eilean mu Dheas, 1999), 277.

[20] Macdonald, *Òrain*, 278–290.

[21] Macdonald, *Òrain,* 284–302.

[22] Calum MacPhàrlain, "Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh", *Guth na Bliadhna* V (1908): 318.

[23] MacPhàrlain, "Bàrdachd", 313–14.

[24] Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn, "Ath-sgrùdadh 10: Bàrdachd Màiri Mhòr nan Òran", *Gairm* 132 (Am Foghar 1985): 326.

[25] Ronald Black, *An Lasair* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), xv–xvi.

[26] Black, *An Lasair*, xvii–xviii.

century" a dhìth.[27] Na alt "Gaelic Literature in the Nineteenth Century", canaidh Dòmhnall Meek gun robh slatan-tomhais ceàrra aig Uilleam MacBhatair, is e den bheachd gun do chleachd e "[a] backwards-extending measuring rod" air bàrdachd an naoidheamh linn deug[28] – ann am faclan eile, gun do dh'fheuch e ri tomhas no measadh a dhèanamh ann an dòigh a fhreagradh do dhàin cho-aimsireil, ach a dh'fhaodadh a bhith mì-iomchaidh don t-saothair a bh' aig bàird a bha beò ginealach no dhà roimhe sin. Agus ann an 2015, ann an lèirmheas spòrsail, canaidh Raghnall MacilleDhuibh, mar gu bheil e ann an èiginn, gu bheil "slat-tomhais a dhìth orm".[29]

Ged a tha cuid air a bhith den bheachd gu bheil feum aig luchd-breithneachaidh air slat-tomhais nas fhreagarraiche do dh'obair measaidh air bàrdachd an naoidheamh linn deug, chan eil aonta air a bhith ann am measg sgoilearan cò ris a bhiodh i coltach. A-rithist, tha rud no dhà aig Calum MacPhàrlain ri ràdh a tha ùidhmhor. Canaidh e, "Cha dean sealltainn air ais a ghnàth an gnothach. Feumaidh sinn bhi 'sealltainn air ais 's air aghaidh agus mun cuairt air a h-uile taobh dhinn".[30] Gun teagamh, tha coltas sìmplidh air seo, ach 's e rabhadh a th' ann gum bu chòir dhan neach-breithneachaidh a bhith fosgailte gu seallaidhean eadar-dhealaichte ris an fheadhainn ris a bheil e cleachdte, gun a bhith ag obair air an aon dòigh anns a h-uile co-theags.

Nas fhaide air adhart san fhicheadamh linn, mhol Dòmhnall Iain MacLeòid a bhith "evaluating on more flexible criteria",[31] agus 's i comhairle Iain MhicAonghuis gum bu chòir sealladh eile a bhith aig neach-breithneachaidh – bho thaobh a-staigh na coimhearsnachd Gàidhlig fhèin.[32] Ann an 2009, sgrìobhaidh Dòmhnall Meek, is e a' dèanamh iomradh air beachdan Ruaraidh MhicThòmais agus Shomhairle MhicGill-Eain: [33]

> Our priority must be to understand each poet on his or her own terms, and to appreciate each one accordingly. That is far more important than the application of a rather juvenile litmus test to determine what is, and what is not, 'good' poetry.

Chithear dlùth-sgrùdadh den leithid ann an obair Iain Mhic a' Phearsain agus, thathas an dòchas, anns na leanas.[34]

Breithneachadh Litreachais san Fharsaingeachd: Gnèithean Breithneachaidh

Chaidh an leabhar cliùiteach aig I. A. Richards (1893–1979), *Principles of Literary Criticism*, fhoillseachadh ann an 1924, agus tron chòrr den linn sin thug e buaidh mhòr air dlùth-leughadh agus dlùth-sgrùdadh litreachais ann an saoghal na Beurla co-dhiù. A bharrachd air Richards fhèin, bhiodh iomadh duine eile ris an obair anns an linn sin – nam measg T. S. Eliot (1888–1965), Cleanth Brooks (1906–94) agus Northrop Frye (1912–91). Mar thoradh air na rinn iadsan agus iomadh sgoilear eile, thàinig tòrr sheòrsaichean sgrùdaidh gu bith. Nam measg, dh'fhàs *New Criticism* gu math cumhachdach ann am meadhan an linn, gu h-àraidh ann an Ameireaga, far an robh Cleanth Brooks agus Northrop Frye gu mòr an sàs ann. Chuir an teòiridh seo sìneadh air dlùth-leughadh, gu sònraichte a thaobh bàrdachd, gus tuigse a ruigsinn air ciamar a dh'obraicheadh dàn sam bith mar phìos ealain fa leth.

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[27] Michel Byrne, Lèirmheas air *Tuath is Tighearna*, le Donald E. Meek. *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XXI, 2003, 279.

[28] M.e. William J. Watson, *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig* (Inbhir Nis: An Comunn Gàidhealach, 1976).

[29] Raghnall MacilleDhuibh, "Sàr bhàrd mara, sàr bhàrd buntàta – agus sàr bhàrd", lèirmheas air *Bàird Ghleann Dail*, le Meg Bateman, anns *The Scotsman*, 18.2.15.

[30] MacPhàrlain, "Bàrdachd", 316.

[31] Donald John MacLeod, "Twentieth Century Gaelic Literature" (Tràchdas PhD, Oilthigh Ghlaschu, 1969), 3.

[32] John MacInnes, "Gaelic Poetry in the Nineteenth Century" in *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes*, deas. Michael Newton, 357–379 (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006), 359.

[33] Donald E. Meek, "The World of William Livingston", ann an *A Land that Lies Westward*, deasaichte le J. Derrick McClure, John M. Kirk agus Margaret Storrie (Edinburgh, John Donald, 2009), 149.

[34] Faic na trì altan aig Mac a' Phearsain anns a' Chlàr-leabhraichean shìos.

Sgrìobh I. A. Richards gum bu chòir don neach-breithneachaidh dòighean-obrach na deuchainn-lainn a chleachdadh, gus co-dhùnaidhean a dhèanamh a ghabhadh dearbhadh no breugnachadh.[35] Seallaidh e fhèin am pròsas sa ann am *Principles of Literary Criticism*, sam bi Caib. 17 "The Analysis of a Poem", gu h-àraidh cuideachail, mar a bhios na ceithir caibideilean a thig às a dèidh, agus a dhèiligeas ri ruitheam, meadarachd, cumadh, ceòl is eile, agus mar as urrainnear an cleachdadh gus sgrùdadh air ciamar a dh'obraicheas dàn àraidh a mhìneachadh.[36] Cuiridh seo cuideam air an luach a thig à breithneachaidhean a tha stèidhichte air fianais, agus gheibhear an fhianais sin à dlùth-sgrùdadh.

Rabhadh

Gidheadh, thig rabhadh bho sgoilear eile mu dheidhinn bhreithneachaidhean. 'S e neach-sgrùdaidh buadhmhor a bh' ann an Northrop Frye, agus bha esan den bheachd nach eil e cho cudromach no cho feumail a bhith a' breithneachadh, no a' meas an luach a tha aig pìos litreachais sam bith, ag ràdh a bheil e math no dona. An àite sin, canaidh e gu bheil e nas fheàrr a bhith a' sgrùdadh litreachas gu dlùth, gus na feartan a tha rim faicinn ann a shealltainn. Ma thachras sin, ann am beachd Frye, bidh cothrom aig an luchd-leughaidh co-dhùnaidhean a dhèanamh dhaibh fhèin. Mar a sgrìobh e ann an *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), "genuine criticism...progresses toward making the whole of literature intelligible", agus cha bhi fìor bhreithneachadh den t-seòrsa sin a' dèiligeadh ri "what belongs only to the history of taste, and therefore follows the vacillations of fashionable prejudice".[37]

Am Pròsas Breithneachaidh

Le sùil air an rabhadh sin, ma-thà, leanaidh a' cheist dè na feartan air am bi luchd-sgrùdaidh litreachas na Beurla a' meòrachadh. A rèir Vincent B. Leitch, mhol Cleanth Brooks, is e an sàs gu mòr ann an *New Criticism*, deich riaghailtean airson dlùth-leughaidh.[38] Seo trì dhiubh sin, le beagan a bharrachd mìneachaidh às an dèidh:

- "Avoid personal emotional response in favour of objectivity." Mar a thuirt Frye, 's fhiach "the vacillations of fashionable prejudice" a sheachnadh. 'S e ciamar a bhios a' bhàrdachd ag obrachadh a tha fa-near dhan alt sa, seach a bhith ga moladh no càineadh a rèir na tha fasanta – san fhicheadamh linn no an-dràsta fhèin.

- "Rule out historical inquiry in preference to stylistic and aesthetic analysis." Chaidh tòrr a sgrìobhadh mar-thà mun eachdraidh a nochdas ann am bàrdachd Ghàidhlig. Nithear sgrùdadh an seo air na feartan a thig còmhla gus stoidhle gach dàin a tha fon phrosbaig a shònrachadh, agus anns an dòigh seo nochdar ciamar a bhios iad ag obair mar phìosan ealain.

- "Focus on patterns of imagery, metaphorical language, and literariness and not, absolutely not, on psychology, morality, sociology, or political economy." Ged a thèid gach dàn a sgrùdadh na cho-theags fhèin, 's ann a bhios seo aig teis-meadhan an sgrùdaidh a chleachdar san alt seo.

Feumar cuimhneachadh gum b' e an càineadh a bu mhotha a thaobh bàrdachd baile gun robh cus *cliché* innte – cus abairtean a nochdas uair 's a-rithist. Ach, gu fortanach, tha gnè breithneachaidh eile ann a mhìnicheas an ath-aithris a chithear ann an corra sheòrsa litreachais, agus 's e seo rannaigheachd-dùthchais.

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[35] George Watson, *The Literary Critics* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin, 1963), 198.

[36] I.A.Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London, Routledge, 2001).

[37] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Penguin, 1990), 9.

[38] Vincent B. Leitch, *Literary Criticism in the 21st Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 39. Faic cuideachd Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947), 3–21.

Rannaigheachd-dùthchais[39]

Anns an fhicheadamh linn, rinn iomadh sgoilear sgrùdadh a bhios ceangailte ri rannaigheachd-dùthchais, agus tha cuid ann aig a bheil smuaintean a bhios feumail ann an co-theags bàrdachd baile.

Dh'fhoillsich Heda Jason an leabhar aice *Ethnopoetry* ann an 1977.[40] Tha na beachdan a nochdas san leabhar sa stèidhichte gu ìre air na sgrìobhas Albert B. Lord ann an *Singer of Tales* mu bheul-aithris Sèirbis-Cròthaisis,[41] le tòrr eisimpleirean à cultaran eile. Mìnichidh Jason dè na feartan a chithear anns an litreachas thradaiseanta a lorgar ann an diofar dhualchasan, agus seallaidh i cho cudromach 's a tha an gnìomh agus an luchd-èisteachd don duine a bu chaomh leis a bhith a' tuigsinn ciamar a dh'obraicheas litreachas a thèid a lìbhrigeadh beò, air beulaibh an t-sluaigh. Canaidh an t-ùghdar, "Ethnopoetry (oral or folk literature) is understood as being verbal art, transmitted from generation to generation by talented performers in a process of improvisation".[42] Ged a bha comasan leughaidh is sgrìobhaidh aig iomadh bàrd Gàidhlig anns an naoidheamh linn deug (nam measg, an fheadhainn air an dèanar sgrùdadh san alt sa), 's ann feumail a bhios e fhathast na smuaintean seo a chumail air cuimhne ann a bhith a' sgrùdadh na saothrach aca.

'S e sgoilear gu math torrach a thaobh rannaigheachd-dùthchais a th' ann an John Miles Foley. Chithear bho na sgrìobhas e gum bi rannaigheachd-dùthchais feumail ma bhios duine a' feuchainn ri modhan obrach bhàrd cho eadar-dhealaichte ri Homer, bàrd Bheowulf, Bongani Sithole (bàrd molaidh à Afraga a Deas) agus Marty McConnell (bàrd "*slam*" Ameireaganach) a mhìneachadh.[43] Chithear anns na leanas cho feumail 's a bhios beachdan Fholey, gu h-àraidh, ann a bhith a' sgrùdadh bàrdachd baile.

'S dòcha air sgàth 's gun do thòisich Lord le dàin-mhòra sheanchasail de leithid a rinn Homer, bidh an teòraidh seo an sàs gu mòr ann an structair.[44] Togaidh John Miles Foley an cuspair seo:[45] canaidh e gum faicear "inset stories", air am bi an luchd-èisteachd eòlach, mar eisimpleir "sea voyage /ship burial scene" ann am *Beowulf*.[46] Ach mìnichidh an teòraidh cuideachd am pròsas a chleachdas an fheadhainn a bhios a' dèanamh òrain de sheòrsa sam bith air làrach nam bonn, agus carson a chithear feartan àraidh nam broinn. Am measg nam feartan sin, gu sònraichte, thèid aire a thoirt air abairtean a nochdas uair is uair. Mun leughte *The Singer of Tales*, bhiodh cuid dualtach am beachd a ghleidheadh gur e laigse a bh' anns an ath-aithris seo. Mhìnich Lord, ge-tà, gur ann a dh'aon ghnothach a chleachdadh na bàird na h-abairtean gu tric, agus gur e *formulae* a bh' annta, a bhiodh cuideachail, taiceil, no fiù 's deatamach, ann am pròsas cruthachaidh air làrach nam bonn.

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[39] San alt seo, cleachdar "bàrdachd-dùthchais" air bàrdachd a chaidh a dhèanamh le daoine aig nach robh sàr chomasan ann an leughadh agus sgrìobhadh, agus a ghabhte san fharsaingeachd ann an suidheachadh poblach, air beulaibh luchd-èisteachd; agus thèid gabhail ris gur i bàrdachd den t-seòrsa seo a th' ann am bàrdachd baile. Ach feumar a chuimhneachadh gun robh comasan leughaidh is sgrìobhaidh aig mòran dhaoine san naoidheamh linn deug, taing don obair a bha sgoiltean a' dèanamh ro Achd an Fhoghlaim 1872, agus gun tug an dualchas beul-aithrise agus an dualchas litreachais sgrìobhte buaidh air a chèile tron linn air fad. Cleachdar "rannaigheachd-dùthchais" air an raon sgoilearachd a bhios an sàs ann an sgrùdadh agus breithneachadh na bàrdachd sa.

[40] Heda Jason, *Ethnopoetry*, (Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1977).

[41] Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

[42] Jason, *Ethnopoetry*, 5.

[43] John Miles Foley, "Word-Power, Performance and Tradition", *Journal of American Folklore*, 105 (1992): 275-301: ri fhaighinn aig: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/541757.pdf; "The Implications of Oral Tradition", ann an *Oral Tradition in the Middle Ages*, deasaichte le W. Nicolaisen, 31–57, (New York, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995); agus *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

[44] Lord, *Singer of Tales*. Faic cuideachd Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[45] Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 105.

[46] Mar a bhios aig an neach-sgrìobhaidh air.

Cleachdaidh Foley am mìneachadh a thabhainn Parry gur e "an expression regularly used, under the same metrical conditions, to express an essential idea" a th' ann am *formula*, agus canaidh e gun nochd trì feartan ann am bàrdachd-dùthchais: "formulas (recurrent phrases), themes (recurrent scenes) and story-patterns". [47] Gu follaiseach, nochdaidh pàtranan ann an sgeulachdan tradaiseanta, ach chithear co-dhiù an dà fheart eile ann am bàrdachd baile.

Nì Heda Jason feum air an fhacal "formula" anns an t-seagh "a noun and its permanent epithet" agus canaidh i gum faicear "redundant parallelism: the repeated rendering of the same thought in different words" am broinn bàrdachd-dùthchais.[48] Nas tràithe san aon àite, sgrìobhaidh i: [49]

> Ethnopoetry is built from a stock of sound units and contentual terms which are combined into texts according to a set of rules of composition. Together, the units of content and the rules of composition comprise the literary canon of ethnopoetry.

Ach tha cuid ann a tha den bheachd gu bheil adhbharan eile ann airson a' *chanon* sin – airson a' bhriathrachais a nochdas gu tric ann am bàrdachd beul-aithrise.

Na Teòraidhean *Oral-Formulaic* agus *Immanent Art*, agus Rannaigheachd-dùthchais

San fharsaingeachd, aontaichidh John Miles Foley ris an Teòraidh *Oral-Formulaic*, agus canaidh e, "These systematic ways of speaking support composition".[50] Ach tha e cuideachd den bheachd gu bheil barrachd ri ràdh mun dòigh anns am bi *formulae* ag obair. Ar leis, gum biodh cuid a' cleachdadh na teòraidh anns an dòigh cheàrr: canaidh e gun robh sgoilearan ann a bha den bheachd gur e "[a] *tour de force* to 'count the formulas'" a bh' ann, gam faicinn mar phàirt den structair no den rannaigheachd a-mhàin, gun aire a thoirt do bhrìgh no ciall no buaidh ealanta, cho math ri faclan: "at the structural level," canaidh e, "they paid correspondingly little attention to the possibilities of these units as meaning-bearing entities". Ar leis gur e seo "the false dichotomy set up between structure and aesthetic meaning".[51]

Leanaidh e air le argamaid anns am bi e a' dèanamh iomradh air dà abairt à saothair Homer air an eadar-theangachadh gu Beurla mar eisimpleirean gus na tha e a' ciallachadh a shealltainn: "'grey-eyed Athena'" agus "'Hektor of the glancing helm'".[52] Air an dearbh dhuilleig, mìnichidh e gum bi gach aon de na h-abairtean seo ag obrachadh mar aon fhacal, agus a h-uile turas a nochdas iad gum beir iad a-steach ceanglaichean ris a h-uile co-theags anns am faicear iad – no, nas puingeile, anns an cluinnear iad:

> Under the aegis of such a reconception, 'grey-eyed Athena' would serve as an approved traditional channel or pathway for summoning the Athena not just of this or that particular moment, but rather of all moments in the experience of audience and poet.

Ma nochdas abairt de leithid sin uair is uair, chan obraich iad mar ghlutranadh no, ann am faclan Fholey, "generic metrical fillers"; air sgàth an dualchais agus anns a' cho-theags far an nochd iad, nì iad fada nas motha na sin: obraichidh iad mar sheis-riochdachadh gu math eaconamach cumhachdach, gach aon dhiubh na "nominal detail standing metonymically, or *pars pro toto*, for the character in all of his or her traditional complexity". Tha seo fìor, a rèir Fholey, a thaobh "traditional narrative poetry",[53] agus canaidh e cuideachd gum faicear na h-aon "structural characteristics" ann an saothair Homer 's a chithear ann an "living oral poetries".[54] Mas e an fhìrinn a tha seo, b' fhiach na teòraidhean

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[47] Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem,* 110–112; Parry, *Making of Homeric Verse*, 13.
[48] Jason, *Ethnopoetry*, 63–65.
[49] Jason, *Ethnopoetry*, 59.
[50] Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 115.
[51] Foley, "Word-Power, Performance and Tradition", 279–80.
[52] Foley, "Word-Power, Performance and Tradition", 281.
[53] Foley, "Word-Power, Performance and Tradition", 284.
[54] Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 110.

sa a chumail air chuimhne ann a bhith a' sgrùdadh bàrdachd baile Ghàidhlig, stèidhichte mar a tha i air dualchas beul-aithrise.

B' ann gus an taobh seo de bhàrdachd beul-aithrise a mhìneachadh a chuir Foley teòraidh eile air bhog – Teòraidh *Immanent Art*. Tha an teòraidh seo stèidhichte air Teòraidh *Oral-Formulaic*, ach 's e an diofar eatarra gum bi Teòraidh *Oral-Formulaic* a' sealltainn dè na mìrean cànain (faclan, abairtean, ìomhaighean) a bhios aig bàrd gus dàin a dhèanamh a' cleachdadh siostam sùbailte; ach feuchaidh *Immanent Art* "idiomatic implications" nam mìrean seo a thuigsinn cuideachd, gus brìgh agus a' bhuaidh air an luchd-èisteachd a mhìneachadh.[55]

Chaidh beachdan rannaigheachd-dùthchais a thogail air mullach an dà theòraidh seo. San fhicheadamh linn, bha cuid de na sgoilearan a dhèanadh rannsachadh air beul-aithris den bheachd gu bheil iad feumail ann a bhith a' tuigsinn structair, stoidhle agus dòighean obrach a chithear ann an cuid de na dàin is eile a bhios a' nochdadh, mar eisimpleir, ann an dualchas nan tùsanach Ameireaganach. Tha Dell Hymes air fear de na daoine as cudromaiche san obair rannsachaidh a tha seo, is e a-mach air an dòigh anns an tèid dùil a thogail agus a shàsachadh uair is uair no, mar a bhios e fhèin ag ràdh, "the recurrent arousal and satisfying of expectation".[56] Bidh dùilean àraidh aig an luchd-èisteachd air sgàth 's gum bi iadsan air an togail leis a' bhàrd no leis an t-seinneadair. Bidh a h-uile duine air an aon ràmh a thaobh na bhios iad a' sùileachadh a chionn 's gun deach an togail am broinn an aon dualchais. Bidh am pròsas seo a' dearbhadh na dàimh no a' chompanais no an dlùth-chomainn eadar an duine a bhios a' dèanamh an dàin agus an luchd-èisteachd.

Adhbharan a Bharrachd airson *Formulae* no *Cliché*an

Ann am bàrdachd-dùthchais, nochdaidh feartan is coltas gnàthach orra air adhbharan a thèid nas fhaide air adhart na taic don bhàrd a bhios a' dèanamh òran air làrach nam bonn (m.e. a bhith a' toirt diog no dhà dha fhèin gus an cuimhnich e air an ath phàirt san sgeulachd, no gus am bi ùine aige faclan a fhreagras air a' chuspair a thaghadh); nochdaidh iad cuideachd, a rèir teòraidh rannaigheachd-dùthchais, air adhbharan brìghe agus gus teachdaireachd an òrain a chur an cèill, tro sheis-riochdachadh a bhios a' cleachdadh tuigse dhomhainn choitcheann na coimhearsnachd – "treating an artistic and meaning-bearing, rather than simply compositional, imperative".[57]

Chithear ceangal eadar rannaigheachd-dùthchais agus an t-adhbhar do dh'fheartan ann am bàrdachd thradaiseanta air an cuir cuid dìmeas: feartan mar rannaigheachd nòsail no ìomhaigheachd ghnàthach – "dìth adhnuachais" mar a bhios aig MacAmhlaigh, agus *cliché* mar a bhios aig MacThòmais.[58] A rèir rannaigheachd-dùthchais, 's e neartan a tha annta seach laigsean.

Gu tric, ann an suidheachadh far am bi dùil agus companas, thèid ìomhaigheachd a chleachdadh air am bi coltas gnàthach air sgàth 's gum bi i a' cruthachadh dhealbhan cumanta làitheil. Eu-coltach ri ìomhaighean ùra, a bheir clisgeadh dhan neach-leughaidh ann an nua-bhàrdachd, aithnichidh an luchd-èisteachd na h-abairtean seo, agus mar as trice obraichidh iad mar sheis-riochdachadh. Cuiridh seo beachdan no faireachdainnean a bhios coitcheann an cèill agus neartachaidh e an dàimh a th' eadar an neach-gnìomhaidh agus an luchd-èisteachd a thaobh luachan a' chultair aca.

Canaidh John Miles Foley gum bi ìomhaighean nòsail a' cumail smachd air ceanglaichean cultarach a tha fada nas motha na na dàin anns am bi iad a' nochdadh: "they command fields of reference much larger than the single line, passage, or even text in which they occur". Leanaidh e air leis a' bheachd gum bi iad a' giùlan bhrìghean a bhios a cheart cho leathann agus cho domhainn 's a tha an dualchas fhèin: "they bear meanings as wide and deep as the tradition they encode", agus gun toir iad saorsa leotha seach cuingealachadh: "This idiom is liberating rather than imprisoning".[59]

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[55] Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 109.

[56] Dell Hymes, "Ethnopoetics, Oral-Formulaic Theory, and Editing Texts", *Oral Tradition 9/2* (1994), 332.

[57] Foley, "Word-Power, Performance and Tradition", 278.

[58] MacAmhlaigh, *Nua-bhàrdachd*, 20; Thomson, *Introduction*, 226.

[59] John Miles Foley, "The Implications of Oral Tradition", ann an *Oral Tradition in the Middle Ages*, deasaichte le W. Nicolaisen (New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), 33–34.

Bho bhith a' sgrùdadh fheartan gnàthach a nochdas ann am bàrdachd a chithear ann an iomadh cultar, dearbhaidh sgoilearan rannaigheachd-dùthchais gu bheil adhbharan ann air an son a bhios ceangailte ri ealain cho math ri cùisean teicnigeach mar rannaigheachd.

Anns an t-suidheachadh seo, nochdaidh abairtean anns am bi faclan a' dol còmhla gu tric anns an aon dòigh sam bi sùilean gorma no glasa ann an Athena no clogaid dheàrrsach air Hektor ann an saothair Homer. Mar eisimpleir, ma nochdas "beanntan" ann am bàrdachd baile, 's ann a bhios iad dualtach a bhith "àrd", ged nach cuir am buadhair fhèin mòran ri brìgh an ainmeir. Faodar a ràdh gur ann a' sùileachadh "beanntan àrda" a chluinntinn, seach "beanntan" a-mhàin, a bhiodh an luchd-èisteachd. Anns an t-seadh seo, 's urrainnear a ràdh gun obraich "beanntan àrda" agus abairtean eile de leithid mar aon "fhacal" anns a' chànan shònraichte seo, a rèir na bhios an luchd-èisteachd a' sùileachadh.

An Seòrsa Ìomhaigheachd a Chluinnear gu Tric ann am Bàrdachd Baile

Ann an alt a tha gu math cuideachail, mìnichidh Máire Ní Annracháin an diofar eadar dealbh-cainnt agus seis-riochdachadh ann a bhith a' sgrùdadh bàrdachd Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh. A rèir an Oll. Ní Annracháin, seallaidh na "structuralist poetics" a thàinig gu bith tron obair a rinn sgoilearan a leithid Roman Jakobson gu bheil diofar bunasach eatarra: thèid dealbh-cainnt a stèidheachadh air coltas, canaidh i, fhad 's a thèid seis-riochdachadh a stèidheachadh air co-dhlùthachd ("contiguity") no co-cheangal ("association").[60] 'S e pàirt de sheis-riochdachadh a th' ann am mìr-riochdachadh, a bhios a' cleachdadh *pars pro toto*, mar a chithear ann an liostaichean de bhuaidhean gaisgeil ann an òrain molaidh. Canaidh Ní Annracháin gum biodh an diofar seo cudromach far an tagh bàrd dealbh-cainnt seach seis-riochdachadh, air neo a chaochladh.

Leanaidh an t-Oll. Ní Annracháin oirre ag ràdh gum bi tuigse air seis-riochdachadh an crochadh air tuigse ro-làimh an luchd-èisteachd air a' cheangal eadar brìghean litireil agus samhlachail an tròpa:[61]

> To understand metonymy properly requires a prior understanding on the part of the listener or reader of the connection between the literal and figurative meanings of the trope.

Air an làimh eile, bidh dealbh-cainnt a' tàladh an neach-èisteachd gu seallaidhean ùra agus coltasan dha nach do mhothaich e roimhe agus, a thuilleadh, bidh e a' beantainn ris an duine fa leth, seach ris a' choimhearsnachd air fad. Mar sin dheth, canaidh Ní Annracháin, freagraidh seis-riochdachadh air structair sòisealta a tha dlùth, teann, far am bi e nas cudromaiche a bhith ceangailte na bhith nad neach fa leth:[62]

> ... metonymy is arguably the literary equivalent of a closely-knit social structure where individuality, as opposed to connectedness, is not overly promoted and where the poet's role is to remain more or less within the status quo, rehearsing in persuasive and polished ways versions of the familiar.

Gus seo a ràdh ann an dòigh eile, seallaidh dealbh-cainnt coimeas ris nach robh an luchd-èisteachd no an neach-leughaidh an dùil, ach nuair a chleachdar seis-riochdachadh cluinnidh an luchd-èisteachd smuain a bha iad a' sùileachadh, no co-dhiù ris am bi iad cleachdte.[63]

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[60] Máire Ní Annracháin, "Metaphor and Metonymy in the Poetry of Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh'", ann am *Fil súil nglais – A Grey Eye Looks Back – a Festschrift in Honour of Colm Ó Baoill*, deasaichte le S. Arbuthnot agus K. Hollo (Ceann Drochaid: Clann Tuirc, 2007), 163.

[61] Ní Annracháin, "Metaphor and Metonymy", 164.

[62] Ní Annracháin, "Metaphor", 165–66.

[63] Chan e bàird Ghàidhlig a-mhàin a nì feum air iomraidhean. Chithear cleachdadh caran coltach ri sin anns an dòigh anns an obraich bàrdachd shanasach ("allusive poetry") den t-seòrsa a rinn cuid de sgrìobhadairean Beurla an fhicheadamh linn, a leithid T. S. Eliot. Anns a' bhàrdachd a sgrìobh esan tha ìomhaigheachd ann a

Chaidh iomradh a dhèanamh mar-thà air dùilean an luchd-èisteachd: le bhith a' sgrùdadh saothair a rinn bàird baile chithear an tèid samhlachas no ìomhaigheachd a chleachdadh a bhios an crochadh cuideachd air eòlas ('s e sin seis-riochdachadh) seach air clisgeadh ('s e sin dealbh-cainnt): chithear an nochd an dàrna fear no am fear eile. Chithear cuideachd am bean a' cheist seo ri *cliché*. Ma bhios neach-leughaidh airson bàrdachd a shireadh anns an tèid ìomhaigheachd a chleachdadh a bheir clisgeadh dha, 's dòcha nach cuireadh e mòran luach air bàrdachd a bhiodh freagarrach do luchd-èisteachd a bhiodh a' sùileachadh samhlachas an crochadh air eòlas.

Anns an naoidheamh linn deug, bha comasan leughaidh agus sgrìobhaidh bitheanta ann an coimhearsnachdan Gàidhlig. Ach anns gach coimhearsnachd bha taighean-cèilidh rim faicinn, far an deach an dualchas a chumail, le sgeulachdan gan aithris, òrain gan gabhail agus – mar a chanas Iain MacAonghuis – far an deach dlùth-chomann a chruthachadh eadar buill na coimhearsnachd.[64] Thogadh bàird an ama anns an dearbh cho-theacsa seo, agus thugadh buaidh orra gun do dh'fhàs iad suas is iad air am bogadh anns an àrainneachd sin. Chan iongnadh ma chuir iad an cuid bhrìghean an cèill le bhith a' cleachdadh ìomhaigheachd stèidhichte air co-cheanglaichean smuaintean bhon dualchas.

Ìomhaighean ann am Bàrdachd Baile

Coimeas-cainnt

Thèid coimeas a dhèanamh gus coltas a shealltainn eadar cuspair a' bhàird agus rudeigin eile. Mar as trice, cruthaichidh seo ìomhaigh no dealbh mac-meanmnach ann an inntinn an neach-èisteachd no -leughaidh, agus tron phròsas seo cuiridh am bàrd an cèill rudeigin àraidh, nach gabh a ràdh ann an dòigh a bhiodh cho math no cho sgiobalta às aonais a' choimeis sin. Leanaidh eisimpleirean de na gnèithean coimeis a chithear ann an corra dhòigh ann an saothair nam bàrd air an dèanar sgrùdadh. Mothaichear gun cleachd na h-ìomhaighean san fharsaingeachd coimeasan ri rudan àbhaisteach, ann an cainnt làitheil. Uaireannan, bidh coltas follaiseach air na thèid a ràdh ach nochdaidh na h-eisimpleirean feum nan teòraidhean a mhìnichear shuas ann a bhith a' sealltainn mar a dh'obraicheas a' bhàrdachd mar ealain.

Tha coimeas-cainnt air fear de na seòrsaichean gnèithe as bitheanta a chithear sa bhàrdachd. Ann an coimeas-cainnt, thèid an cuspair agus an ìomhaigh a sheallas cò ris a bhios e coltach a cheangal le structair a leithid "mar", "coltach ri" no "cho ... ri ...".

'S e cuspair cumanta ann an saothair Iain MhicLachlainn a th' anns a' ghaol agus cuirear brìgh nan dàn ann an cèill le ìomhaigheachd nòsail – uaireannan nan coimeasan-cainnt. Ann an "Òran: 'Nì mi òran le dùrachd'", molaidh e boireannach air a bheil "gruaidh mar ròs dearg" (2.3),[65] agus ann am "Bidh Mi gad Chaoidh", bidh e a-mach air tè eile a tha "Mar ròs air a' mheangan" (5.3).[66] Cleachdaidh am bàrd ìomhaigh na rionnaige san aon dàn, far am bi "gnùis" a' bhoireannaich "mar an reul a bheir leus fad air falbh" (5.2).[67] Nochdaidh ìomhaighean caran coltach ri sin ann an "Seinn an

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bheir iomraidhean a-steach à saothair cuid eile. Gun fhios nach bi làn-thuigse aig an leughadair, agus gus an cuirear teachdaireachdan an cèill tro cheanglaichean-smuain, nochdaidh notaichean a sgrìobh T. S. Eliot fhèin an cois na bàrdachd anns na *Selected Poems* (1970, 68–74) aige, sam mìnich e tùsan cho eadar-dhealaichte ri Baudelaire, Dante, Shakespeare, Ovid agus an Naomh Augustine. A rèir coltais, bha am bàrd airson 's gun rachadh na co-theagsaichean seo a thuigsinn, agus a thoirt a-steach, fhad 's a bha an leughadair a' leughadh na saothrach aige.

[64] MacInnes, 'Gaelic Poetry', 372. A' sgrìobhadh sa Bheurla, cleachdaidh Iain MacAonghuis am facal "solidarity".

[65] H. C. Gillies, *The Gaelic Songs of the Late Dr. MacLachlan, Rahoy*, (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair, 1880), 13. Nithear iomradh air sreathan bàrdachd san leabhar seo le dà àireamh: bidh "(2.3)" a' ciallachadh "Rann 2, sreath 3".

[66] Gillies, *MacLachlan*, 42. 'S dòcha gu bheil seo fo bhuaidh Bhurns – m.e. "A Red, Red Rose", ann an James Kinsley (deasaiche), *Burns: Poems and Songs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 582; no 's dòcha gur e tuiteamas a th' ann, agus Burns agus Iain MacLachlainn air am bogadh san aon dualchas.

[67] A-rithist, 's dòcha gur e buaidh Bhurns a tha seo:

Duan Seo, hug ìri hù o", far am bi cuspair gaol an neach-aithris "mar reult na maidne" (3.3) agus "mar Bhènus ag èirigh suas" (4.4).[68] Bidh na coimeasan-cainnt seo ceangailte ri bòidhchead agus soillse, an dà rud iomchaidh ann an òran molaidh do mhnaoi. Ach san naoidheamh linn deug bhiodh rionnagan riatanach do mharaichean ann a bhith a' sealltainn na slighe chun a' chinn-uidhe agus, mar thoradh air sin, tha e freagarrach an ìomhaigh sin a chleachdadh do chuspair a' ghaoil: an tè a tha riatanach dhan neach-aithris, agus reul-iùil a bheatha. San t-seagh sin, chan eil e gu diofar ged as e ìomhaigh nòsail a bhios innte: cuiridh i brìgh a' bhàird an cèill ann an dòigh a bhios iomchaidh brìghmhor don luchd-èisteachd cho-aimsireil.

Chithear eisimpleirean mar an ceudna ann an saothair Màiri Mhòr nan Òran. Ann an "Luchd na Beurla", cuiridh i dìomoladh air na daoine a dhèilig rithe an cois na cùise cùirte anns an deach a dìteadh ann an Inbhir Nis ann an 1872.[69] Canaidh am bàrd (sreath 62) gun robh iad "coltach ri sgaoth de na guilbnich", agus bheir seo air an luchd-èisteachd smaoineachadh air feartan nan eun sin, air am biodh iad eòlach gu làitheil, ann an dàimh ris na daoine air am bi Màiri a-mach – 's dòcha mar gun robh iad gobach, ri fuaim gun fheum gun rian.

Dealbh-cainnt

Chan eil mòran diofair eadar coimeas-cainnt agus dealbh-cainnt, anns an dèanar coimeas cuideachd ach le riochd fhacal eadar-dhealaichte: fhad 's a thèid abairtean àraidh a chleachdadh ann an coimeas-cainnt, mar a mhìnichear shuas, ann an dealbh-cainnt nithear co-ionannachd eadar cuspair na h-ìomhaighe agus an rud ris an dèanar coimeas. A-rithist, cleachdar dealbhan-cainnt caran tric leis na bàird air an dèanar sgrùdadh san alt seo. Mar eisimpleir, ann an "Òran Gaoil" le Iain MacGill-Eain, chithear dealbhan-cainnt nàdarra, am measg cuid eile a tha mar an ceudna ceangailte ri àilleachd agus luach, fhad 's a nì an neach-aithris moladh air a leannan:[70]

> B' e 'n lilidh ghleann air bhòidhchead thu;
> B' e 'n daoimean thu, b' e 'n t-òmar thu;
> B' e 'm flùr am measg nan ròsan thu ... (3.1–3)

Le ìomhaigheachd de leithid, chan eil e coltach gu bheil am bàrd a' feuchainn ri bhith eadar-dhealaichte ris an dualchas no clisgeadh adhbharachadh no fiù 's abairtean nach eil àbhaisteach làitheil a chleachdadh; air a chaochladh, cho math ri dealbhan mac-meanmnach de na rudan brèagha fhèin, bheir na faclan a-steach co-cheanglaichean smuaintean ri ìomhaigheachd air a bheil an luchd-èisteachd air a bhith eòlach fad am beatha, le bhith ag èisteachd ri òrain san nochd i. Cuirear crìoch air an dàn seo le dealbhan-cainnt eile a sheallas an cron a chaidh a dhèanamh leis an dealachadh eadar an dithis aca, agus cuiridh an neach-aithris a mhiann air adhart a dh'ionnsaigh na bhios a' toirt slànachadh dha fhèin, agus 's e sin pòsadh:

> Ach tha mi 'n dùil ged thrèig thu mi,
> Gun càradh tu na reubadh leat,
> 'S gun tòir thu cungaidh leighseas mi –
> Le òrdugh clèir do làmh dhomh. (5.1–4)

> Who shall say that Fortune grieves him,
> While the star of hope she leaves him:
> Me, nae chearful twinkle lights me;
> Dark despair around benights me. (Kinsley, *Burns*, 468, sreathan 5–8)

[68] Gillies, *MacLachlan*, 43.

[69] Dòmhnall E. Meek, *Màiri Mhòr nan Òran*, (Dùn Èideann: Scottish Academic Press, 1998), 23 agus 60.

[70] Hector Cameron, *Na Bàird Thirisdeach* (Stirling: The Tiree Association, 1932), 185. Nithear iomradh air sreathan bàrdachd san leabhar seo le dà àireamh: bidh "(3.1)" a' ciallachadh "Rann 3, sreath 1".

’S e co-theags eadar-dhealaichte agus gaol eadar-dhealaichte a bhios aig Iain Caimbeul ann an “Cuimhneachadh air na Làithean san Robh Mi ann an Sgoil na Ledaig”.[71] Às dèidh dha an t-àite far an do rugadh agus an do thogadh e a mholadh, mothachaidh e na h-atharrachaidhean a tha air tighinn air a’ choimhearsnachd, agus cuiridh e a bheachdan mun deidhinn an cèill le dealbh-cainnt anns an dèanar coimeas ri beachlann a chaidh a sgrios, agus na seilleanan air am fuadachadh:

> Ach ris an t-saoghal chaidh ’n sgeap a sgaoileadh
> ’S ar cuir air faontradh air aodann cuain; (8.1–2).

Mar thoradh air sin, canaidh e gu bheil creachadh air tighinn air an fheadhainn a dh’fhalbh, ach nì e brosnachadh don fheadhainn a tha fhathast beò gun a bhith a’ call an dòchais, len “inntinn air tuiteam ìosal” (9.3), agus cuiridh e crìoch air an dàn le dealbh-cainnt eile:

> ’S i reult an dòchais a chumas beò sinn,
> ’S a bheir dhuinn còmhnadh is dòigh gu buaidh. (10.3–4)

Mothaichear gun cleachd am bàrd ìomhaigheachd nòsail le mac-talla Bhurns innte, mar a chithear ann an saothair Iain MhicLachlainn, shuas.[72] Mar sin dheth, ’s urrainnear a ràdh nach robh e cudromach don Chaimbeulach a bhith a’ seachnadh a leithid, ach gun robh e a dh’aon ghnothach ga cleachdadh gus co-cheanglaichean smuaintean a thoirt a-steach às an dualchas. A thaobh teachdaireachd an òrain, ged a bhios cianalas ann mun bheatha a tha a-nis air falbh, bidh dòchas ann fhathast – ge be dè an seòrsa “buaidhe” air am bi gach neach ag amas. A-rithist, ’s e ìomhaigh ghnàthach an rèil-iùil a chuireas a’ bhrìgh seo an cèill.

Chithear dealbhan-cainnt ann an “Còmhradh eadar am Bàrd agus an Cìobair” le Dòmhnall MacEacharn, cuid dhiubh sìmplidh gu leòr agus cuid eile gan cleachdadh gus meòrachadh a dhèanamh air dìomhaireachd na beatha.[73] A rèir a’ bhàird,

> Cha shligh’ bhuan ach astar suarach
> Tha eadar an uaigh ’s a’ chìoch: (1.11–12)

Anns an dealbh-cainnt seo, thèid a’ bheatha fhaicinn mar shlighe agus, an àite a bhith a’ dol gu rianail bho thùs gu deireadh, nochdaidh “an uaigh” an toiseach mar sheis-riochdachadh air a’ bhàs, agus an uair sin “a’ chìoch”, a dh’obraicheas san aon dòigh mar shamhla breithe no leanabachd. ’S ann a tha iad anns an òrdugh sin air sgàth ’s gu bheil an caractar “am bàrd” a-nis sean, a’ teannadh dlùth ris a’ bhàs, agus e a’ coimhead air ais:

> Tha mo cheum-sa dol am moille
> A bha aon uair beothail, luath, (1.5–6)

Nochdaidh teachdaireachd an dàin mean air mhean às a’ chòmhradh eadar an dithis charactar a thèid ainmeachadh san tiotal – “am bàrd” aig am bi cothrom meòrachaidh agus “an cìobair” a bhios trang is e a’ dol air adhart le a bheatha, air a shamhlachadh le “a’ siubhal garbhlaich / Moch is anmoch is là fèill” (2.3–4). A rèir dealbh-cainnt “a’ bhàird”, bidh “leabhar mòr an domhain” (3.5) fosgailte fa chomhair “a’ chìobair”, ach freagraidh esan nach eil e foghlaimte, agus mar thoradh air sin bidh “stòr an eòlais” (4.3) glaiste dha. Fàsaidh an deasbad eadar an dithis teth, agus ann an dealbh-cainnt eile molaidh “am bàrd” “air an loinneas sin cuir srian” (10.2). Aithrisidh e taisbeanadh samhlachail mar

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[71] John Campbell, *Poems* (Edinburgh: MacLachlan and Stewart, 1884), 20. Nithear iomradh air sreathan bàrdachd san leabhar seo le dà àireamh: bidh “(8.1)” a’ ciallachadh “Rann 8, sreath 1”.

[72] Nochdaidh ìomhaighean coltach ri seo ann an dualchas na Gàidhlig cuideachd, m.e. “Bu bhinne, ros-dheirge, beul”, “Oran air Gaol na h-Oighe do Chailean”, ann an Uilleam Ros, *Òrain Ghàidhealach* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1937), 28, sreath 42.

[73] Dòmhnall MacEacharn, *Am Fear-Ciùil* (Dùn Èideann: Iain Grannd, 1910), 15. Nithear iomradh air sreathan bàrdachd san leabhar seo le dà àireamh: bidh “(1.11)” a’ ciallachadh “Rann 1, sreath 11”.

eisimpleir dhan duine eile, agus aig deireadh an dàin tillidh "am bàrd" chun an deilbh-chainnt a chleachdte roimhe gus comhairle a thoirt dhan "chìobair" mun t-slighe air adhart dha fhèin:

> Thusa cìocrach airson eòlais!
>   Thusa 's t' iuchair òir ad dhìth!
> Tha i, bhurraidh, ann ad phòca,
>   Cuir do chròg ann 's gheibh thu i! (18.1–4)

Ann am faclan eile, cha bu chòir do dhuine a bhith a' gearan mu staid a bheatha, no a bhith a' feitheamh gus an tig cuideigin eile a chuireas ceart i; 's ann leis fhèin a bhios an dleastanas cùisean a chàradh.

Ged a bhios coimeas-cainnt agus dealbh-cainnt gu tric ag obrachadh le bhith a' cur clisgeadh air an neach-leughaidh mun choimeas a nithear annta, tha e soilleir gun cleachd an dà sheòrsa ìomhaigheachd seo ùrlaran nòsail gus teachdaireachd nam bàrd a chur an cèill. San t-seagh seo, obraichidh iad ann an dòigh coltach ri seis-riochdachadh.

Dealbh-cainnt Sìnte

Chan eil dealbhan-cainnt sìnte pailt ann am bàrdachd baile an naoidheamh linn deug, ach nochdaidh iad an siud 's an seo. Mar eisimpleir, ann an "Catrìona ni'n Dùghaill" le Ailean an Rids, nithear coimeas eadar air an dàrna làimh boireannach òg aig a bheil guth binn, agus air an làimh eile clàrsach: "Bu ghrinn a chruit chiùil i" (1.2).[74] An uair sin, leudaichear an ìomhaigh sin na dhealbh-cainnt sìnte san ath rann leis a' bheachd gun còrd a seinn ris an neach-aithris nas motha "na ceòl às na teudan" (2.16), agus nì e coimeas eadar guth Catrìona agus ceòl nan eun: mìnichidh e gun robh e na leabaidh nuair a chuala e òran ga ghabhail leatha agus canaidh e gum "bu bhòidhch' e" (2.9) leis-san:

> Na ceilearadh smeòraich
> A sheinneadh sna h-òganan (2.13–14)

Pearsanachadh agus Gairmeachas

'S e seòrsa de dhealbh-cainnt a th' ann am pearsanachadh, far an tèid coimeas a dhèanamh eadar rud nach eil beò agus duine. Nochdaidh e corra thuras sa bhàrdachd, uaireannan le gairmeachas na chois.

Chan ann bitheanta a bhios pearsanachadh a' nochdadh ann an saothair Iain MhicLachlainn, ach cleachdar e ann an "Òran: 'Seo nam shìneadh air an t-sliabh'", dàn anns am bi an neach-aithris a' caoineadh a bhith a' dealachadh ri a leannan.[75] Dh'fhaodte a ràdh gum bi e a' faireachdainn mar nach eil cumhachd aige air na bhios a' tachairt, agus mar sin dheth nì e gairmeachas air a' ghaoith, is e a' sireadh cuideachadh:[76]

> O! Nach innis thu, ghaoth 'n iar,
>   Nuair a thriallas tu thar sàil',
> Ciod an dòigh a th' air mo ghaol –
>   Bheil i smuaintinn orms' an tràth s'? (5.1–4)

Chithear an seo gu bheil dà cheist aig an neach-aithris, an dàrna tè a' shealltainn gu bheil staid a leannain air a chùram – "Ciod an dòigh a th' air mo ghaol" (5.3) – agus an tè eile a' nochdadh cho draghail 's a bhios e a thaobh na dàimh a tha eatarra, is e a' faighneachd, "'Bheil i smaointinn orms' an tràth s'?" (5.4). San dòigh seo, seallaidh am pearsanachadh draghan an neach-aithris, a bhios aig cridhe brìgh an dàin.

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[74] Effie Rankin, *As a' Bhràighe* (Sydney, Nova Scotia: Cape Breton University Press, 2005), 80. Nithear iomradh air sreathan bàrdachd san leabhar seo le dà àireamh: bidh "(1.2)" a' ciallachadh "Rann 1, sreath 2".

[75] Gillies, *MacLachlan*, 30.

[76] Chan e rud ùr a bha gairmeachas ris a' ghaoith san naoidheamh linn deug. 'S dòcha gun tug *Oisean* buaidh air Iain MacLachlainn: chithear pearsanachadh den ghaoith ann an saothair Sheumais Mhic a' Phearsain (James Macpherson, *The Poetical Works of Ossian*, 2009): m.e. bidh fearg (td.24) oirre, tha guth (td.271), broilleach (td.252) agus àite-fuirich (td.55) aice, is mar sin air adhart.

Eòl-ainm

Ann am bàrdachd Iain MhicGill-Eain, tha eòl-ainmean cumanta gu leòr. Thèid iomradh a dhèanamh air "creathail Chloinn nan Gàidheal" (9.1) ann an "Teachdairean na Ban-rìgh", a bhios ag amas air a' Ghàidhealtachd air fad, ach san aon dàn cleachdar eòl-ainm eile air Tiriodh fhèin ann an rann agus coltas tòimhseachain air: [77]

> Tìr-bhàrr-fo-thuinn nan garbh-thonnan,
> An t-eilean ainmeil, fiachail;
> Gu buan tha fuaim na fairge ris;
> 'S e nis is ainm Tìr-I dha. (3.1–4)

Gu follaiseach, cuiridh an ìomhaigh seo sìneadh air cho ìosal 's a tha an t-eilean sa mhuir. Thèid iomradh a dhèanamh air feartan eadar-dhealaichte anns na h-eòl-ainmean eile a chleachdas am bàrd air Tiriodh: "tìr rèidh an eòrna" ("Òran nam Prìosanach", 1.4),[78] "tìr a' mhurain'" ("Laoidh Chaluim", 7.1, agus "A' Chailin Mhaiseach Dhonn", 4.7)[79] agus "tìr na gaineimh" ("Slàinte Dhòmhnaill 'ic Phàrlain", 8.4).[80] Nas mionaidiche buileach, cuiridh MacGill-Eain "baile nam bàrd" (2.4) air Baile-phuill ann am "Manitoba".[81] Mothaichear gun nochd an t-alt anns gach tè de na h-abairtean seo, a' sealltainn cho sònraichte 's a tha gach àite fa leth, mar nach eil a shamhail ann.

Seis-riochdachadh is Eile

Chaidh an diofar eadar dealbh-cainnt agus seis-riochdachadh a mhìneachadh mar-thà: bidh gach seòrsa coimeis an crochadh air coltas, ach 's ann air co-dhlùthachd no co-cheangal a bhios seis-riochdachadh stèidhichte. Tha mìr-riochdachadh gu math coltach ri seis-riochdachadh, agus cho math riuthasan feumar corra fhacal a ràdh mu eisimpleirean de cho-cheangal smuaintean. Mar a chithear le coimeasan sa bhàrdachd, cleachdar cainnt àbhaisteach làitheil gus an dà sheòrsa riochdachaidh a chur an cèill.

Seis-riochdachadh

'S ann ro-aithnichte a tha na tròpaichean a nochdas uair 's a-rithist ann am bàrdachd baile. Do chuid san fhicheadamh linn, bha seo sàrachail. Nì Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn iomradh air ìomhaigheachd de leithid gu greannmhor aoireil ann an "A' Dol Dhachaigh":[82]

> ... suidhidh mi air tulach inntinn
> a' coimhead 'a' bhuachaill aig an sprèidh'.
>
> Dìridh (tha mi smaointinn) smeòrach.
> Èiridh camhanaich no dhà.
> Bidh bàt' na laighe ann an deàrrsadh
> na grèin iarail ...

Sgrìobhaidh Ruaraidh MacThòmais mu na "romantic, idyllic settings [which] are characteristic of the homeland/love verse of the period", is e a-mach air "spurious emotion" agus "clichés".[83] 'S i argamaid an uilt seo, ge-tà, gun nochd abairtean nòsail air adhbharan ealain, gus co-cheanglaichean smuaintean a dhùsgadh às an dualchas.

Tha e fìor gum faicear daoine aig an sprèidh, camhanaich agus smeòraich anns a' bhàrdachd a thig fon phrosbaig an seo. Bhiodh crodh gu math cudromach do bheatha agus do dh'eaconamaidh na

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[77] Cameron, *Na Bàird Thirisdeach*, 162.
[78] Cameron, *Na Bàird Thirisdeach*, 168.
[79] Cameron, *Na Bàird Thirisdeach*, 151 agus 181.
[80] Cameron, *Na Bàird Thirisdeach*, 169.
[81] Cameron, *Na Bàird Thirisdeach*, 164.
[82] MacAmhlaigh, *Nua-bhàrdachd*, 175.
[83] Thomson, *An Introduction*, 224–26.

Gàidhealtachd san naoidheamh linn deug, agus gun teagamh bhiodh smeòraich agus eòin eile bitheanta gu leòr air an dùthaich, mar a tha iad fhathast. Mar sin dheth, bhiodh an sluagh co-aimsireil gu math eòlach air na tròpaichean seo, agus nan ìomhaighean b' urrainn dhaibh a bhith ag obrachadh mar sheis-riochdachaidhean, a bheireadh iomadh smuain eile leotha, a' toirt dhan luchd-èisteachd cothroman meòrachaidh a bhiodh feumail dha na bàird ann a bhith a' cur an teachdaireachdan an cèill. Ann an òrain beul-aithrise, a rachadh a dhèanamh air làrach nam bonn, bhiodh abairtean a nochdadh gu tric a' toirt taic don t-seinneadair; ach, ann am bàrdachd baile, seallaidh seis-riochdachaidhean an t-adhbhar ealanta airson nan abairtean bitheanta seo – an fheadhainn air an cuir cuid *cliché*an.

Am measg nan ùrlaran eile a nochdas gu minig, chithear beanntan – gu h-àraidh, beanntan àrda – agus feartan talmhainn a bhios ceangailte riutha, m.e. binnean agus stùcan, cho math ri gleanntan. Nochdaidh uillt agus rionnagan anns na speuran. Bidh doireachan ann agus flùraichean de dh'iomadh seòrsa, nam measg neòineanan agus ròsan, agus uaireannan bidh dealt no driùchd orra. Faodaidh sgeulachd òrain tachairt air madainn Chèitein, cluinnear fuaim na pìoba agus thèid breacan a chosg. A thuilleadh air sin, nithear iomradh air a' chòd molaidh, agus obraichidh na h-uile dhiubh seo am broinn an dualchais anns a bheil na bàird agus an luchd-èisteachd air am bogadh. Cha robh am bàrd no an luchd-èisteachd mothachail air an dualchas an-còmhnaidh, ach bha e ann, a' toirt dhaibh dòighean smaoineachaidh agus abairtean le co-cheanglaichean smuaintean a rachadh a thuigsinn air an dà thaobh.

Bhiodh e doirbh a bhith ag argamaid gun nochd na tròpaichean seo cho tric is minig air thuiteamas, agus mar sin dheth feumaidh e bhith gu bheil iad ann a dh'aon ghnothach. Seallaidh dlùth-sgrùdadh air ìomhaighean fa leth dè na h-adhbharan a bh' aig na bàird gus na h-abairtean sin a chleachdadh.

'S e "Am Fòghannan – Suaicheantas na h-Alba" an dàn le Eòghann MacColla anns am bi an seis-riochdachadh as soilleire ri fhaicinn.[84] ('S urrainnear a ràdh gur e dealbh-cainnt sìnte a th' ann cuideachd, le pearsanachadh fhad 's a tha am bàrd a-mach air cuid de na feartan a bhios aig a' chluaran, ach obraichidh e mar sheis-riochdachadh ann a bhith a' riochdachadh dòigh-beatha shlàn na h-Alba, le luachan a leithid neirt, tapachd agus raige na cois.) Cleachdaidh am bàrd an samhla seo – agus an co-cheangal smuaintean a' toirt a-steach luachan àrsaidh uasal na dùthcha[85] – ann an dàn a bhios air an uachdar mu dheidhinn an lusa ach a bhios gu follaiseach ann an da-rìribh a' moladh na h-Alba fhèin. Cuiridh e na faclan aige ris an fhonn "Òran nam Fineachan Gàidhealach", dàn brosnachail Seumasach le Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair.[86]

Nochdaidh tuairisgeul san dàn agus uaireannan tha e soilleir dè an cuspair a th' aige, ach aig amannan eile cleachdar dà-sheaghachas a dh'aon ghnothach. Mar eisimpleir, 's e lus "nan dos calgach" (1.2) agus "nam meur cròchdach" (2.1) a th' anns an fhòghannan ann an da-rìribh ach, fhad 's a b' urrainn dha bhith "ainmeil" (1.1) agus "cruaidh" (1.2), dh'fhaodte na buadhairean sin a chleachdadh mu dheidhinn dùthcha às a bheil bàrd moiteil. Chithear an t-aon rud corra thuras san dàn, m.e. "[an cluaran] nach leònar le stoirm" (2.1), agus gu dearbh seasaidh an lus an aghaidh shiantan; ach le roghnachadh nam facal seo obraichidh an seis-riochdachadh gus beachd a' bhàird a shealltainn gum bi muinntir na dùthcha calma an àm sam bith a nithear ionnsaigh oirre.

San aon dòigh, nochdaidh cuid den ìomhaigheachd feartan nas maoithe a' chluarain, agus faodar meòrachadh air dè a bhios sin ag ràdh mun dùthaich:

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[84] Eòghann MacColla, *Clàrsach nam Beann* (an treas clò-bhualadh) (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair, 1886), 42. Nithear iomradh air sreathan bàrdachd san leabhar seo le dà àireamh: bidh "(1.2)" a' ciallachadh "Rann 1, sreath 2".

[85] M.e. earbsachd, deagh-bheus agus seasmhachd, a chithear coltach ri neart a' chluarain ge be dè cho dona is a tha an t-sìde.

[86] Derick S. Thomson, *Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair – Selected Poems* (Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1996), 105.

> ’S leis clòimh tha cho maoth gheal ri faoileag na tràigh,
> ’S barr-ghuchdan cho chiùin-ghorm ri sùilean mo ghràidh. (2.3–4)

Anns na sreathan seo, tha am bàrd a-mach air bòidhchead agus air gaol, agus bhiodh an dà fheart iomchaidh do bhith a’ smaointinn mun dùthaich. Le bhith a’ cleachdadh seis-riochdachadh, gheibh am bàrd an cothrom Alba a mholadh, agus nì e sin gu h-eaconamach tro thuairisgeul mun chluaran.

Am measg nan òran le Eòghann MacColla a chaidh fhoillseachadh mar “Òrain Ghaoil”, chithear dàn no dhà aig am bi prìomhachas caran eadar-dhealaichte ris an tiotal sin. A rèir coltais, ’s e cuireadh do chuspair gaol an neach-aithris a bhios ann an “Iseabal, an Tig Thu ’n Ghàidhealtachd?”.[87] Thèid a thairgse le fear a dh’fheuchas ri coltas tarraingeach a chur air an àite – .i. “Taobh Loch Fìne” (Sèist, sreath 3) – gus an tig Iseabal seo còmhla ris. Cleachdaidh am bàrd ìomhaighean nòsail mun àite mar sheis-riochdachadh air a’ bheatha a bhios an neach-aithris a’ moladh. Canaidh e gum bi “blàth-dhachaigh” (1.3) aca ann an “tìr mòr-bheannach nan Gàidheal” (1.4), a’ ceangal na tìr ri a beanntan (a tha mòr, mar a bhios iad gu tric san dualchas) agus ris na daoine a tha a’ fuireach innte. Nì e sgaradh eadar air an dàrna làimh “cuairt sa bhaile” (2.1) a tha “glè mhath” (2.1) agus air an làimh eile “an doire geugach” (2.2) no “’n gleann gorm” (2.3). Ged a bhios am baile math, air an dùthaich bidh “fàile ’n fhraoich” (2.4), seach a-mhàin adhar fionnar, a’ toirt air an àite a bhith “slàinteil” (2.4). Tha am fraoch bitheanta sa Ghàidhealtachd, agus canaidh am bàrd gun dèan e math do shlàinte nan daoine. Cho math ri lèirsinn air na seallaidhean bòidheach am measg bheanntan, dhoire is ghleann, agus fàile an fhraoich a tha fallain, cumaidh am bàrd air le tuairisgeul claisneachd, is e a’ dèanamh iomradh air “caireall bòidheach” (3.2) an smeòraich, “fàilt’” bho uiseagan (3.4) agus ceòl “bho phìob nan dlùth-phong” (4.2). ’S dòcha gur e òran gaoil a th’ anns an dàn seo, ach gu deimhinn ’s e òran molaidh a th’ ann a chleachdas seis-riochdachadh gus spèis don tìr a chur an cèill.

Chan eil ach glè bheag de thalamh àrd ann an Tiriodh, far an do dh’fhuirich Iain MacGill-Eain fad a bheatha. Tha trì chnuic bheaga anns a’ cheann an iar, ach sa mhòr-chuid chan eil ann ach machair agus mòine rèidh.[88] Mar sin dheth, bidh e sàbhailte a ràdh nach robh am bàrd a’ cur earbsa ann an seallaidhean a bha bitheanta mu thimcheall air nuair a chleachd e an coimeas-cainnt seo gus tuairisgeul bàta ann an “Calum Beag” a dhealbhadh:[89]

> Mar fhiadh anns a’ bhùireadh air chùl nam beann fuara
> A’ dìreadh ri uchd garbhlaich ’s an sealgair ga ruagadh (17.1–2).

Thèid a thuigsinn gun robh comas sgrìobhaidh agus leughaidh aig MacGill-Eain, an dà chuid sa Bheurla agus sa Ghàidhlig, agus mar sin chan urrainnear a dhol às àicheadh gum b’ urrainn dha an ìomhaigh seo a thogail às a’ bhàrdachd sgrìobhte. Ach tha e cinnteach cuideachd gun robh e air a bhogadh ann an dualchas beul-aithrise, agus mar sin gu bheil e nas coltaiche gun tàinig i às an tùs sin – às na h-òrain a chluinneadh e. Mar sin dheth, mar a chithear ann an saothair corra bhàird eile, ’s e seis-riochdachadh a thèid a chleachdadh ann an abairt mar “beanntan fuara”. Chan e ìomhaigh nuadh no thoinnte a th’ innte is am bàrd a’ dèanamh coimeas eadar bàta agus fiadh, ach leis an t-seis-riochdachadh bheir e a-steach co-cheangal smuaintean às an dualchas air an robh an luchd-èisteachd co-aimsireil air fad eòlach, a’ beantainn ri gaisgeachd agus uaisleachd.

Mìr-riochdachadh
Dìreach mar nach bi mòran diofar eadar coimeas-cainnt agus dealbh-cainnt ann am bàrdachd Ghàidhlig, ’s ann a tha mìr-riochdachadh dlùth ri seis-riochdachadh. Ach ’s e seis-riochdachadh a th’ ann am “beanntan”, mar eisimpleir, air sgàth ’s gu bheil iad ceangailte ri faireachdainnean mun Ghàidhealtachd – m.e. an cianalas a bhios aig cuid a tha air falbh bhon dachaigh; ’s e seis-

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[87] MacColla, *Clàrsach*, 101.

[88] “In the west also are the island’s three small hills - their stature greatly enhanced by the flatness from which they rise.” https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/islands/tiree.shtml. ’S e an cnoc as àirde dhiubh sin Beinn Haoidhinis, 141 m (463 tròighean).

[89] Cameron, *Na Bàird Thirisdeach*, 143.

riochdachadh a th' anns a' chluaran oir anns an dualchas tha e ceangailte ri beachdan mu ghaisgeachd nan Gàidheal. Ach, ann am mìr-riochdachadh, cleachdar pàirt airson rudeigin slàn, agus mìnichidh Máire Ní Annracháin gum faicear seo ann am bàrdachd Ghàidhlig an t-seachdamh linn deug mar phàirt den chòd molaidh:[90]

> Synecdoche, by means of which the poet lists at great length the various attributes, moral and physical, of the hero, the admired woman, or the place, is the fundamental building block of the tradition of praise poetry.

Cluinnear mac-talla a' "chòd molaidh" ann am bàrdachd baile an naoidheamh linn deug.[91] 'S e Ailean an Rids fear de na bàird a chleachd an cleas seo mar mhìr-riochdachadh caran tric anns an t-saothair aige. Mar eisimpleir, 's e aithris air buadhan pearsanta – gu tric le sruthadh buadhaireach – a tha air fear de na feartan a nochdas gu tric ann am bàrdachd molaidh.[92] Chithear an dearbh rud ann an "Òran do dh'Alasdair mac Aonghais 'ic Mhuirich":[93]

> Fear àrd a' chùil bhàin a b' fheàrr nàdar fon ghrèin (2.2)

agus a-rithist ann an "Catrìona ni'n Dùghaill" ("dìleas" (3.11), "laghach" is "fialaidh" (3.13));[94] agus "Aonghas Camshron, an t-Ìleach" ("beusach, bòidheach" (5.4)).[95]

Cleachdaidh Iain Caimbeul mìr-riochdachadh anns "An Gàidheal an Tìr Chèin a' Moladh Tìr a Dhùthchais", is e ri sruthadh buadhaireach a sheallas buadhan pearsanta nan daoine a tha ceangailte ris an àite:[96]

> 'S i siud an dùthaich a thog na fiùrain,
> Bha gaisgeil, cliùiteach, bha iùlmhor, treun, (8.1–2).

Anns an òran molaidh "Lines to J. C. MacNiven, Esq., Manchester", nì an t-aon bhàrd iomradh air sloinntearachd cuspair an dàin tro ìomhaigheachd craoibhe:[97]

> Siud a' choill' a chinn gun chrìonach,
> Fìne uasal chloinn Mhic Nìen; (1.1–2)

'S e sruthadh buadhaireach a chleachdas Iain MacPhàidein ann an "Òran don Bhan-rìgh", mar an ceudna a' cur a' chòd molaidh ann an inntinn an luchd-èisteachd, agus a' ceangal cuspair an dàin ri buadhan pearsanta san dualchas:[98]

> Bu mhaighdeann bheusach bhanail thu,
> Bu chèile ghaolach cheanalt' thu, (6.1–2).

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[90] Ní Annracháin, "Metaphor", 164.

[91] John Macinnes, "The Panegyric Code in Gaelic Poetry and its Historical Background" ann am MacInnes, *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes*, deas. Michael Newton, 265–319 (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006); agus Black, *An Lasair*, 525–527.

[92] Faic "Personal Endowments and Social Roles", Black, *An Lasair*, 525.

[93] Rankin, *As a' Bhràighe*, 72.

[94] Rankin, *As a' Bhràighe*, 80.

[95] Rankin, *As a' Bhràighe*, 86.

[96] Campbell, *Poems*, 12.

[97] Campbell, *Poems*, 50.

[98] John MacFadyen, *An t-Eileanach* (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair, 1890), 118. Nithear iomradh air sreathan bàrdachd san leabhar seo le dà àireamh: bidh "(6.1)" a' ciallachadh "Rann 6, sreath 1".

Bho sheasamh boireannaich ann am "Mo Ghaol an t-Uasal", molaidh neach-aithris MhicPhàidein "fiùran" (1.1), is e na beachd-se sgileil ann a bhith a' làimhseachadh bàta, mar a bhios cuspairean nan òrain molaidh san dualchas:[99]

> Stiùireadair sgoth chaoil thu,
> Cho math 's thèid troimh na caoiltean,
> 'S nuair thèid an long na h-aodach
> Gur deas mo laoch na crannagaibh. (4.1–4)

B' urrainnear eisimpleirean a thoirt a-steach bho cha mhòr a h-uile gin de na bàird air an dèanar sgrùdadh an seo, ach seallaidh na tha shuas gun tèid mìr-riochdachadh agus seis-riochdachadh a chleachdadh leotha feuch an dùisgear smuaintean às an dualchas ann an inntinn an luchd-èisteachd. Agus, a-rithist, tachraidh seo a dh'aon ghnothach gus an cuirear gu feum co-cheangal smuaintean a tha freagarrach do chuspair a' bhàird.

Co-cheangal Smuaintean

Chaidh iomradh a dhèanamh mar-thà air co-cheangal smuaintean oir obraichidh an dà chuid seis-riochdachadh agus mìr-riochdachadh le bhith a' ceangal smuaintean ann an inntinn an luchd-èisteachd. Ach thèid smuaintean a cheangal le bàird ann an dòighean eadar-dhealaichte riutha sin cuideachd, mar a chithear ann an saothair Iain MhicLachlainn.

'S e "a chuilein mo rùin" (1.1) a chuireas an neach-aithris air a' phàiste ann an "Do Leanabh" leis "an Dotair Ruadh" Iain MacLachlainn. Bheir an gairmeachas seo a-steach smuaintean mun tutaig a tha ceangailte ri cuid de na ciadfathan: lèirsinn, gu follaiseach, cho math ri suathadh san t-seagh 's gum bi a leithid de chreutair a' toirt air duine a bhith airson a shlìobadh no a chaidreabh na ghàirdeanan.[100] A thuilleadh air sin, cuiridh beathach so-leònte mar sin impidh air daoine a bhith ga dhìon, agus 's ann a bhios an co-cheangal smuaintean seo iomchaidh do leanabh.

Ann an dàn eile a rinn an t-aon bhàrd, "Òran: 'Ged a tha mi 'n-nochd sa chòisridh'", seallaidh dealbh-cainnt agus coimeas-cainnt faireachdainn an neach-aithris mu a "leannan" (9.1):[101]

> Lasadh mo chridhe le gràdh dhut
> Nuair a nochdadh tu air fàire;
> 'S tu cho geal ri cobhair sàile
> Tigh'nn gu tràigh air bhàrr na tuinn. (10.1–4)

Bheir an dealbh-cainnt "lasadh" co-cheangal smuaintean ri dealasachd leis, ach a thuilleadh air sin bidh blàths cudromach do dhuine sam bith, is e a' toirt cofhurtachd a-steach, mar a bhios an neach-aithris an dòchas gu bheil faireachdainnean blàth is cofhurtail a' ghaoil gu bhith leis-san. Ach chan eil na co-cheanglaichean a bhios aig a' choimeas-cainnt cho sìmplidh.

Tha e cumanta ann an dàin gaoil boireannaich a bhith "geal", agus sin gun teagamh a' dèanamh iomradh air an craiceann ach, a thuilleadh air sin, bheir e an cothrom dhan luchd-èisteachd smuaintean a bhith aca a thaobh òigheachd agus deàrrsadh a thaobh deagh charactair no a thaobh cliùtha gun smal. Gidheadh, gu litireil nithear "cobhair sàile" le buaireadh na mara agus nì sin iomradh air cho claoidhte troimh-a-chèile 's a tha an neach-aithris, is e air falbh bho a leannan, "anns a' Ghalltachd" (11.2) "rè a' gheamhraidh" (11.1). Ann an "tùs an t-samhraidh" (11.3), ge-tà, tillidh e ach am faic e "anns na glinn" (11.4) i, agus 's e seis-riochdachadh a tha seo, a nì co-cheangal smuaine ris a' Ghàidhealtachd, ris an dachaigh aca, ri fasgadh agus ri sonas. Seallaidh seo dealasachd an neach-aithris a bhith a' tilleadh, agus seallar leis an aon ìomhaigh gu bheil e cinnteach gun tachair seo, oir

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[99] MacFadyen, *An t-Eileanach*, 1; agus faic m.e. an sgioba ann am "Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill" (Thomson, *Alasdair*, td.132, sreathan 1680–1813), no Ailean Mùideartach ann an "Tha Tighinn Fodham Èirigh" (Black, *An Lasair*, td.48, sreath 28).

[100] Thathas a' tuigsinn nach còrd coin ris a h-uile duine.

[101] Gillies, *MacLachlan*, 14.

bidh an "cobhar sàile / Tighinn gu tràigh air bhàrr na tuinn" (10.3–4). 'S ann a tha an tachartas nàdarra seo do-sheachanta, mar a bhios fios aig gach neach-èisteachd. Mar sin dheth, 's e ìomhaigh iomadh-fhillte a th' anns a' choimeas-cainnt seo, le co-cheangal smuaintean na chois. Cuiridh i an cèill beachd an neach-aithris mu nàdar a' bhoireannaich, cho mì-thoilichte 's a tha e gu bheil iad dealaichte bho chèile fad greis, agus cho deimhinn 's a tha e mu na tha gu bhith a' tachairt san àm ri teachd.

'S iad coimeas agus seis-riochdachadh an dà ghnè ìomhaigh as bitheanta ann am bàrdachd baile an naoidheamh linn deug, ach cleachdar corra sheòrsa eile aig amannan a leithid saobh-chiall nàdair, frith-bharail agus geàrr-fhacal. Chan eil rùm gu leòr an seo airson eisimpleirean dhiubh sin.

Dlùth-sgrùdadh air Dàn air Fad

Mar eisimpleir air na feartan a nochdas ann am bàrdachd baile, nithear a-nis dlùth-sgrùdadh air "Fàilte don Eilean Sgitheanach", a tha air fear de na h-òrain as ainmeile a rinn Niall MacLeòid.[102] 'S e òran molaidh a th' ann, agus 's e an t-eilean fhèin cuspair an dàin.

A' coimhead air an structair an toiseach, chithear gun cleachdar gairmeachas sa chiad thrì rannan, agus an neach-aithris a' bruidhinn gu dìreach ris an eilean; san ath dhà rann 's e muinntir an eilein air a bheil e a-mach. Ach bheir an siathamh rann atharrachadh, agus anns a' chòrr tha e soilleir gur e dàn mu bhuaidh nam Fuadaichean air an eilean a th' ann.

'S e dealbh fiadhaich den àite a gheibhear aig toiseach an dàin. An taca ri iomadh òran a mholas àite le bhith ag ràdh cho brèagha 's a tha na seallaidhean anns a' Chèitean, cleachdaidh an gairmeachas ris an eilean seo an t-ùrlar nòsail ann an eadar-sgaradh sam bi sìde a' gheamhraidh a' còrdadh ris an neach-aithris. Nochdaidh na beanntan "sùghmhor" (1.3) mar sheis-riochdachadh, is iad mòr, làidir, le tòrr susbaint annta, agus tha a' bheatha fhathast nam measg is i air a riochdachadh le beathach, "am meann" (1.4). Chithear dealbh mac-meanmnach den sgrios a nì na siantan air na coilltean beaga, a bhios "air a rùsgadh gu bonn" (1.8) leotha. Thèid coimeas a dhèanamh eadar na beanntan agus leòmhann (2.2), nach tèid a lorg ann an àite sam bith eile san dùthaich, agus seallaidh seo cho annasach agus fiadhaich 's a tha an t-àite. Nochdaidh coimeas-cainnt eile san ath rann, far am faicear oirean an eilein mar "challaid" (3.2) – crìoch no cnap-starra a chumas coigrich a-mach. Aig a' bhonn, chan fhaicear uillt bhrèagha a bhios a' dèanamh fuaim aighearach, ach bidh "srùlaichean gruamach" (3.6) "A' toirt nuallain air tràigh" (3.8). 'S e dealbh a chuireas cuideam air neart agus air a' ghruamachd a sheallas gaisgeachd, seach air bòidhchead.

A rèir coltais, 's ann às an neart seo a thàinig "na gaisgich / A dh'àraich do ghlacan" (4.2), mar gun robh iad air fàs a-mach às an talamh fhèin. Cuiridh seo ann an inntinn an luchd-èisteachd smuaintean a thèid air ais gu creideamh nam pàganach mun cheangal eadar am fearann agus na daoine dham buin e no eadar na daoine agus am fearann dham buin iad. Leanaidh an neach-aithris air le gnàthasan eile, an turas seo ceangailte ris a' chòd molaidh: bhiodh na laoich a dh'ainmichear an sàs ann an sealgaireachd, len "cuilbheirean glana" (4.6) agus "miol-choin" (4.7), agus bhiodh iad làidir gaisgeil an-còmhnaidh anns "a' bhatail" (5.2). Ach tòisichidh am pìos seo – an dà rann mu na daoine a tha air a bhith cho tapaidh san àm a dh'fhalbh – le clisgear agus le ceist ùrlabhairteach: "O! càit eil na gaisgich ...?" (4.1). Mura h-eil iad mun cuairt, tha iad air falbh, agus 's e seo an duilgheadas a bhios na laighe aig cridhe an dàin.

Seallar an t-atharrachadh a tha air tighinn air an àite bho na h-amannan sin le "Ach" (6.1) aig toiseach an t-siathamh rainn. Chithear gu bheil na "fàrdaichean" (6.1) a-nise falamh, agus an dà chuid iad fhèin agus a' "g[h]aisge" (6.3) a bh' aig na daoine a-nise marbh, mar a sheallar leis a' chaomh-ràdh nòsail "Nan cadal fon fhòd" (6.4). Ann an saobh-chiall nàdair, bidh a' ghaoth "gan caoidh" (6.7) "Le h-osnaidhean gruamach" (6.6), agus cruthachaidh am buadhair "gruamach" an seo smuaintean cianail a tha gu tur eadar-dhealaichte ris an fheadhainn a thig bho na "srùlaichean gruamach" (3.6) a sheallas gaisgeachd an eilein.

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[102] Meg Bateman, *Bàird Ghleann Dail* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2014), 22. Nithear iomradh air sreathan bàrdachd san leabhar seo le dà àireamh: bidh "(1.3)" a' ciallachadh "Rann 1, sreath 3".

Le ceist ùrlabhairteach eile, tionndaidh am bàrd am fòcas a dh'ionnsaigh an neach-aithris fhèin, is e a' faighneachd càit' an deach "gach sòlas" (7.1) a bh' aige na òige. Le sin, tuigidh an luchd-èisteachd gu bheil e air a bhith an sàs gu pearsanta anns na h-atharrachaidhean a tha air tighinn air an eilean. Tha "companaich [a] eòlais" (7.5) bhon àm sin a-nis "Air am fuadach" (7.6), agus tuigear gu bheil am bàrd a-mach air a' bhuaidh a thug na Fuadaichean air muinntir an àite. Le dealbh-cainnt sìnte nòsail san cleachdar seis-riochdachaidhean air am biodh an luchd-èisteachd eòlach, cuiridh an neach-aithris an cèill na tha seo a' ciallachadh dhàsan agus dhaibh uile: nuair a bha e òg, bhiodh na sòlais a bha aige a' toirt "meal às na ròsan" (7.3), ach a-nis tha "na ròsan gun bhlàth" (7.8).

Mar a thachras aig toiseach an t-siathamh rainn, tòisichidh rann a h-ochd le "Ach", agus a-rithist comharraichidh seo caochladh anns an t-sruth smuaine. Tha an t-eilean fhathast a' còrdadh ris an neach-aithris, a nì iomradh air a "ghleanntan" (8.1), a "shrathan" agus a "bheanntan" (8.2), is iad na h-eileamaidean a cheanglaich e na bu tràithe ri gaisge nan daoine. Ma tha dòchas ann, mar gum b' eadh, tha e stèidhichte air cho tapaidh 's a tha an t-eilean. Cleachdaidh am bàrd feartan daonna nuair a nì e gairmeachas air an eilean a-rithist: tha "ciabhagan" (8.5) air, agus "srònagan" (8.6), agus tha "coireal"(8.7) a' sealltainn gu bheil guth làidir aige – 's dòcha fuaimean na mara agus na sìde. Canaidh e cuideachd gu bheil e measail air an eilean ("'s caomh leam ..." 8.1), agus gur e a chlann ("do mhacaibh", 9.2) a th' ann am muinntir an àite. Aig an deireadh, tha samhlaidhean air an t-sìorraidheachd ann a tha ceangailte ris an eilean agus cho gaisgeach 's a tha e: bidh "siaban na mara / a' bualadh air carraig" (9.5–6) gu fiadhaich agus san fharsaingeachd bhiodh daoine ag aontachadh gur ann buan a bhiodh "an talamh" (9.3).[103] Fhad 's a mhaireas an t-eilean, le a ghruamachd, le a neart agus le ghaisge, fiù 's ma thachras mì-cheartasan a leithid nam Fuadaichean, bidh dòchas ann.

Cuiridh am bàrd seis-riochdachaidhean cumanta gu feum, ach le eadar-sgaradh ris an àbhaist, oir seallaidh iad cruas agus fiù 's an-iochd seach bòidhchead. Ged as e dàn mu na Fuadaichean a th' ann, thig teachdaireachd dhòchasach am follais gu bheil muinntir an àite calma treun air sgàth 's gun tug iad a-steach nan spiorad lùths an eilein far an d' fhuair iad an àrach. Taisbeanaidh dlùth-sgrùdadh grunn innealan litreachail a dh'obraicheas còmhla gus sin a chur an cèill, agus le eòlas air rannaigheachd-dùthchais tuigear gun cleachdar na h-abairtean nòsail, air am faodadh cuid "*cliché*an" a chur mar ainm, gus ceangal a dhèanamh eadar an luchd-èisteachd, an dualchas agus an tìr, ach am bi dòchas aca.

San Dealachadh

Chan i argamaid an uilt seo gun robh nua-bhàird an fhicheadamh linn ceàrr nan amasan no nan cuid saothrach: thagh iad rathad eadar-dhealaichte ris na bàird baile, nach robh ceàrr nas motha. Ma nochdas *cliché*an san t-saothair aca, tha adhbhar ann air an son – adhbhar a tha ceangailte ris an t-seòrsa ìomhaigheachd a chleachdas iad. Mar a sheallas rannaigheachd-dùthchais, tha an ìomhaigheachd seo stèidhichte air samhlaidhean a thig à ghnàth-eòlas coitcheann na coimhearsnachd, agus mar sin dùisgidh i co-cheanglaichean smuaintean a thig às an dualchas anns a bheil an dà chuid an neach-gnìomhaidh agus an luchd-èisteachd an sàs.

Anns an nobhail *Deireadh an Fhoghair* le Tormod Caimbeul, thig an teachdaireachd am bàrr gum bu chòir do na Gàidheil a bhith moiteil às an dùthchas aca, a' gabhail a-steach na h-àrainneachd, a' chànain, na dùthcha agus an dualchais.[104] Mar an ceudna, an àite a bhith a' meas bàrdachd baile le slatan-tomhais ceàrra a' mhòr-chultair, ma nithear dlùth-sgrùdadh air a' bhàrdachd mar a tha i, a' cumail rannaigheachd-dùthchais an cuimhne, chan eil adhbhar ann nach neartaich seo misneachd nan daoine ann an cultar nan Gàidheal.

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[103] 'S dòcha gun cuir seo *impossibilia* à saothair Bhurns ann an inntinn an luchd-èisteachd: "Till aa the seas gang dry, my dear, / And the rocks melt wi the sun" ("A Red Red Rose", sreathan 9–10, ann an Kinsley, *Burns*, 582).

[104] Tormod Caimbeul, *Deireadh an Fhoghair* (Dùn Èideann: Chambers, 1979).

Sanas Briathar: Gàidhlig–Beurla

aithris	*narrative*
ath-aithris	*repetition*
bàrdachd-dùthchais	*ethnopoetry*
caomh-ràdh	*euphemism*
caractar	*persona*
ceist ùrlabhairteach	*rhetorical question*
co-cheangal smuaintean	*association of ideas*
coimeas-cainnt	*simile*
cumadh	*form (of poem)*
dealbh-cainnt	*metaphor*
dealbh-cainnt sìnte	*extended metaphor*
eòl-ainm	*kenning*
frith-bharail	*antithesis, paradox*
gairmeachas	*apostrophe (ie. direct address)*
geàrr-fhacal	*pun*
glutranadh	*padding*
ìomhaigheachd	*imagery*
meadarachd	*metre*
mìr-riochdachadh	*synecdoche*
pearsa	*person (in grammar, 1st etc.*
pearsanachadh	*personification*
rannaigheachd	*versification*
rannaigheachd-dùthchais	*ethnopoetics*
reim	*register*
ruitheam	*rhythm*
samhla	*symbol*
samhlachas	*symbolism*
samhlachail	*figurative*
saobh-chiall nàdair	*pathetic fallacy*
seis-riochdachadh	*metonymy*
sruthadh buadhaireach	*adjectival serialisation*
structair	*structure*
tràth	*tense*
tròp	*trope*
ùrlar	*motif*

Liosta nam Bàrd: Breith agus Bàs

Ailean an Rids 1794–1868

Iain MacLachlainn 1804–1874

Eòghann MacColla 1808–1898

Màiri Mhòr 1821–1898

Iain Caimbeul 1823–1897

Iain MacGill-Eain 1827–1895

Dòmhnall MacEacharn 1836–1908

Niall MacLeòid 1843–1913

Iain MacPhàidein 1850–1935

Calum MacPhàrlain 1853–1931

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Digital Developments in Scottish Studies

WILLIAM LAMB, NATASHA SUMNER and GORDON WELLS
in conversation with VIRGINIA BLANKENHORN

Technology wasn't always a big part of Scottish Studies. For those whose scholarly training in our field involved the hands-on study of old manuscripts, or the transcription of voices from magnetic tapes, the steepest technological challenge may have been changing the ribbon in an electric typewriter or the battery in a tape recorder. The past few decades have been transformative. But while the pace of change is – and no doubt will remain – challenging, a variety of new technologies will increasingly shape how we gain access to source materials and the questions we ask about them. Greater understanding of these technologies will be essential for all of us.

To trace the impact that digital technologies have already had on our field and to get a sense of what lies ahead, *Scottish Studies* spoke with three colleagues involved in transforming access to specific areas of study. Our first interview was with Professor William Lamb of the University of Edinburgh's Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies, who has been involved in several pioneering, computer-based projects designed to facilitate access to source materials in ways that will allow us to ask questions we might not have otherwise imagined. The latest of these is a collaborative project entitled 'Decoding hidden heritages in Gaelic traditional narrative with text mining and phylogenetics':[1]

Before we delve into what your project is about, could you remind us what 'digital humanities' is?

Well, recently there's another term that I like a little bit better and that's 'computational humanities'; but I'll come back to that in a minute. 'Digital humanities' is a buzzword, and it means different things to different people. Somebody has remarked that, really, the way that people work in the humanities today, *everything* is 'digital humanities', or will be soon enough, and that anybody who sits in front of their computer and does humanities work is in the 'digital humanities'. It's at that point that I think the term becomes meaningless. What it *should* mean, I think, is any form of research pursuit in the humanities that is 'digitally driven' – facilitated by computers – or that relies on 'digital artifacts'. This would mean that the research could only be done through computing, or that it would rely upon something that's only available using a computer, say, a dataset of some kind.

So, if I'm sitting at my computer reading from PDF files of documents that were originally in print, is that not 'digital humanities'?

Maybe a better example would be if you use your computer to access [Tobar an Dualchais](http://www.tobaranndualchais.org/)[2] – then you're probably doing 'digital humanities', which, to me, means either using techniques that are digitally driven, or accessing databases that are on the Internet or in some digital form. If you look at a medieval manuscript in a PDF online, some people might argue that that's doing 'digital humanities'. But if you're just looking at something that happens to be online, I certainly wouldn't call that 'computational humanities' because you could get the same information by going to the library and looking at the original resource. On the other hand, 'computational humanities' implies the existence of material that has been developed by using a computer, and that you can only make use of by using a computer.

If you're thinking about this from the point of view of scholarship in, say, Celtic Studies, try to imagine that you're doing something that you wouldn't be able to do if you just had an archive or material objects. Let's say you're a medieval scholar, and you want to take a look at the prevalence of certain terms in manuscripts over a certain date-range; or maybe you want to look into how particular words change their meaning – what we call 'semantic drift' – in medieval Irish. If there were a database of the relevant documents – if a program had been developed to recognise and read the handwriting in those manuscripts and translate them into a form that you could manipulate and play with using the computer – you could then conduct your research by building a model on your computer. You could even do it manually, just kind of plugging-in some search terms, or automating some search terms. That would be an example of something a little bit more specialised, more digitally driven. You're doing something differently because you're using information that's been digitized, and you're using a computer to manipulate the digitized data to serve your research needs.

Do you think the availability of online datasets will come to drive the questions that researchers ask? I guess my concern is I would rather have an idea and then discover a digital tool that will help me, than have the digital tool suggest the idea to me in the first place.

I see what you're saying, but I don't think they're mutually exclusive. Computer technology certainly opens up possibilities that weren't even imaginable before, outside of science fiction. Sometimes if I'm working on a project – maybe increasingly now that I'm doing coding and things like that – a little bit of code may suggest something interesting to look at, because the technology will enable me to do so; but that's not to say that it's a good way of doing things. Maybe you're kind of just rolling the dice, like the proverbial monkey with a typewriter.

Right now, the humanities are under pressure in ways they weren't for a long time, and the existence of technology is reshaping how we think about everything. What worries me is students' assuming their research has to have a computer science angle because that's what's going to get funding now, or that's what's going get them a career later. Is this the case? This is still humanities, isn't it?

Absolutely. I guess it depends on the scale of what you want to do, in part, and there is room for a certain degree of pragmatism. I certainly discovered in my career that, by about 2014, it was pretty obvious that if I wanted to get the size of grants that I knew were out there, it was going to have to be something that would raise eyebrows, something that people weren't already doing with Gaelic and with ethnology. You certainly can get small pots of money if you're doing really interesting humanities projects, but it's a lot more difficult I think to get a major grant doing things that are paper-based, or things that don't seem to be 'cutting edge'.

Your latest project, 'Decoding hidden heritages in Gaelic traditional narrative with text mining and phylogenetics', has been awarded a big grant from the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council. What's it about, and why do you think it got funded?

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[2] http://www.tobaranndualchais.org/

I think they liked the international elements, for one thing. In addition to AHRC funds we're also receiving support from the Irish Research Council, and we're working with scholars from Scotland, Ireland, England and the United States. We've got a range of people, from early-career researchers to more senior academics who already have a track record in this sort of stuff. For instance, Professor Jamie Tehrani at the University of Durham had already done some really interesting work with phylogenetics – really proper computational humanities work that looks at deep-dating of international folk tales. This takes the ambition of the Finnish school – the 'historic-geographic' method – and kind of drags it into the 21st century. Meanwhile, I myself have been interested in artificial intelligence, how machine learning and text mining allow us to accumulate and then investigate massive corpora.

For this project, we're focusing on the material collected by the Irish Folklore Commission from the 1940s – now held by the [National Folklore Collection](#)[3] in Dublin – and the material held in the School of Scottish Studies Archives – specifically, the Tale Archive – here in Edinburgh, which dates from the 1950s. We want to find out what a large, digital collection of traditional narrative might tell us about historical cultural exchanges between Scotland and Ireland. By looking at the deep history of folk tales and storytelling in both countries, by investigating the internal structure of this particular corpus, we hope to better understand not only the structure and the detail of particular tales, but also the cultural and geographical connections between Gaelic Scotland and Gaelic Ireland, and the early communications networks that made those connections possible.

Can you give us a concrete example of what you mean?

Well, using different computational techniques we can look at a particular folk tale – one of the International Tale types that's widely spread in Scotland and Ireland, like 'the dragon Slayer' (ATU 300) or 'Red Riding Hood' (ATU 333). Of course it's not called 'Red Riding Hood' in Irish; but we could take a tale like that and we can build up a set of metadata – such as the actual tale motifs that appear in the story, or the gender, age or occupation of the storyteller from whom it was collected – and then make comparisons between versions of the story told in Gaelic Scotland and Ireland to see what features appear in tales from both areas.

So, you're not just comparing the internal data available from the tale text, but you're gathering demographic data about the people who told it?

Those are some of the types of questions that we're looking at, the demographic and historical and motif-driven relationships between things. If we look at textual relationships, we can do thematic analysis, so instead of looking at folk tales as belonging to particular tale types, we can look at the whole corpus. For instance, we could see how many different tales involve a certain type of character – a wolf, say – and what are the characteristics of those tales.

As regards demographics, we might look at the difference between tales that women told in Ireland versus the tales that men told. Were some tales told only by people of one gender, and not the other? What associations might there be between the vocabulary used by a storyteller and the gender or even the repertoire of the storyteller? We can then take what we find out about Irish storytellers and compare it to the Scottish Gaelic corpus, to see if the same distinctions apply to Scottish storytellers.

So if a woman were to tell a hero tale – I'm thinking of the daughter who really likes her father's hero tales and wants to tell one herself. In a conservative society like that of Gaelic Scotland, would she tell it the way her father told it, or would she tell it 'like a woman' – whatever that might mean?

This is a really interesting question; it's just the kind of thing that we're trying to determine. It's not just 'what tales did women tell?' as opposed to 'what tales did men tell?', but what sort of language

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[3] https://www.duchas.ie/en/info/cbe

did women or men use when they told the tales. We'll never be able to reach the end of these kinds of inquiries, but we're hoping that eventually we'll have a search engine that will allow people to look into questions like these, and we're doing some of this research ourselves.

What about material collected from elderly women who learned stories from long-deceased male family members, but who might never have told them themselves until the researcher turned up?

That's a good and fair point. I think it's probably a case of being careful with interpretation.

Going back to what I think the AHRC and Irish Research Council were interested in, there a lot of things that we're doing that will outlive this project. First of all, there will be this large corpus of text. All that metadata will be out there in public view forever, potentially, and accessible from various points. In addition – and this is fairly 'cutting edge' – we're working with language technology, building models for handwriting recognition both in Ireland and Scotland so we can go through all of these manuscripts semi-automatically, and then digitally tag the output so that it can be easily searched and analysed. We're focusing on traditional narrative at the minute, but we're developing techniques for handwriting recognition that could be applied to any other sort of text, such as songs, for example.

So assuming that you're able to implement a viable technological process for handwriting analysis for Irish and Scottish Gaelic, will it be robust enough to stand the test of time, or will it need constant updating as the technology becomes more sophisticated?

That's a really good question. I think the technology is mature enough at this point that the basic techniques will be the same. We're using a platform called Transkribus[4] which makes this type of work much more user friendly than if you're just entering code on your computer. But the question goes beyond that. We don't know, for example, what is going to happen with general user interfaces like Google. How will humans in the future interact with computers? That is an unknown quantity, and the landscape is constantly changing.

Returning to your grant application, do you think your funders may have envisaged your project having wider applicability beyond Scottish Gaelic and Irish – that it might be a good model for similar projects in other languages?

The AHRC and IRC understand that the project they're funding involves Irish and Gaelic, and I don't think they were looking beyond that. Obviously, the Irish Research Council is interested in our project because of the Irish language content. But who is to say what the priorities are going to be in the years to come? I do think the computational humanities will be increasingly important, and I think computer literacy in all different ways is going to be increasingly important. Machine learning and artificial intelligence are going to play a greater part in what we all do – there's no doubt about that. So, I think it's important for people to begin to educate themselves about these large language models like GPT-4, so that we understand what they can do and what they can't do, and what methodological and ethical problems might arise when we start to incorporate such models in our work. In this project, for example, ethical considerations will be a factor, because people who sat in their living rooms talking to researchers sixty or seventy years ago could never have imagined their names being in an online database. So we have to be careful if – and how – we use their names, and we have to be aware of any sensitivities in the material they gave us at the time.

But as regards other languages and linguistics projects, there's certainly a lot going on. I'm currently involved in five or six different research projects (a little crazy). There's a project we want to do based on the Gaelic material collected for the Linguistic Survey of Scotland[5] in the 1950s and

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[4] https://readcoop.eu/transkribus/
[5] https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery/cultural-heritage-collections/school-scottish-studies-archives/manuscripts-collections/linguistic-survey

1960s, all of which has been catalogued now thanks to a grant we got from Faclair na Gàidhlig.[6] There's a lot of work that we can do now with that material that we couldn't do before. Another project, which the Scottish Government just agreed to fund, deals with Gaelic speech recognition. We're aiming to develop automatic Gaelic subtitling for the BBC. At the moment, programmes in Gaelic are subtitled in English, but it doesn't work the other way around. As regards education, we would like to be able to help kids in Gaelic-medium schooling who may have learning difficulties and cannot write very well, to give them the same speech-recognition 'scaffolding' that's available for pupils in mainstream English-medium schools.

And then the third thing – and this is really my passion – would be to improve the search experience on audio-based websites like Tobar an Dualchais. Say you're interested in a formulaic expression – a word, or a phrase, or even a concept – and you can't get at it using the current search engine. Let's say you're interested in witches, but there's no way, for example, that you'd be able to find every single record that mentions the word *bana-bhuidseach* ('witch'). With speech recognition, we could just set the algorithm, the routine, and let it run through all the Gaelic language recordings on Tobar an Dualchais, and have it transcribe them – probably somewhat roughly in some cases and better in others – and then index everything using those transcriptions. Once we do that, we'll be able to find all sorts of proverbial needles in haystacks. We've got tons of transcriptions of many speakers already, so theoretically we could train machine learning models to understand those speakers and be able to transcribe the rest. Some people are hard to understand, particularly if you're not in the room with them. I've been learning Gaelic for thirty years but there are still speakers that I struggle with, so if we could train a speech recognition model to do even a pretty good job with these speakers, then we can use human intuition to fill in the gaps.

You told me that you were also talking with Gordon Wells about the work he's done with his project, Island Voices.[7] Some of his recordings are priceless – they are great for people who are trying to learn language and who have trouble accessing native speakers in a naturalistic environment. It was actually his material, in part, that allowed us to develop the first speech recognition model for good, colloquial, contemporary Gaelic, because so few recordings of contemporary speech had actually been transcribed in detail. We had material from the School of Scottish Studies Archives, but most of that was recorded decades ago, whereas Gordon's recordings and transcriptions actually provided the more modern register that we wanted. We were able to help him out, in turn, by providing subtitles for the videos he provided to us.

So overall you're talking about getting straightforward transcriptions of things that are currently hard to decipher – whether in manuscripts or in speech – and giving people a chance to connect with the spoken registers and the manuscript registers without having to study paleography or struggle with an audio recording that may be hard to hear...?

That's it. There is so much material to pull from and very few people working on it. Before I retire, I would love to help make these resources more accessible to people, because while Covid restrictions and other factors mean that it's increasingly difficult to visit the School of Scottish Archives in person, there is nevertheless a ton of material online – if we can make it more easily accessible.

One of the reasons that I think we've been successful with these grants is that we're trying to do several things at the same time. By developing projects based on material of ethnological or historical interest and adding an element of language technology we can accomplish various things. First, we can extract information not just about what people are saying but how they're saying it, what their speech reveals about their time, their age, their station in life, their location, their relationships with other speakers – so that provides a linguistically interesting corpus, as well as a culturally interesting one. But in addition to that, we're building large databases that we can search, that we can use as

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[6] http://www.faclair.ac.uk/

[7] https://guthan.wordpress.com/about/. Our interview with Gordon Wells begins on page 76 below.

training data for speech recognition, or large language models, or predictive text, or grammar correction – things that we're starting to take for granted in English, but which need to be invented for Gaelic. The people who recorded their stories and songs, and the researchers from the School of Scottish Studies who visited them – they couldn't have imagined how their contributions would one day be used, enriching all kinds of lived experience.

Finally, maybe we need to talk about stability and security. What happens when you've come to depend upon a certain online resource and it suddenly changes or disappears altogether?

Yeah, this is one of the problems. If you have a regular book, you can pull it off the shelf and it's never going to change. But the problem with online databases, websites, et cetera is that the code that underlies them can go out-of-date or potentially become compromised. As I understand it, one database of ours here at the University of Edinburgh, the Carmichael Watson Project,[8] had to be taken down because the underlying code had security flaws that got worse over time, and the university couldn't risk keeping it online. Now the problem is that bringing it back would probably require as big a grant as the one they got to do the project in the first place.

  More recently I think people have become aware that longevity – maybe 'redundancy' or 'duplication' are better words – needs to be built into these systems so that if one part fails the whole thing doesn't have to go down. In other words, the datasets need to be independent of the 'front end' – the user interface, the website – so that even if a problem develops with a given website, the database itself isn't lost, but can still be accessed elsewhere. As long as we ensure that the data is archived properly, it will have value independently of what may change at the front end.

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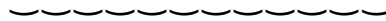
Our next interview was with Harvard Associate Professor Natasha Sumner, and illustrates some of the research potential that digitisation of resources will unleash. The recently launched **Fionn Folklore Database** provides tools that will help researchers locate and study the vast quantity of folklore material relating to the hero Fionn mac Cumhaill, who is said to have defended Ireland and Scotland from foreign and supernatural threat during a legendary third-century Golden Age:
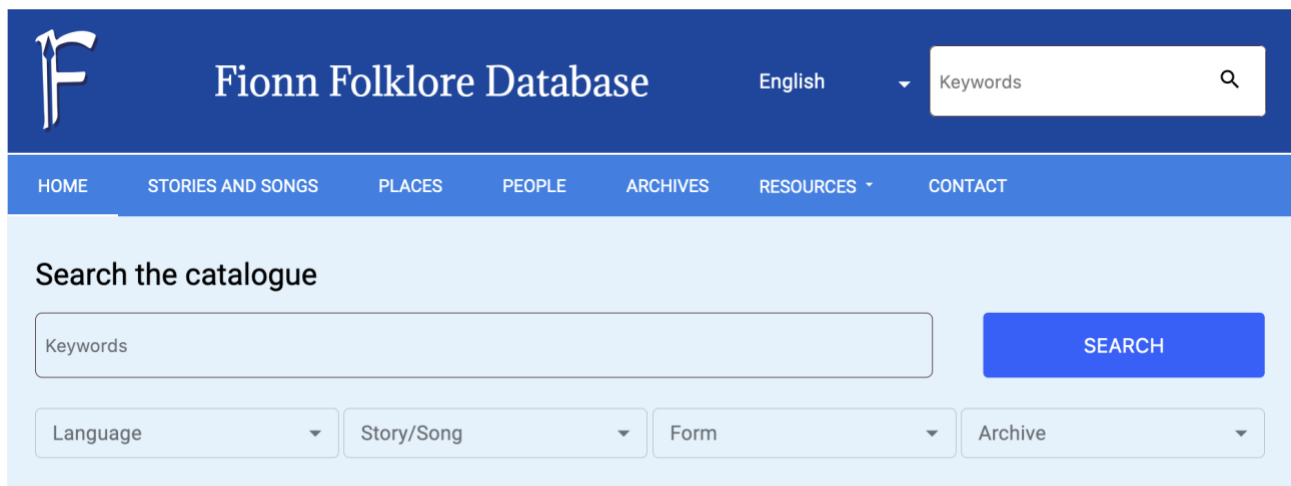
What convinced you that a resource like the Fionn Folklore Database was needed?

I think a lot of people in the Gaelic academic world, and probably also the broader public, would agree that Fionn mac Cumhaill is one of the most important heroes in the Gaelic corpus, if not *the*

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[8] https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery/crc/research-resources/gaelic/carmichael-watson

most important hero. As the database [landing page](#)[9] says, stories and songs about Fionn and his warrior band (known as the Fianna in Ireland and *An Fhèinn* or *na Fiantaichean* in Gàidhlig) form the most prolific body of narrative in the Gaelic tradition, spanning 1,400 years of continuous literary and oral transmission. In the oral tradition alone, I've identified more than 3,500 stories and songs about them since the beginning of folklore collecting in the eighteenth century. So, Fionn is important to an understanding of the Gaelic world. The collected body of folklore about Fionn and his men is significant and *should* be important to our discipline.

Unfortunately, not a lot of research has been done on the Fionn (or Fenian) oral corpus, despite how important it is, and there's a very good reason for that. Until now, much of the material has been almost hopelessly inaccessible. The first problem is one of physical accessibility: the tales are scattered across numerous archives throughout Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Mann, England, Canada, and the United States. It takes a lot of time and effort to visit all of those archives to locate Fionn tales and lays, and I say that from personal experience! Of course, the relatively recent creation of digital repositories like [Tobar an Dualchais](#) and [Dúchas.ie](#) alleviates some of the difficulty of access, but not all archives are digitized, and none of the relevant archives has yet digitized their entire collection, so the geographical dispersal of the Fionn corpus remains an issue.

The second problem is the accessibility of the tales *within* the archives. It can be pretty hard to locate the Fionn tales you're looking for with the finding aids available in the archives, or using their digital resources.

Is that a failure of the archives, or is there a bigger problem here?

It's absolutely not a failure of the archives. I don't want to malign any of the hard-working archivists of these collections! No, the happenstance cataloguing of Fionn folklore across archives has everything to do with the nature of the material. Because we're dealing with a native heroic tradition, there isn't a lot of overlap with the international cataloguing systems that most archives use, like the Aarne-Thompson index of international folklore, or the various national migratory legend indices. There have been some efforts to organize the Fionn corpus categorically before. I'm thinking in particular of Alan Bruford's *Gaelic Folk-Tales and Mediaeval Romances*,[10] but there are also other limited Fenian tale lists, like the one in the folklore collecting handbook prepared for the Irish Folklore Commission by Seán Ó Súilleabháin,[11] and Mícheál Briody also did a lot of work with Irish Fenian and hero tales in the 1980s. But there has not historically been a universally agreed-upon typology, so archival documentation of Fionn tales can be quite happenstance. A cataloguer may have reliably recorded several instances of a very popular tale, but for many of the others the only thing noted on an index card might be 'Fenian' or a character's name: 'Diarmaid', for instance. With a corpus this large, that kind of documentation – while appreciated because, as I said, there was no agreed-upon typology for this stuff and archivists were doing their best – that sort of documentation is a real stumbling block. It's simply not conducive to scholarly investigation at the pace university administrations expect us to produce research these days. It's entirely understandable that only a few persistent scholars have ventured into the field of Fenian folklore.

So how are you addressing these problems?

The Fionn Folklore Database[9] is the solution that allows researchers to work with Fenian folklore. In response to the geographical problem, it functions as a union catalogue, bringing together records from all of the different archives in a single, searchable database. And addressing the cataloguing problem, it provides the first ever comprehensive categorization of Fenian folklore, providing a

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[9] See image above; https://fionnfolklore.org/#/

[10] Alan Bruford, *Gaelic Folk-Tales and Mediaeval Romances* (Dublin: The Folklore of Ireland Society, 1969).

[11] Seán Ó Súilleabháin, *A Handbook of Irish Folklore* (Dublin: An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann, 1942).

uniform categorical system across all archives, which enables the sort of broad comparative analysis that is critical to the study of folklore.

That sounds great, but it must have taken some work to make it all happen. How did the project get off the ground? Were there any bumps in the road?

There's no such thing as a completely smooth road, but I'm very thankful to my sponsors (Harvard University and the Government of Ireland's Emigrant Support Programme) for making it as bump-free as possible.

The project officially got its start in 2019 when I got funding to hire the first research assistant, but I've been working on it for much longer than that. The basis for the database is a catalogue of Fenian folklore that I began to compile a little over a decade ago, which eventually became an appendix to my doctoral dissertation. I began compiling a catalogue because I wanted to research female tellers of Fenian folklore, but I found that I couldn't do so properly without being able to define the limits of the corpus. So that's what started me on my journey to document Fenian folklore.

I've already mentioned some of the previous work, and I discuss the process of cataloguing in an essay published on the database website.[12] That initial work was decidedly not digital – and really, much of the back work for many current digital humanities projects probably looks a lot more like traditional humanities than one might assume. After trawling through every tale list and card catalogue I could get my hands on, I went to the recordings and the manuscripts and I verified all of my source data, re-catalogued when necessary, documented additional metadata for each tale, and catalogued a ton of previously undocumented Fenian folktales. All of this took many months of more than full time work.

Maybe one day AI will be able to do some of those tasks using speech and handwriting recognition to transcribe the tales (the ones that are digitally available), and then cross-referencing with typological documentation to automatically catalogue and record metadata. But in this context, it required a lot of skilled labour to compile the data set for the Fionn Folklore Database. And even in a future AI context, a lot of human verification might still be needed without concurrent advances in linguistic and topographical scholarship. Given non-standardized spellings, dialectal vocabulary (in more than one language), and local place names that are irregularly documented in scholarship, some aspects of data collection and regularization may remain specialized human skills. By way of example, the geodata (latitude and longitude) for every place in the Fionn Folklore Database had to recorded by hand by research assistants because, despite urging from our developer, that process couldn't be automated for all of the reasons I just gave.

If so much had to be done in a 'traditional' humanities way, why embark on a digital project at all? Why not just publish a folklore catalogue?

That question gets right to the heart of the matter. In fact, I had 'traditional' resources in mind even as I conceptualized the database. The Fenian tale type descriptions in the database approximate the structure of an international tale type description in the ATU index, as you can see in *Fig. 1*.[13]

I chose to go with a database rather than a more traditional reference book for a couple reasons. First, an online database is much more malleable than a printed book; you can update its content a lot more easily. I think that's important when you're dealing with a typology. All typological systems are man-made, imposed, and fallible; there's no such thing as a perfect one. The Aarne-Thompson index has been thoroughly revised a couple times – it's now the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index – and aspects of its categorization are still subject to query. Revisions to the Fionn Folklore Database are also likely in the future. But unlike the ATU index, we'll be able to make those changes right away; we won't have to wait for another print run.

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[12] https://fionnfolklore.org/#/creating-the-catalogue

[13] Uther, Hans Jörg, Antti Aarne, and Stith Thompson, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography*, 3 vols (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004).

The ability to create reliable, user-friendly online databases is really a game-changer for this kind of research. It may be more expensive to create and maintain, but when scholarly thinking changes, you don't need to wait years or even decades to publish a revised edition of a print catalogue; you can make the updates in real time. That's valuable.

Fig. 1. A Fenian tale type description (https://fionnfolklore.org/#/lays/cml)

Was the user experience also a concern?

Yes, absolutely. I'd say it was the primary reason I opted for a database over a print resource. A database is just a lot more *useful*. Users can perform a tailored search of a database and come up with

a list of results aligned with a specific research question. While a simple search is possible from the landing page, the search results page provides a faceted search tool that allows for multiple ways of isolating the material the user wants to work with. A basic search for 'Bran', for instance, will take the user to a page where they can filter the records containing the name of Fionn's hound according to criteria such as the language used, the form of the story (narrative or song), date and location of the recording, location of the archive(s) where the item is held, and whether or not the item has been digitised.[14] From there, users can easily click through to a storyteller and discover other Fionn tales they've told, or to an archival collection to see how much more Fenian material is held there, or to other tellings of a tale by the same storyteller. For digitised material, links to external digital archives allow users direct access to available audio or manuscript records of an individual item (see *Fig. 3*).

So, discoverability is much, much easier with an online database. There's also a whole slew of data visualization tools that developers can implement to help draw points of connection that may not be readily apparent in a more traditional resource. The one we've incorporated is a dynamic digital map that shows up when viewing individual records and displays storyteller and collector locations specific to that record.

Fig. 3. Linked data on a tale page (https://fionnfolklore.org/#/item/2301)

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[14] https://fionnfolklore.org/#/search/?keywords=Bran&page=1

In Figure 3, for instance, we can see that the item was recorded in Tiree. But you can also go to the places page and see all of the locations in the database on a single map.[15] That's a great way to see the density of material collected from different areas, and to locate Fionn folklore collected in a specific place. If you click a marker on the map, you can navigate to Fionn tales associated with people in that location.

I also felt strongly about making the user interface trilingual, so speakers of Irish and Scottish Gaelic wouldn't have to navigate a database of primarily Gaelic folklore through the medium of English if they didn't want to. This feature means that the database can potentially be used in Gaelic-medium classrooms. In fact, one of our objectives for 2023-24 is the creation of educational materials to accompany the website.

So, the same information that you might find in a reference book can be presented in a much more effective way in an online database – a way that will encourage more use, more exploration, and I hope more scholarship.

You mentioned earlier that the database was expensive to create, and it will also be expensive to maintain. Is there any chance that the resource could disappear in the future?

Yes, in comparison with a print resource, a database is expensive and labour intensive. I don't think anyone should take on a digital project without considering what level of effort is going to be required, and thinking through the long-term longevity of the project. There will be a lot of grant writing involved – some successful, some not – and at least some degree of ongoing oversight, although the amount will depend on the nature of the project. If the infrastructure is going to be complex – if it will need to be built from scratch, like the Fionn Folklore Database, to achieve the desired results – then there will be a lot of decisions to make in conversation with the developer, and the timeline may be fairly lengthy. It took over three years from the initiation of this project until the soft launch of the database in June 2022, and the data set – all of the metadata I compiled for thousands of Fenian folktales – already existed. So that time was all spent doing data preparation and going back and forth with the developer about aspects of the design. Granted, there was a global pandemic during that time that slowed the research assistant hiring process and impacted the speed of development, but it was still a lengthy and labour-intensive process.

There is also the ongoing cost of web hosting to consider, although that's comparatively quite low, and the cost and effort associated with periodic upgrades. Technological development moves fast, and when planning a digital project, it's necessary to consider the likelihood that your website will need upgrading every seven years or so to keep it from going obsolete – to keep the code from 'breaking'. Those upgrades likely won't be cheap.

So, a digital project like an online database requires ongoing funding and administrative oversight. Without those, the resource absolutely could disappear. I'm future-proofing the database as well as anyone can. I have no intention of giving up administration of it, and I'm optimistic that funding sources will be available down the road when serious upgrades are needed. As more and more new digital projects get underway, I think there will be increasing pressure to support their ongoing maintenance, and funders will likely respond to that need. But I'm also mindful that obsolescence is possible for any digital project. If the database is ever in that situation, the current plan is for the data to be archived in the Harvard Dataverse.[16] The present user interface is impermanent, but even if the website someday ceases to be maintained and upgraded, the data will remain accessible. And there's always the potential to publish a print resource down the road, if that's something people would want.

You said that you're currently creating educational materials to accompany the database. Are any other future developments planned?

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[15] https://fionnfolklore.org/#/places
[16] https://dataverse.harvard.edu/

Yes, certainly! We've begun, in a limited capacity, to add storyteller biographies to the site. Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart composed two excellent biographies for us for [William Robertson](#) and [Sarah Fletcher](#). We hope to add more in the future. I also know of a large amount of Fenian *seanchas* that still needs to be catalogued and added. A research assistant began that process last year, and I'd like to hire someone to continue that work.

User interface improvements are also possible. We've held several workshops in universities, libraries, and other venues over the past year, and collected a lot of helpful feedback that will inform developments over the next few years. To some extent these will depend on what the developer thinks is possible, but they may include things like refining the faceted search capabilities so that users can isolate for even more data points, or creating additional visualizations like graphs or timelines.

People have also asked me whether we'd consider including literary sources – so shifting from a Fionn folklore database to just a Fionn database. Maybe that's something to consider in the distant future, but it would be a much, much bigger project. There are thousands of literary Fenian texts in manuscripts, many of which haven't been catalogued yet. I'd love to get to that point someday, but right now we're sticking with the folklore. It's severely understudied and there's a whole lot of it to explore.

That said, I've started hearing people reference the database at conferences, and it makes me really, really happy. I hope more and more people find it useful. I'll be keeping an eye on the Google Analytics and watching out for new Fenian folklore research inspired by the database.

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Our final interview was with Gordon Wells, longtime director of the **Island Voices/Guthan nan Eilean project** launched at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig eighteen years ago.[17] His work illustrates how a digital humanities project can not only facilitate scholarship, but also help to meet the practical challenges facing second-language learners and the communities they seek to understand.
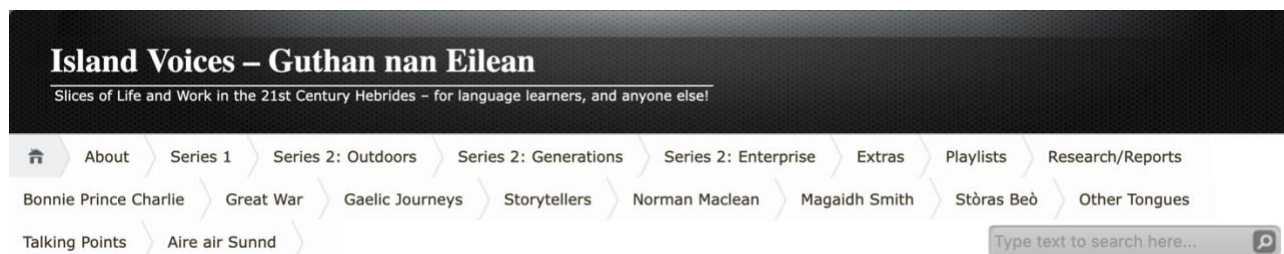
How did the project come into being – and why?

Island Voices started in 2005 with funding from the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci programme. It emerged from a collaborative project between Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and a number of European institutions interested in technology-assisted language teaching, particularly with reference to less-resourced languages. While the EFL [English as a Foreign Language] industry produces teaching resources in all sorts of media, this project was about making sure that the affordances available through technology were put into the hands of those teaching lesser-used and sometimes minoritized languages such as Basque, Danish, Romanian and, of course, Gaelic. There were probably eight or nine different languages represented.

Each partner in the consortium had to produce a set of exemplar materials, and because Sabhal Mòr Ostaig was the only UK partner we were charged with producing materials not only in Gaelic but also in English, establishing the bilingual approach from the very start. This suited my own agenda, because as someone based in the Western Isles it was clear to me that, while this is a Gaelic-speaking community, it's not a monolingual community. It seems to me that in any kind of language-teaching or language-planning enterprise you have to start from the ground up and understand the linguistic

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[17] https://guthan.wordpress.com/

environment in which you're operating; and yes, you might want to focus on just one of those languages, but you don't do that effectively by ignoring the existence of the other – you have to engage with the way these two languages coexist with each other at any given moment.

So, who was the project specifically designed for? Obviously, English speakers who want to learn Gaelic; were there others?

Of course. I mean, you can't produce sample materials for teaching English unless you've got a genuine audience for them. At the time this project was funded, a number of new countries – especially eastern European countries – were joining the EU, so there was a significant influx of people from Poland, Latvia, Romania and Bulgaria into Scotland, and the impact was noticeable. For a few years, between about 2005 and 2009, Russian was probably the third most spoken language in the Western Isles because it functioned as a lingua franca for all of those coming from eastern Europe, and these people provided a genuine clientele for the English language teaching materials we were developing. While the project was meant to illustrate a methodology for developing technology-based teaching materials, I also wanted to make it meaningful and useful in practical terms for people who were actually living here.

As regards the Gaelic-learning constituency, it was clear to me that while plenty of materials existed for beginners, there was a paucity of materials for post-beginners and especially for autonomous learners. While I believe some of our videos have been taken into language classrooms, I was more concerned with providing resources for individuals who weren't in a position to sign up for a graded class, but who might be living in a community setting where they needed to find their own resources.

Have you collected any data about how people have been accessing the site?

Oh yes. We're coming up to a half million hits on the Island Voices YouTube site; and something like 5,000 people have either signed up to email notifications from our WordPress site or followed us on Facebook or (what formerly called itself) Twitter.[18] I can't really say who these people are or why they're interested, or whether they are using it in the way we originally anticipated; but people continue to use it in a variety of ways. Having said that, the real impact of Island Voices is hard to measure in concrete terms, because the philosophy behind the project has been to expose members of a community to a set of resources, and invite them to use those resources in whatever way empowers them. This means that the project may go off in all sorts of directions which can't be predicted beforehand, but which, when you look back, seem like natural developments.

Apart from learners of English and of Gaelic, what other user communities have you been able to identify since the project started?

In the initial series,[19] as well as in Series 2 (Outdoors, Generations, and Enterprise),[20] the focus was on the local community in the Western Isles, trying to expose post-beginners to authentic speech and situations by using short videos, produced by members of the community, to showcase local events and organisations. But because local people were involved in making these videos, and because the local flavour was injected from the very beginning, this content[21] proved to be of interest not just to language learners but especially to members of the Western Isles communities themselves. That gave us a way of breaking out from just a language teaching orientation to something broader and hopefully reflective of the interests and needs of the local community right across the board.

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[18] https://www.youtube.com/@IslandVoicesVideos and https://guthan.wordpress.com/about/.
[19] https://guthan.wordpress.com/series-one/
[20] https://guthan.wordpress.com/series-two-outdoors/; https://guthan.wordpress.com/series-two-generations/; and https://guthan.wordpress.com/series-two-enterprise/.
[21] https://guthan.wordpress.com/playlists/

So local people are following the content of your videos about, say, furniture restoration and recycling, or tractor repair, or windsurfing in the Western Isles…?

Exactly. We know they're interested because they're talking about it and sharing it online. I published a blog post[22] in 2020 that compared viewing figures after I'd shared a video with the 'South Uist Appreciation Society' group on Facebook, and then with some other Facebook groups for Gaelic learners all over the world. I mean no harm to Gaelic learners – I'm one myself – and there's an energy and an enthusiasm amongst Gaelic learners which is to be admired. Nevertheless, it was quite clear that when you post something on social media such as the 'South Uist Appreciation Society' or the 'North Uist Appreciation Society' the expression of interest is much, much greater. This isn't a scientific comparison, but even when you look at groups having roughly the same number of members, the uptake from local community groups in the Western Isles is always higher than from these rather more rarefied and scattered Gaelic-interest groups.

So, having started as a project designed for Gaelic learners and English learners, your project now has a third constituency in the local communities themselves?

It's been interesting to work through this process, exploring how new technology can be used in support of a language whose use is in decline – teaching that language, of course, but not necessarily restricted to teaching. We started with the short, narrated documentaries – the pretty pictures of Uist, and windsurfers and lazy beds – the scene-setters for the real thing, which was showing how people actually speak. Even in the first two programme series we included some interviews – in terms of recording a video it doesn't get much easier than plonking a camera down in front of somebody – and this gave us some wonderful material. Of course, it then needed to be transcribed, as transcriptions are also part of the package; but it became clear that there was tons and tons of stuff – particularly if you think about it not just in terms of serving the needs of people teaching and learning languages, but in terms of giving more of a voice to members of the community, representing them in ways that they might not have seen themselves represented. So it became clear that there was lots we could do to support that side of things.

For example, we've got a page on Island Voices which brings together all the recordings made as part of the Bonnie Prince Charlie project[23] developed by Stòras Uibhist, the South Uist Community landowner, in which people share their lore and their understanding about the Prince's time on the run in Uist and Benbecula. We've got a page on the Great War,[24] led by Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath [The North Uist Historical Society], who asked Island Voices to help with disseminating their recordings, many of which were made by people going out with an iPad and just recording their neighbours talking about their fathers or grandfathers or grandparents and their involvement from the outbreak of World War 1. Obviously I was very happy to facilitate those projects, and to encourage more people – individuals as well as community groups – to get in touch.

Probably the most eye-catching of the individuals who contacted us was Norman Maclean,[25] whom we'd briefly recorded soon after he had returned to settle in Uist, so the relationship was already there. But then he came to us and said, 'I've got these stories which I need to get out there – so would you like to record them?' Of course! So we got Norman actually telling some of his own short, humorous stories[26]– you know the sort of thing he did.

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[22] https://guthan.wordpress.com/2020/10/27/gaelic-virality-a-snapshot/
[23] https://guthan.wordpress.com/bonnie-prince-charlie/
[24] https://guthan.wordpress.com/the-great-war/
[25] https://www.scotsman.com/news/obituaries/obituary-norman-maclean-scholar-entertainer-and-gaelic-legend-2469432. See also https://guthan.wordpress.com/2017/09/18/dileab-thormoid-dhuinn/.
[26] https://guthan.wordpress.com/sgeulachdan-thormoid/

After that it was a natural second step to record his life story (or bits of it) – Saoghal Thormoid,[27] which we did just a couple of years before the end of his life. It was a highlight of my career, going in to sit with Norman Maclean for an hour a day for a week and just switching on the cameras and letting him go. The project was funded as part of some ethnographic research Soillse[28] wanted to do, recording the voices of community members who, probably since the War, would have witnessed extraordinary changes in the use and practice of Gaelic, making sure that their accounts of those changes were recorded in the language of the community. The Maclean recording project was, in a sense, a test drive, I just switched on the buttons and let him talk, so it's not the sort of polished broadcast standard you get on TV; but that's not necessarily a bad thing, and may actually bring people closer to the 'real thing', as it were.

So, you don't necessarily want something that looks like it could go straight onto mainstream BBC Alba – you want something where it's natural and where people feel comfortable?

Absolutely – and it's been a crucial part of the motivation. A primary tenet of linguistics, but one that seems to get forgotten a good bit, is the primacy of speech.[29] This is such an obvious fact, but so often we think of language learning as the 'four skills' – listening, speaking, reading, writing – and if we're missing any of those we think we're inadequate in some way. But in fact, none of us writes before we speak, and if we didn't speak we wouldn't be able to write. It's only when we see people speaking naturally to each other, listening to each other, comprehending each other quite easily without any recourse to the written word, that we can get back to an understanding of what real language behaviour (apart from sign language) is.

Someone who can't read or write terribly well may even feel a sense of shame in some circumstances. Lots of Gaelic speakers – particularly older people – never became comfortable reading and writing Gaelic, because all their literacy training in school was in English, and all their reading and writing is in English. So if, for example, you're a Gaelic speaker and you're invited to submit an opinion in a consultation exercise, if that invitation comes in written Gaelic, then you know you're expected to reply in written Gaelic, and your response is likely to be 'No, thank you, I'm not going to touch it!' Even my mother, who studied Gaelic at university, when she wrote letters home it was always in English. For a long time it's been a linguistic feature of this community to be not just bilingual but also 'bimodal' – there was never any doubt that my mother would speak Gaelic within the family, but communication in writing was always in English.

It's ironic that nowadays, since the relatively recent advent of Gaelic-medium education, some members of the community feel that, because young people are now being taught to read and write Gaelic, everything is fine and the language is now on the right track. This is an example of what I call the 'privileging of literacy' – the notion that proper linguistic competence depends upon being able to read and write. But I think that, in terms of education, our focus on those skills ignores what's most valuable about Gaelic, which is the liveliness, the inventiveness, of the spoken language.

You told me earlier that the project is currently at an inflection point. What are your thoughts about the coming changes? Will it continue in the direction of language teaching, or community involvement, or both?

Possibly both. From my own point of view, as the years have gone by the interest in just being part of the community, encouraging participation and representing the community, has become a higher and higher priority. Having said that, I'm a trained language teacher, but I don't see the community

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[27] https://guthan.wordpress.com/sgeulachdan-thormoid/

[28] http://www.soillse.ac.uk/en/

[29] Gordon Wells (2020). 'Reading Island Voices: Issues around the primacy of speech and the privileging of literacy, from a Hebridean viewpoint'. *Changing English, 27:1*, 109-117.
DOI: 10.1080/1358684X.2019.1660620. Also summarised at
https://guthan.wordpress.com/2020/05/18/studies-in-culture-and-education/.

orientation as being detrimental, but rather as being an advantage from a language-teaching perspective. What language learners often need is the opportunity to put what they get in the classroom into practice, and it's often a big jump to go from the 'teacher talk' of the classroom to the way people actually do talk to each other in the community. So I think that, for learners, the focus on community involvement and representation in the videos we've produced can be a kind of bridge between those two language environments.

How do you think learners of Gaelic are, in fact, profiting from the tools you put at their disposal?

I've written a couple of papers about the whole learner/fluent speaker interface and how it's negotiated.[30] I think the most successful learners are the ones who actually start unlearning some of what they learned in the classroom – you know, they start saying 'weekend' instead of 'deireadh seachdain' and things like that. This then becomes a more genuine interaction, a sort of levelling of the playing field for people who, on the one hand, have been raised in a Hebridean home, and on the other hand, those who are interested in Gaelic, who have all sorts of ambitions and motivations for learning it, but who haven't grown up speaking it. There's an inevitable naiveté on the part of learners who aren't familiar with the community, and they can have expectations about the community's attitudes towards Gaelic which turn out to be unfounded once they hit the ground. Island Voices may give them a chance to warm up a bit, to see code-switching happening naturally, to hear Gaelic as it is really spoken rather than as read from a book. Then you know they'll be ready for some of the challenges of speaking Gaelic in real life. That's definitely part of the motivation. Because however well you've learned the written codes for Gaelic – and some people have learned it very well indeed – what the classroom experience of Gaelic brings you to is just the starting point – not the end point.

Finally, I'm thinking about some of the ethnographic and linguistic material you've developed. Is Island Voices proving a useful resource for researchers and collaborators? Is it giving people ideas for other projects?

Yes – to both of those. There's a 'Research/Reports' page[31] on the site that provides some project documentation, and provides access to a number of associated research projects dealing with topics we've talked about here. We also have a page detailing our Gaelic-related contributions[32] to the Aire air Sunnd ('Attention to Wellbeing') project,[33] a collaboration between Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath [The North Uist Historical Society] and a consortium of Scottish universities. And of course, the videos themselves constitute data sets that anybody can use.

It's also worth noting that – as you recall I mentioned that the project with Norman Maclean was meant as a sort of 'test drive'; the interview model we trialled in his case has now been followed up by Stòras Beo nan Gàidheal and the Language Sciences Institute of the University of the Highlands and Islands, who have produced some fifty video interviews[34] with Gaelic speakers from throughout the Western Isles. Many of these interviews are also accessible through the Island Voices[35] website, where they're accompanied by full Gaelic transcriptions linked to *Am Faclair Beag*, allowing users to follow at their own pace and look up unfamiliar words as they go (see. *Fig. 4*). The user-friendliness is very important, and has made learning far easier than it was for earlier generations.

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[30] Gordon Wells (2011), 'Perceptions of Gaelic Learning and Use in a Bilingual Island Community: an Exploratory Study' Sleat: Soillse; and (2013), 'Gaelic Digital Literacies in a Bilingual Community: a Sampling of Practices and Preferences'. Sleat: Soillse. Both available at: https://guthan.wordpress.com/research/

[31] https://guthan.wordpress.com/research/

[32] https://guthan.wordpress.com/aire-air-sunnd/

[33] http://ceut.northernheritage.org/wellbeing/

[34] https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLOku8VJ3RjvLcYwbr_0s6qYZiySRDH_Ol

[35] https://guthan.wordpress.com/storas-beo/

Fig. 4 Transcriptions allow listeners to follow along and look up unfamiliar words as they go.

Another way in which the project is making an impact is in the area of what I call 'internationalisation' or 'multilingualisation'. Our 'Other Tongues' [36] page shows how some of our video documentaries – basically just picture sequences with a recording stitched on top that were originally narrated in English and/or Gaelic – have been easily transferable into other languages. So far, we've got documentaries narrated in over twenty languages, including 'Peatcutting' in Polish and 'Seatrek to St Kilda' in German, Bengali and Maltese. I'm especially glad that we've been able to provide material for other under-resourced languages – for instance, our video on Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, 'Scotland's Gaelic College', has been narrated in Breton and in Okinawan. A special collaboration with the Irish, funded by Foras na Gaeilge's Colmcille grant scheme,[37] has involved reciprocal visits between Benbecula and Ranafast, Donegal, and production of videos in both Gaelic and Irish.[38] All of these 'Other Tongues' videos are also fully transcribed and linked to dictionary resources.

So Island Voices has, as it were, developed a life of its own, and begun to seed similar ideas elsewhere. Not just abroad, either, but here in the UK. 'Other Tongues' documentaries have also been narrated in languages from the South Asian subcontinent – Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Maithili – so that has a washback effect, because a lot of these languages are represented among the diasporic communities here. In a related project, Mediating Multilingualism,[39] the UHI recently brought together international partners in universities in India and Jamaica to discuss themes of common interest with UK-based community language speakers. That discussion can be explored on our Talking Points page.[40] Once the technophobe can get over the initial barrier, so much is possible these days, and it's so rewarding. The horizons are pretty limitless, really.

Once the technophobe can get over the initial barrier, so much is possible these days, and it's so rewarding. The horizons are pretty limitless, really.[41]

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[36] https://guthan.wordpress.com/other-tongues/
[37] https://www.forasnagaeilge.ie/support/colmcille-grant-scheme/?lang=en
[38] https://guthan.wordpress.com/gaelic_journeys/
[39] https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/res-themes/humanities-and-arts/language-sciences-institute/projects/mediating-multilingualism/
[40] https://guthan.wordpress.com/talking-points/
[41] Since participating in this interview, Gordon Wells has compiled a detailed report on the history and content of this project that will shortly be published in the journal *Language Issues*.

Volunteer Bands and Local Identity in Caithness at the Time of the Second Reform Act

JANE PETTEGREE

Abstract

Caithness lay outside the national railway network in 1868, but as this article demonstrates, used the band music of its local volunteer military units, embedded within a wider contemporary British context of imperial music-making, as a means to express and shape local political identities. The second Reform Act of 1867, enacted in Scotland by the Representation of the People (Scotland) Act 1868, prompted wider reimagining of what it meant to be a citizen of Scotland and Britain. Regular references to civic bands in contemporary newspapers and carefully posed photographs in local archives provide evidence for the popularity of Silver and Brass bands connected with the Caithness Volunteer movement. As they marched around towns, villages and countryside, especially around the time of the national elections and local by-elections of 1868–9, their music created powerfully affective soundscapes that connected traditional local identities with the modern British fiscal-military state, helping people to imagine their place as British citizens in a period of widening political engagement. The county's band music provides a microhistory that allows exploration of contrasts between rural and civic patterns of political behaviour in this period.

Introduction: The British Volunteer Movement and Its Bands

Caithness in the mid-nineteenth century was a remote place. A daunting combination of bogs (the 'flow country') and coastal geography dominated by high cliffs and deep inlets prevented the railway from being extended to Thurso until 1874. The telegraph only reached Wick months before the election of 1868, just in time for reports to be lodged more quickly in newspapers to the south about the proceedings.[1] The fastest way to reach the rest of Scotland in this period was by steamer rather than land. A regular steamer service from Granton in Edinburgh connected with Thurso and Wick roughly three times each month, and another similarly connected the county with Aberdeen.[2] A daily boat connected Scrabster with Stromness in Orkney. News, as well as goods and livestock, accompanied people in these boats, but not with any great rapidity. How, then, did Caithness people feel themselves to be part of a larger political identity, alongside their traditional local affiliations?

The extent to which Caithness people imagined themselves to be part of a larger British identity in this mid-Victorian period was substantially assisted by the formation of the Volunteer rifle and artillery units after 1859, and, I will argue, the civic work done by the music associated with these amateur groups, heard live and celebrated in local newspapers. Trevor Herbert has written at length about the growth of British patriotism in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the role of music in making people beyond the metropolitan centres feel part of a larger patriotic moment.[3] Drills and shooting practice helped to keep young men away from the temptations of drink, while musical bands,

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[1] 'Extension of the Telegraph to Wick', *John O'Groat Journal*, 6 August 1868, 3, and 'Canvassing by Telegraph', *John O'Groat Journal*, 13 August 1868, 3.

[2] 'Sailings for October, 1868', *John O'Groat Journal*, 1 October 1868, 1.

[3] Trevor Herbert, 'Public Military Music and the Promotion of Patriotism in the British Provinces, c.1780–c.1850', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 17, (2020): 427–44. doi:10.1017/S1479409819000594

formed alongside the more military activities, benefited both the men and the wider community and, as we shall see, were to have a significant impact on civic involvement, especially during elections.[4]

Standing militias had not been popular in Britain – especially in Scotland after 1745 – as civilians rightly feared governments might turn a local defence body against local people. The 'fencible' regiments raised for home defence in the Napoleonic period were therefore quickly disbanded. However, anxious about the bellicosity of France in the post-Crimea period and recognising that full-time regiments were widely dispersed around the world protecting British imperial interests, the War Office in May 1859 approved the creation of a British Volunteer Force for home defense.[5] Local Lord Lieutenants were to oversee the recruitment and training of volunteer rifle and artillery corps in counties throughout Britain.[6] Volunteering for these local Volunteer units gave men exemption from the ballot for regular army service. Unless mobilized for war, members were initially required to provide their own arms and equipment, the acceptance of which in local training would be 'subject to the approval of the Lord-Lieutenant'.[7] In the 1860s, Volunteer regulations became more formal and the infrastructure deepened. The Volunteer Act of 1863 required an oath of allegiance, specified conditions for mobilization in the event of war, set pay for active service, defined standards for drill and readiness, and made provision for a small remuneration for training.

By 1866, there were nine volunteer corps in Caithness, including six volunteer artillery corps, located in the coastal settlements of Wick, Thurso, Lybster, Mey, Castletown and Thrumster, and three rifle corps, located in Thurso, Wick and Halkirk.[8] These volunteer militias successfully aligned local area loyalties with the patriotic requirements of the British military state and, until they were reorganized by the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act of 1907 as the Special Reserve units of the regular army, were the ground out of which brass bands grew and flourished in Caithness.

While the core activities of local militias were drilling and shooting practice, many also found social music-making in concert an excellent way of generating an *esprit de corps*. In the far north, where brutal winter weather might have made outdoor drilling more challenging, this extension of volunteering found a particularly enthusiastic welcome. Amateur bands associated with the Volunteers in this context did not function as 'instruments of command', in which bugles and drums conveyed military instructions on the drill-ground or battlefield.[9] Rather, these bands were an extension of the kind of gentlemen's music clubs that had been fashionable amongst the gentry and upwardly mobile professional classes since the eighteenth century. On the field, they played for formal inspections to help volunteers march in step; off the field, they performed for local balls and public festivals, and in concert, to raise money for their own upkeep and that of the Volunteer units more generally. Music today is everywhere, personalised and instantly available. Music in the nineteenth century was live and social. In Herbert's words, 'through the impact of sight and sound, routine military drill could stimulate a benign view of the army and by implication the state'.[10]

The officers of the Volunteers were drawn from prominent men in local communities, particularly landowners in rural areas. Beckett suggests that in some areas the Volunteers looked remarkably similar to 'bands of neo-feudal retainers', and this is certainly true for Thurso, although

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[4] On the ritual, performative nature of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century elections in England and their place in civic life, see Frank O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England 1780–1860', *Past and Present*, 135 (1992): 79–115.

[5] Ian W. Beckett, *Riflemen Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1859–1908* (Barnley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword, 2007), 19.

[6] Trevor Herbert, *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 37.

[7] Major General J. M. Grierson, *Records of the Scottish Volunteer Force* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1909), 6.

[8] Grierson, *Records*, 152.

[9] Herbert, 'Public Military Music', 435.

[10] Herbert, 'Public Military Music', 444.

not so much for Wick.[11] The rank and file of the men who joined the Volunteers drew on the lower middle classes and skilled trades. In Caithness, they would have included fishermen. Ordinary ranks were often very young, in their late teens and early twenties, before marriage brought other responsibilities.[12] Recruitment patterns also suggest that these units were knitted into other professional and trade networks.[13]

Beckett suggests that by the mid-1860s, membership in Volunteer units was moving down through the social class structure, drawing in more working-class men, perhaps including some who might have hoped to gain the franchise. For citizens of twenty-first century democracies, it is worth remembering that the 1832 Reform Act in Britain only extended the vote in parliamentary elections to men in boroughs owning property worth at least £10 a year, thus excluding nearly all working-class males and all women. In 1860, 1865 and 1866 there had been some discussion of extending the vote to the Volunteers; but in 1867, when the second Reform Act was passed, this was not achieved.[14] The 1867 Act extended the franchise to male householders and lodgers in urban areas paying £10 annually in rent, and it slightly lowered the threshold for rural voters, but the modern notion of universal adult franchise was still a long way off.

Research by Trevor Herbert and Helen Barlow surveying the impact of military music on local identity around Britain included evidence from lowland and central Scotland, but not the far north.[15] Ian Kelly has also written about music making in the context of a larger study of the Highland regiments; his comments, however, concentrate more on bagpipes.[16] In her study of the vibrant brass band tradition of the Scottish Borders, Gill French suggests 'there are no brass bands in a large part of the Highlands where pipe bands predominate.'[17] This was by no means true. By the summer of 1860, Caithness had Volunteer Rifle units in Thurso and Wick; by 1861, the fishing village of Lybster had yielded another; and by the summer of 1867 Volunteer units had formed in Castletown, Mey and Thrumster. All of these units marched to the sound of brass band music: the British band movement had reached the far north.

Caithness Politics in 1859

In 1859, Caithness had a total population of around 40,000.[18] The largest and most economically developed communities were coastal: the towns of Thurso and Wick, and the coastal villages of Castletown, Reay, Dunnet, Mey, Lybster, and Latheron. Inland villages include Halkirk, upstream along the river Thurso, and Watten, sitting beside the Wick River. Caithness was thus an obvious hub for both sea and freshwater fishing.

There were two parliamentary constituencies. The Royal Burgh of Wick was part of the 'Northern Burghs' constituency, a group of towns around the Moray Firth coast with shared interests in fishing, that together returned one member to parliament; member towns included Kirkwall, Wick, Tain, Dornoch, Cromarty and Dingwall. The rest of the county formed the 'County' seat of Caithness, dominated by the estates owned by a few notable landowners who acted as tenants in chief (i.e., who held land direct from the Crown) and who rented land to lesser tenants, and by commercial slate

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[11] Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 43.

[12] Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 74.

[13] Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 60.

[14] Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 146.

[15] Trevor Herbert and Helen Barlow, *Music & the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[16] Ian Stuart Kelly, *Echoes of Success: Identity and the Highland Regiments* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 164.

[17] Gillian French, 'Follow the Band: Community Brass Bands in the Scottish Borders'. (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2014), 9. http://hdl.handle.net/1842/9482.

[18] Ruth Nancy Hildebrandt, 'Migration and Economic Change in the Northern Highlands during the Nineteenth Century, with particular reference to the period 1851–1891'. (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 1980), 15–16. http://theses.gla.ac.uk/3555/1/1980HildebrandtPhD.pdf. The 1861 census, the first census conducted after the 1855 act required civil registration, recorded a population of 41,111.

quarrying around Castletown organised by the Traill family. By far the most prominent of these landed notables were the extended Sinclair family, at least until the Portland family bought the Langwell estate from the Sinclairs in 1857 and gradually extended their influence further north. The most senior Sinclairs were the Earls of Caithness from the late fifteenth century, although a lesser branch, the Sinclairs of Ulbster, had their family seat on the east of the river Thurso mouth, and controlled Thurso as a Burgh of Barony.

Following the Reform Act of 1832, only 0.6 percent (a total of 219 voters) of the county population of the Caithness constituency could vote. In the election of 1868, this number rose to just under 1000 voters following the Representation of the People (Scotland) Act, as the Second Reform Act was known in Scotland.[19] The electorate in Wick was rather larger. In 1868, the Northern Burghs together polled 1486 votes, a turnout of just under 89 percent.[20] Of these, 832 – by far the largest of any of the burghs and a majority of all the votes cast – came from Wick, in an election that came to have national notoriety for being ill-tempered and controversial.[21]

Fig. 1: Thurso Town Bandstand, early 20th century. With permission from The Johnston Collection, Wick Heritage Centre.

The Volunteer movement, and its music, arrived at a moment of important political change in the north. Band music in the streets of Thurso and Wick in the mid-nineteenth century reached not only the small proportion of the population who were actually enfranchised, but also the much larger general body of people who one day might be. The importance of regular band performance to local life by the end of the century can be inferred from the photograph of the Thurso bandstand, built over the winter of 1902–03, which sat in the central town square and gardens donated by the Sinclairs of Ulbster and commanded the view of the road leading east to the county town of Wick (*Fig. 1*).[22]

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[19] Michael Dyer, '"Mere Detail and Machinery": The Great Reform Act and the Effects of Redistribution on Scottish Representation 1832–1868', *The Scottish Historical Review* 62(173), Part 1 (1983): 25, 29.

[20] Based on Data from 'UK House of Commons Election Results at Constituency Level', *Harvard Dataverse V4*, (UMIT: Resul, 2022). https://api.parliament.uk/uk-general-elections/elections/4009.

[21] 'Northern Burghs – Election of Mr Loch', *Inverness Courier*, 3 December 1868, 6.

[22] Image from publicly searchable Johnston Collection at The Wick Heritage Centre, Index JN22163B018. http://www.johnstoncollection.net/.

Thurso in the 1860s

Thurso is an ancient Viking fishing settlement on the west side of the mouth of the river Thurso. The town entered the nineteenth century as a burgh of barony, with town officer appointments made by the Sinclairs of Ulbster according to powers personally granted to them in 1633 by Charles I. Relatively underdeveloped both in terms of its civic infrastructure and population, Thurso was slowly expanding as a planned town under the patronage of these local lairds.
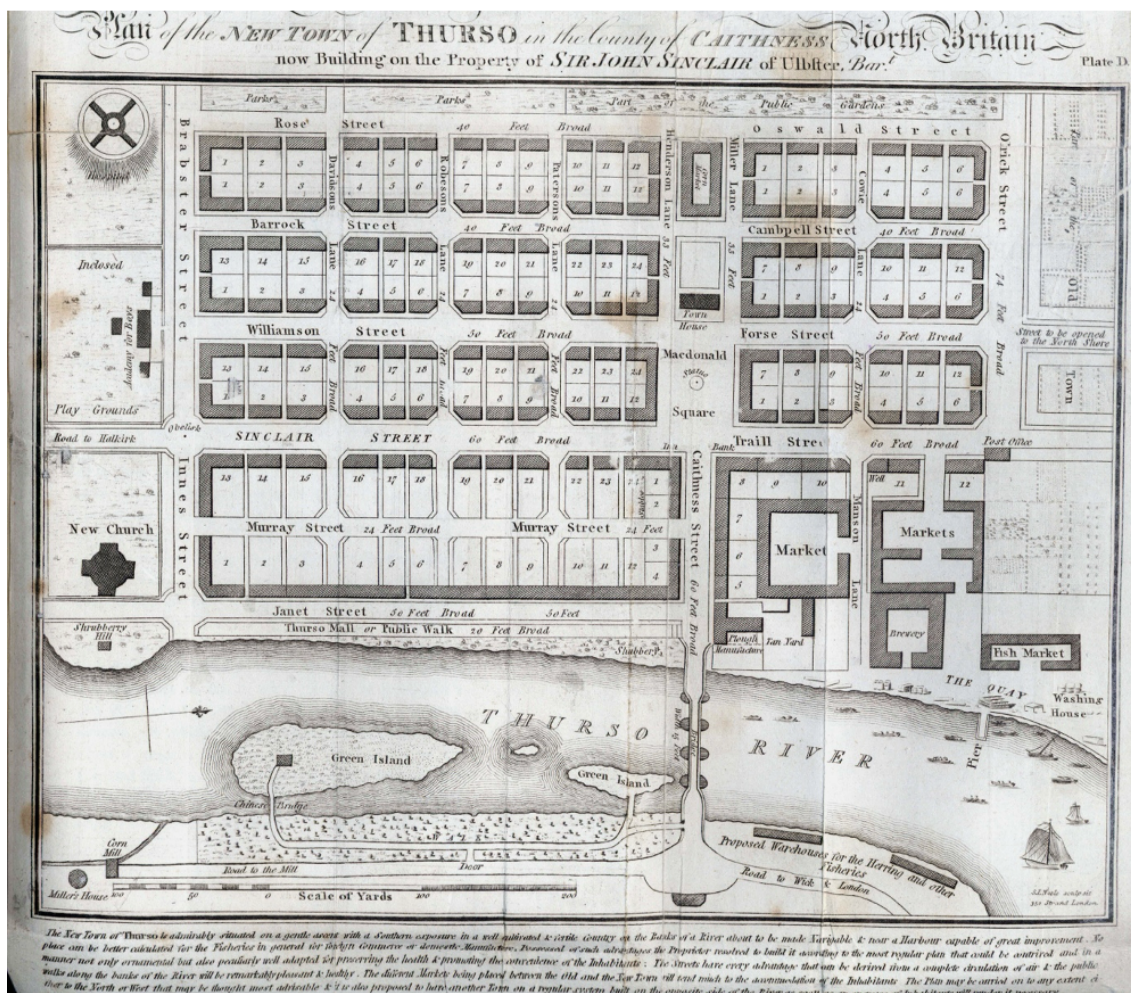
Fig. 2: Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster's Map of Improvements for Thurso in *A General view of the Agriculture of the County of Caithness, together with maps* (London: Board of Agriculture, 1812). Image courtesy of www.ambaile.org.uk and Highland Libraries.

The Sinclairs' ambitions for the town were laid out at the start of the nineteenth century in Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster's projected grid plan, drawn up in emulation of Edinburgh's Georgian new town (*Fig. 2*).[23] Partially realised in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the plan expressed the modernising aspirations of the nineteenth century town as it expanded beyond the old fishing settlement at the mouth of the Thurso River. In the period we are discussing, these broad streets made fine throughways for processions of local organisations led by their bands. Similar plans were drawn up for the Sinclairs' tenants in the neighbouring inland village of Halkirk, along with what became highly controversial clearance schemes for the county that aimed to make rural tenants into cottage

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[23] Am Baile: Highland History and Culture. https://www.ambaile.org.uk/asset/38287/. Image Reference QZP40_ULBSTER_036b_Illus.

industry employees in a range of projected new industries (most of which never materialised). The immediate consequence of these changes for the rural north was steady depopulation, as tenant crofters boarded boats and sailed to new homes overseas. Those who stayed, however, found themselves in a complicated relationship with the local gentry that required some complicated strategic forgetting of the past and careful renegotiation of local political power and representation.

Thurso's harbour, lying across the river mouth and potentially the most lucrative part of the town, was controlled by the Ulbster Sinclairs. This feudal arrangement, however, began to give way to a more modern civic politics in 1866, when J. G. Tollemache Sinclair, acting on behalf of his ailing father Sir George, began negotiations with the town to hand over the west harbour area and to draw up a new town charter to give the townspeople the right to free elections for baillies and counsellors. Thurso would thereby become, for the first time, an independent, self-governing town.

This 1866 initiative is symptomatic of changing times in national politics, as well as of the Sinclair family's broadly liberal political affiliations. As the national Reform Acts in 1832, 1867, and 1884 gradually extended the parliamentary franchise, so local civic structures came under some scrutiny. One of the first questions to be discussed for those planning Thurso's first free town council elections was the basis of the local franchise, and surprisingly, this seems to have been left to the town itself to decide. The first Minute Book of the provisional Thurso burgh council, convened pending formal elections, reveals that the question of local franchise dominated discussions in 1866.[24] The first entry, dated 18 January 1866, records local druggist Mr Bremner regretting the lack of a burgh magistrate able to give an independent steer to proceedings 'upon broad and liberal principles.' Ten months later, on 5 October 1866, it was agreed that the franchise for the town council be given to householders aged twenty-one and over who occupied property within the burgh of an annual rent of at least five pounds. Three days later, at a meeting of all duly qualified local voters, bookkeeper Alexander Mackay lodged a counter proposal calling for the vote to be given to *all* proprietors of properties within the burgh of this rental value, not just householders – a proposal that would have given local county gentry such as the Sinclairs, who lived outside the town boundary but who owned much of the land and tenements, a much more direct influence over the vote. To this, a radical counter proposal was minuted that the franchise should include not just householders but all local inhabitants. The 'bell man' was thereupon instructed to call everyone in the town to a further meeting in the courthouse.

On 13 October 1866, a meeting described as 'public' and 'of the inhabitants of Thurso' duly took place, listing the names of eighty-seven men deemed eligible to vote. Local magistrate and doctor James Mill proposed that 'in place of the electors consisting of Householders, the right should extend to Proprietors, Tenants and occupiers of premises of the annual rent to the value of five pounds and upwards above the age of 21 years residing within the extended limits of the Burgh', citing the Police and Improvement (Scotland) Act's provisions for funding local policing as a possible basis on which to constitute an electorate, a proposal seconded by draper Donald Shearer.[25] This was countered with a suggestion by joiner George Swanson that the five-pound qualification for magistrates and councilor candidacy should be reduced to 'either two pounds or all who pay police rates', a motion seconded

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[24] *Thurso Burgh Minute Book* vol. 1, in Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archive, Wick: BT/1/1. The following discussion draws upon minutes for meetings of 18 January and 5–13 October 1886.

[25] Victorian-era Scots law on policing and street lighting gave localities the optional power to administer policing and (also relevant to crime reduction) street lighting. The 1857 County and Burgh Police Scotland Act placed these local powers under some central scrutiny, by directing that local police committees be established under the local Lord Lieutenant and Sheriffs. Local politicians were not always expert in the range of potential power they could or could not wield through these instruments; Mill's proposal to define a local electorate using these laws is rather novel and may not be fully legally competent. The discussion reflects the way that local people were using Scots law to test civic remits and responsibilities. See David G Barrie, 'Anglicization and Autonomy: Scottish Policing, Governance and the State, 1833 to 1885', *Law and History Review* 30, no.2 (2012), 474.

by stationer William Allan. After some debate, the more radical proposal for the extension of the franchise was withdrawn; Swanson seconded the list of candidates proposed under the five-pound qualification. The final proposal of the meeting was that future meetings to elect town officials should be announced around the town not just by the bellman, but with additional drums 'or other mode of intimations', once a week for two weeks before the election meeting, and by newspaper advert 'in any newspaper in the said burgh.'

These archives reveal a lively interest in the early days of Thurso Burgh Council, amongst newly minted town politicians, in determining who should have a say in shaping the town's future fortunes and in mobilizing political engagement using aural tools: bells and drums as well as printed media ('other modes' probably included posted billboards, referred to in local press coverage of the County by-election of 1869). The requirement for town residence was an important one, qualifying the influence of the landed gentry somewhat: voting patterns in which tenants simply followed the lead of their feudal superior were slowly changing. Fairly late in the franchise discussions – two days before the first town elections were held on 13 October 1866 – Tollemache Sinclair threw in the suggestion that perhaps 'he and his heirs should confirm such elections,' a suggestion politely but firmly rejected by the town magistrates.[26] Otherwise, the early minutes of the Thurso Burgh council show local democracy moving tentatively forwards.

Although drums, bells, 'intimations' and newspaper adverts only managed to turn out thirteen town electors for the annual electoral meeting of 21 October 1870, several significant civic projects did move ahead in this first decade of civic independence. A new non-denominational secondary school, the Miller Institute, had already opened in 1862 in an attractive neoclassical building, founded by a local man whose uncle had made his fortunes in colonial trade. A new town hall, providing a band practice room, a large assembly hall and meeting rooms, was completed in 1872, thanks to a bequest from a local banker topped up by local subscriptions. Similarly, a hospital was projected, to be built following a bequest first noted to the Thurso town council on 27 October 1868 from the trustees of Alexander Dunbar, a local JP and deputy Lord Lieutenant. Voluntary civic activism was undoubtedly more effective in 1860s Thurso than formal political processes, but overall, town civic works were emphatically given a new injection of confidence by the new charter of 1866.

It is worth looking at the ritual surrounding the laying of the foundation stone for the new town hall, because music provided by the Volunteer band was important to the solemnity of that occasion. This event was reported at some length in the *John O'Groat Journal* of Thursday 15 October 1868, one of two county newspapers in existence at the time, and one that usually reflected the interests of the Sinclair family and liberal politics more generally. A procession formed in front of the Miller Institute at the west end of the new town, and participating musicians included both those of the Volunteers and the band of the regular militia. Leading the way were the 'Thurso Rifles Volunteer band in their picturesque uniform of Sinclair tartan.' Next came the fishermen, for whom the band played the lively Scottish tune 'Weel may the boatie row.' The Magistrates, Commissioners of Police, and various unnamed but leading citizens and clergy followed; then came the trades: the Freemasons with their banner, the bakers carrying loaves of bread on poles, fishermen carrying their banner. Next were '3 pipers and a drummer boy, whose ear-piercing notes resounded over the whole length of the line behind them and made up for the want of the music of the bands now so far in front.' In the middle of the procession were the pavement workers, joiners, masons, merchants and shopkeepers; local school children from the Parish Church and the Free Church elementary schools and the Miller Institute brought up the rear.

Once the procession had arrived at the site of the future town hall, Reverend Taylor of St Peters Church of Scotland church urged everyone to sing Psalm 95 ('O come, let us sing to the Lord' from the 1650 metrical psalter), led by the precentor, Mr Goodlad. Lengthy speeches followed, acknowledging the legacy, listing the local subscriptions – including those from the Sinclair family

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[26] *Thurso Burgh Minute Book,* in Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archive: BT/1/1, 11 October 1866.

and the local county MP, Mr Traill – and calling for more to finish the project. The band played again while a bottle with copies of local and Scottish national newspapers was placed, and the foundation stone laid over it. Corn, wine and oil having been poured on the stone by the masons, 'the band then played the Mason's anthem.' The only discordant note recorded by the newspaper on this occasion was a placard on one corner of the street that read, 'Down with the Irish Church and Ben. Diz' (i.e., Benjamin Disraeli) – typical liberal sentiments of the time.[27]

The reported 'soundscape', involving unaccompanied collective psalm singing, bagpipes and drums, and not one, but two, military-style bands, clearly contributed to the day's success. The report is vague about the relationship between the bands – vagueness being a common trait in Caithness newspapers of the 1860s. But the fact that the bands turned out, with instruments and uniforms, rehearsed and ready to play, speaks to careful and regular preparation, and it is to this process of formation that we now turn.

Music Club or Volunteer Band?

Prior to the formation of the militia volunteers, Thurso had a musical band that formed part of the activities of the Thurso Musical Club. This club, formed around 1857, was an informal association of young men in the town who met after work to sing glees and play instruments, entertaining each other and occasionally others with amateur concerts. Essentially a continuation of the eighteenth-century pattern of male socializing in Britain, it was rather old-fashioned in national terms. It had taken Thurso some time to develop enough middle-class youth to make this kind of socializing viable. Club members were local tradesmen and young professionals: bank clerks, watchmakers, stationers and junior skilled trades, with reasonable levels of education and middle-class cultural aspirations. These were the sort of men who, when they were not at the Musical Club, might have been found in the local 'St Peters' Freemasons Lodge. They played a variety of instruments initially in a non-standardized ensemble.

In January 1859, the Thurso Musical Club participated in the town's Robert Burns Centenary celebration. Thurso is always windy, and this was the depths of winter. The masonic banners were torn ragged by the wind and the (predictably) driving rain. The *John O'Groat Journal* reported: 'The [Musical] Club wore Balmoral bonnets, adorned with harps, while their flag also represented the same on a larger scale, along with other instruments peculiar to them.' The trades' procession for this event included, alongside the 'peculiar' band of the Musical Club, some bagpipers and a 'flute band' (probably military-style fifes) also associated with the Thurso Musical Club, all blowing away and blown away by the winter gale.[28]

Almost two years later, the *John O'Groat Journal* of 8 November 1860 reported that the Musical Club band had marched out in association with the town Volunteers, to celebrate the arrival in town of a new lifeboat. A standard military bugle call summoned all to order. The procession was again led by the Musical Club band playing some 'fine airs and marches', followed by the Artillery volunteers, then the lifeboat with the crew on board, flanked on each side by three Artillerymen with fixed bayonets; the Rifle Volunteers brought up the rear. Some members of the band seem to have joined the boat's crew as it was launched, and what followed evokes a dramatically-conceived performance, almost an ancient Viking ship ceremony. As music from the boat reached the ears of those on land, 'the sound of the oars combined with the notes of the clarion and the cornopian, grew fainter and fainter, and in a short time the boat was lost to our view.' [29] At this point, there still seems to be a degree of formal separation between the Musical Club and the Rifle Volunteers, although the club is acting *de facto* alongside the Volunteers as their marching band.

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[27] 'Laying the Foundation Stone of the New Town Hall, Thurso', *John O'Groat Journal*, 15 October 1868, 3.
[28] 'The Burns Centenary (Festivities at Thurso)', *The John O'Groat Journal,* 3 February 1859, 3.
[29] 'Thurso (Life-Boat)', *The John O'Groat Journal*, 8 November 1860, 2.

A couple of weeks later, the *Groat* editor added a few more general remarks about the Musical Club in a paragraph where the alternative title 'Trades' Band' is also used for the same group of musicians, now providing a list of instruments:

> We may also notice that the Thurso Musical Club is at present in a very flourishing condition. This Club consists of twelve military fifes, two kettle drums, a tenor and bass, one clarion, two cornopians, tenor saxhorn and bass trombone, eight vocalists, six violins and one violincello. We expect that a concert will be given by the above Club in about a fortnight or so.[30]

This concert took place on 7 February 1861, in the nearby village of Castletown. The *Groat* reported that on this occasion the Musical Club fielded both their ensembles – a brass band and a fife band – and generated controversy that suggested a little bit of military discipline might be timely. The concert itself was decorous, ending with everyone singing 'Auld Lang Syne'. But while some of the Club retired to Mrs Miller's Coffee Rooms for refreshments, others went elsewhere to enjoy stronger beverages. [31] Letters in the newspaper throughout the rest of March alternatively blamed and defended the band for their behaviour on this occasion. What the Thurso band required was some military discipline buoyed by patriotic idealism. Over the next couple of years, the Musical Club band's activities are increasingly mentioned in connection with with those of the Caithness Rifle Volunteers (Thurso) unit.

On 17 October 1861, the *Groat* reported a 'Grand Review of the Thurso Volunteers on Monday last by the Lord Lieutenant, the Right Hon Earl of Caithness, accompanied by Countess of Caithness, Sir John Sinclair Baronet Barrock, John Henderson of the Commercial Bank, and the Misses Henderson.' The volunteers were led by Captain Smith of Pennyland House, on the north edge of Thurso. Headed by the brass band of the Thurso Musical Club, they marched to a field at Smith's farm, where they played the national anthem.[32] This performance must have been witnessed by Captain Smith's son William (1854–1914), the future founder of the Boys Brigade movement, a movement dedicated to the moral formation of youth through the conjunction of para-militarism and Presbyterianism. It is interesting to think that the young William might have been inspired by the efforts of the Thurso Volunteers in providing young men with morally improving leisure alternatives to drinking and worse.

By the middle of the decade, the personnel of the Thurso Musical Club and the town's Volunteer Rifle band, playing now with some considerable overlap of personnel, got some recognition in more distant news reports. On 14 January 1864, the *Dundee Advertiser,* in a digest of news from around Scotland, reported that New Year's Day entertainments in Thurso went off without undue drunkenness despite an outbreak of diphtheria. The article highlighted two events in particular: the Christian Association celebrations in the Benevolent Institution, and a 'festival in the Mason Hall.' The former involved 'an extemporised choir' singing 'sacred and sentimental music.' The latter started with a speech by local merchant Mr Keith on the subject of 'innocent amusements,' following which 'the Thurso Musical Club and Volunteer Brass Band catered most successfully in the musical departments': local ladies sang, and then there was dancing.[33] The syntax here, and singular 'Band', makes it very unclear where the Musical Club stopped, and the Volunteer Band began – or indeed if they were the same or different groups.

Although the Thurso band does not seem to have travelled south much, if at all, it was prepared to undertake the short but choppy sea voyage across the Pentland Firth to Orkney, reciprocating a previous visit south by the Orcadians. On 3 May 1864, the *Orkney Herald and Weekly Advertiser and*

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[30] 'Thurso (Thursday last)', *The John O'Groat Journal*, 29 November 1860, 2.

[31] 'Thurso (Concert)', *The John O'Groat Journal*, 7 February 1861, 2.

[32] 'Grand Review of the Thurso Volunteers', *The John O'Groat Journal*, 17 October 1861, 2.

[33] 'Thurso (News Notes)', *The Dundee Advertiser*, 14 January 1864, 4.

Gazette for the Orkney and Zetland Islands reviewed a concert by the Thurso Musical Club 'or' [*sic*] Band of Thurso Artillery Volunteers in the Stromness Town hall, in which members sang songs, glees and catches: 'the [Town] Hall was tastefully decorated by the band of the 4th O.A.V. who did their utmost to show their appreciation of the kindness they had experienced whilst across in Thurso.'[34]

As it transformed from a 'club' to performing in association with the Volunteers, the Thurso stock of instruments seems to have been built up in association with both civilian and military identities. In the early 1860s, there was not an obvious Thurso newssheet in which local accounts might have been published, nor the same tradition of public fiscal accountability as existed in Wick at the same time. The *Caithness Courier* – a new, Thurso-focussed newspaper serving the west of the County – started to roll its presses in 1866, another initiative undertaken in the year of the new town charter. The lack of earlier local reporting on band finances may also reflect the fact that the financial subscriptions that supported the band were drawn from a narrower section of society than the broad-based civic subscriptions that set up and supported the Wick Volunteer band (see discussion below). In particular, the personal support of the Sinclair family was not publicly advertised unless – as happened with Sir George Sinclair's donation of six pounds to purchase silver shooting prize medals in June 1864 – the gift was designed to encourage more competitive participation in the resultant shooting competitions. The *Courier* described the shooting medals as 'another proof among many of the warm and lively interest the worthy and esteemed Baronet has taken in this patriotic movement ever since its organisation.'[35]

Fig. 3: Thurso Musical Club 1868. Photograph by A. M. Allen.
Source: Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archive, Wick P543/3.

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[34] 'Stromness (Concert by the Thurso Band)', *The Orkney Herald and Weekly Advertiser and Gazette for the Orkney and Zetland Islands,* 3 May 1864, 2.
[35] 'Thurso (Sir George Sinclair)', *The John O'Groat Journal,* 30 June 1864, 2.

The Sinclairs contributed a particularly significant piece of patronage branding to the Thurso Musical Club band in the middle of the decade. In 1866, the band acquired not only new instruments, made to the latest standard army specifications ensuring common tuning, but also a spanking new uniform, using the Sinclair tartan. As many entries in the new Burgh's minute book make it clear that there was no spare money in the community purse at this period, it is reasonable to infer that any investment in local bands would have needed to come from private patronage, or from the pockets of the members themselves.[36] Although proof in the form of either a newspaper report or a letter in the Sinclair family archives has not been found, the Sinclair influence is clearly at work in the particular design for the new Thurso 'Musical Club' Band uniform of 1866, as photographed in 1868 by local shopkeeper Mr A. M. Allen, and presented to their founding members, the men of the Thurso Musical Club.

The uniforms shown (*Fig. 3*) are not standard national uniforms. In the first years of the local Volunteer movements, Lord Lieutenants were given freedom to determine how to dress their men. In the 1860s, the Lord Lieutenant would have been the 14th Earl of Caithness, James Sinclair, whose seat was the Castle of Mey. A report of the Thurso Rifle Volunteer Band in 1865 suggests it initially wore a green uniform with white banding, which is certainly not the dress here.[37] The 'Musical Club' band in 1868 wore tartan trousers, plaids, and fitted jackets that are more usually associated with twentieth-century Highland pipe bands than with the nineteenth-century British Volunteer companies. By the 1870s, after the Caldwell army reforms had introduced greater standardization, Volunteer bands in the Highlands were to be kitted out in plain blue serge with, at most, a modest red trim.[38] The use of tartan in the first decade of the Volunteer movement in the Highlands speaks to the way in which the personal affiliations of traditional Highland feudal bands were co-opted by the British state with, in this case, the transition being managed through traditional local Sinclair patronage.

The status of tartan had risen alongside the reputation of the Highlanders in the Napoleonic age and its British imperial aftermath.[39] Tollemache Sinclair's grandfather, Sir John Sinclair, author of the *Old Statistical Account of Scotland* (1791–99), had been an early promoter of tartan through his involvement in the Highland Society of London, in particular advocating the trews (as in *Fig. 3*) rather than the kilt (or *philibeg*) as fit and manly traditional garb.[40] In his 1813 *History of the Highland Society of London*, Sir John's description of idealised Highland dress amounts to a design brief for the Thurso uniforms of 1868:

> The Natives of the Highlands have always been distinguished for the attachment to their ancient Garb, which they look upon as a National Dress, peculiarly calculated for mountainous districts and well fitted for the purposes of war.[41]

By 1866, tartan was again the height of British military fashion, promoted by a series of nationally circulated postcard images called 'Crimean Heroes', studio portraits taken in 1856 by Robert Howlett

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[36] For instance, a minute of a meeting held in February 1868 discusses the challenge of repairing a storm-damaged breakwater, which the council funds totalling £10 would be stretched to cover. *Thurso Burgh Minute Book,* 10 February 1868.

[37] 'Review of the Caithness Battalion of Rifle Volunteers at Thurso', *The John O'Groat Journal*, 15 June 1865, 3.

[38] Major General J. M. Grierson, *Records of the Scottish Volunteer Force 1859–1908* (Edinburgh, 1909), colour plate VI.

[39] Allan Carswell, 'Scottish Military Dress' in Edward M. Spiers, Jeremy A. Crang and Matthew J Strickland (eds.), *A Military History of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 635–6.

[40] Sir John Sinclair, *An Account of the Highland Society of London, from its Establishment in May 1778, to the Commencement of the Year 1813* (London: Macmillan, 1813), chapter 1, 'Restoration of the Highland Dress.'

[41] Sinclair, *An Account of the Highland Society of London*, 7–8.

and Joseph Cundall in London, as the regular Highland Regiments returned from service.[42] This elaborate, be-tartaned 'Highland' uniform was not so much based on contemporary rural dress, but was rather part of an imagined heroic, warrior tradition, giving an 'ancient' glamour to the evolving traditions of the modern British army.

Even for a regular army soldier serving in the professional army, the full tartan uniform of an officer involved some considerable personal expense.[43] Soldiers of the line had the cost of the 'necessary' trimmings of their uniforms taken out of their wages (i.e., their basic kit was supplied, customised for the regiment). However, for the Volunteers, and certainly for loosely associated town bands, uniform expenses would be covered locally, often by the band members themselves. Volunteers relied on local subscriptions and their own fundraising. The Thurso band, whose members were shopkeepers, tradesmen and several very young boys, would have relied on generous local patronage to achieve the finery of the 1868 photograph. Peter Macdonald of the Scottish Tartans Authority, to whom this photograph was shown, was able to compare the tartan shown with those in the STA archives. His opinion was that the 1868 tartan did look to be identical in weave and colour block distribution to a sample of 'Ancient Sinclair' tartan dated c.1820 that was designed and woven by Messrs Wm. Wilson & Son, Bannockburn, official supplier of tartan to regular army regiments.[44] The pattern is of contrasting rich, earthy reds with bands of hunting green and thin but striking contrasting lines of white, pale blue and black.

This example is not the only instance of local Highland aristocracy supporting a musical band: Lance Whitehead has described the Marquises of Breadalbane employing musicians taken from their estates in the 1840s.[45] However, where the musicians at Breadalbane were primarily established to provide entertainment at Taymouth Castle, the Caithness musicians played not for private entertainment but rather public utility. The Thurso town band may look like a feudal band, but it is playing in a local, civic, and national, militaristic, context. This is a pattern that reaches beyond the traditional role of clan musicians into a new civic age.

Local newspaper reports in 1866 also celebrated the news that the Thurso Volunteer band had acquired a new set of musical instruments. The *Caithness Courier*, the new Thurso-based newspaper launched in the spring of that year, described some recent and planned improvements to the Volunteer band: 'we believe that…brass instruments and two drums, on the improved principle, for the new band of this corps, has reached here.'[46] Two months later, the same newspaper reported on the annual inspection of the Thurso Volunteer Corps, which started with a muster outside the Masons' Hall in Traill Street, crowds cheering the Volunteers in their 'handsome uniforms.' To the band's music (unfortunately not detailed), the volunteers marched to the artillery battery on the headland, where firing commenced. The *Courier* correspondent noted that this was the first public appearance of the Volunteer band with their new instruments, and there was much anxiety about how good they would be: 'the instruments are all first class, supplied by Mr Lyons, Woolwich' (the headquarters of the Royal Artillery) but 'the band has only been in practice a little over two months under the instruction of Mr John Stewart and the leadership of Sergeant David Manson'.[47]

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[42] Joseph Cundall, 'Crimean Heroes' (1856). National Gallery of Scotland, https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/34487/crimean-heroes.

[43] Carswell, 'Scottish Military Dress', 638–9.

[44] Peter Macdonald, Head of Research & Collections, Scottish Tartans Authority, private communication by email, 27 June 2017.

[45] Lance Whitehead, 'The House Bands of the Marquises of Breadalbane c. 1804–60', *The Galpin Society Journal* 70 (March 2017), 179–197.

[46] 'Artillery Volunteers', *The Caithness Courier* 12 May 1866, 2.

[47] 'Inspection of the Thurso Volunteer Artillery Corps', *The Caithness Courier* 21 July 1866, 3.

Instruments and personnel for the 'Volunteer' band, as reported by the *Caithness Courier* on 21st July 1866		Instruments in the 1868 'Music Club' photograph.
1st coronet [*sic*]	Sergeant David Manson	Cornet (or flugelhorn)
coronet [*sic*]	Robert McAdie	Cornet (or flugelhorn)
Alt Horns [*sic*]	John Dunbar and John Bruce	Alt Horns
B flat tenor horns	John Waters and Donald Bain	Baritone or Euphonium
1st Bass [*sic*]	Henry Hope and Matthew Waters	Bombardon
Solo Bass	John Stewart (instructor)	Euphonium?
Trumpet	Donald McKenzie	
Side Drum	Alex M Allen	Side Drum
Bass Drum	D McKay	Bass Drum
		Cymbals

Table 1: Instruments of the Thurso Band in 1866-8.
(With thanks to Professor Arnold Myers, RCS.)

The list of instruments and personnel given in Table 1, which Arnold Myers has helpfully helped me to crossmatch against the 1868 photograph (*Fig. 3*), suggests that the instruments shown in the 1868 'Musical Club' photograph are, substantially, the same as those bought for the 'Volunteer' band in 1866. There is little overlap between this new instrument list and the list given for the earlier band in the *John O'Groat Journal* article of November 1860. This new batch of instruments, bought in consultation with the Royal Artillery Regiment's national headquarters at Woolwich in London, would have met the requirement for a standard B-flat pitch laid down by the British army in 1862–3, allowing the band to play in concert with other standard military bands. New instruments, and new uniforms in 'traditional' Sinclair tartan, aligned local feudal affiliations with national British military identity. Alex. M. Allen, the photographer in 1868, was a side drum player in the 'Volunteer' band in 1866.

The program of music played by the band on the occasion of the 1866 summer inspection of local Volunteer units reflected the merging of its civilian and military identities. As the *Caithness Courier*'s writer described it, the Volunteer band on that occasion played a combination of arrangements of popular contemporary Music Hall songs and military march music. Unusually, the report included a full list of items played, including 'Slap Bang' (probably 'Slap Bang Here We Are Again, or The School of Jolly Dogs,' composed by Harry Copeland in 1865)[48]; 'Will ye come to the Bower' (not to be confused with an Irish Fenian song of the same name, this was a popular broadside ballad with lyrics by the Irish entertainer Thomas Moore, also author of 'The Last Rose of Summer,' and normally sung to a Morris dance tune called the 'Vandals of Hammerwich');[49] 'Oh Isn't That a Pull Back' and 'The Lass that Sits on the Outside of the Door' (exact identification of these not found, although the latter's trope of a pregnant girl driven outside the walls of her in-laws' castle is found in several Scottish traditional ballads); 'Garryowen' (a popular military march, originally Irish, but also popular in the American Civil War where it was also known as the 7th Cavalry March); a medley from Verdi's operas; and finally something the correspondent hasn't managed to record, although he knows the tune came from *The Musical Times*. This is standard, fashionable British band repertoire: it is neither specifically local or Highland, or even particularly military, but rather connects Thurso with a national, British, musical culture of brass band playing.

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[48] Harry Copeland, 'Jolly Dogs, or, Slap Bang, Here We Are Again,' Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection, John Hopkins Sheridan Library, https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/26779; Kirsten Anderson, '"I Like to be a Swell": Paupers at the Pantomime', in *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, 44(2), (2017): 133–153, https://doi.org/10.1177/1748372717752313.

[49] Thomas Moore, 'Will you come to the bower I have shaded for you?' (Roud 16910). *Broadside Ballads Online*, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/roud/16910.

The tartan uniform followed apace on the Thurso band's instrumental refurbishment. In mid-August, the *Caithness Courier* – after a panic piece discussing 'rumours of a Fenian invasion of the Faroe Islands' – reported that 'the Rifle band is, we understand, to receive new uniform. The trousers are to be of Sinclair tartan, with a Highland doublet and (smart) plaid. The contract, however, has not yet been settled.'[50] This is the uniform shown in the 1868 photograph. A week later, the new band uniforms have been ordered from Messrs J. & W. Keith of Thurso, to be delivered by steamer in time for the autumn September review.[51]

The autumn review of the combined County companies took place on 20 September 1866. The *John O'Groat Journal* reported that the Thurso Volunteers marched across the county to the designated venue in Wick. Mail carts conveyed spectators from Thurso; some also came by the coastal steamer. For those who took the land route, 'the stirring strains of the fine brass band of the Thurso Rifles were heard on the Thurso Road' while 'the Artillery, with their band, came via Castletown.' The march across the County allowed both the new instruments and the new Sinclair-tartan uniforms to be prominently displayed. The reporter remarked on the combination of 'ancient' and modern:

> The band of the Thurso Rifles attracted general attention, both from the excellence of their music and of a doublet of dark green, and trousers and plaid of Sinclair tartan. It has a look of 'other days' about it and is certainly a dress that will attract attention anywhere. The other bands, though not so conspicuous from anything unique in their uniforms, are very tastefully dressed and play very well.[52]

Despite ostensibly giving away power in the form of the Thurso charter, the Sinclairs were clearly using alternative means to make their place and position in county society secure. These efforts, which continued in less flamboyant ways throughout the 1860s, included benefit entertainments attended by local gentry.[53]

Women and the Thurso Volunteer Movement

The naming of female patrons specifically in connection with support for music rather than shooting medals or military equipment may have been considered an appropriate outlet for the ladies of the county. The inscription on a rather beautiful silver bugle currently in the collection of the Caithness Horizons Museum in Thurso (*Fig. 4*) describes its having been presented from the proceeds of a fundraising bazaar in spring 1861 that was held to raise money to equip the recently established 1st Caithness (Thurso) Rifle volunteers. This week-long celebration, hosted by the town's 'Benevolent Institution', was described at length in the *John O'Groat Journal* of 11 April. It clearly involved most of the ladies of the area, who donated baking and donations of art and bric-a-brac, and even items brought in by the Friday mail steamer. In the evening after the bazaar finally closed, a 'soiree' was held in the old Court house. The weather outside was not particularly clement, but inside the ladies had been at work, decorating the ceiling rafters with rope nets laced through with greenery. White linen covered long tables, and home-made candelabras supplied the lighting, suggesting 'the idea of an entertainment *al fresco* or a *dejeuner a la* Friar Tuck and his merry men all under the greenwood tree' – the allusion to Robin Hood suggesting local Scottish identities reimagined through British folk myth. The guns of the local Volunteers (carbines of the Artillery and Enfields of the Rifles) hung from the joists; bayonet scabbards were arranged 'in a variety of tasteful devices' as in a Highland baronial hall. Before a lengthy vote of thanks was offered up to the ladies by Captain Henderson (commander of the Rifles), 'a band of violins whiled away the time till the assemblage was completed.' Other speeches that evening remarked on how the local ladies had shown themselves to

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[50] 'Artillery Volunteers', *The Caithness Courier*, 11 August 1866, 2.

[51] 'Artillery Volunteers', *The Caithness Courier,* 18 August 1866, 2.

[52] 'Review of the Caithness Volunteers', *The John O'Groat Journal*, 27 September 1866, 3.

[53] 'Letters (A Volunteer)', *The Caithness Courier,* 27 June 1868, 3.

be well worth defending from 'the grasping policy of Napoleon III.'[54] In June, the *Inverness Courier* briefly reported on the same event: that two silver bugles had been presented by Miss Henderson of Stemster and Miss Sinclair of Forss 'in the name of the ladies of Thurso' to the 1st Caithness Volunteer Rifles and the 2nd Caithness Volunteer Artillery, and that the money otherwise raised by the bazaar had covered both existing debts and a surplus of 20 guineas to purchase music and instruments.[55]

Such female patronage continued throughout the decade. In 1867, a trio of local ladies from Olrig House in Castletown (a village dominated by the slate quarrying operations of the Traill family) organised a local day *en fête* at which they presented a set of two silver bugles to the newly formed village artillery corps.[56] In 1869, the *John O'Groat Journal* printed an acknowledgement of receipt from the Thurso bandmaster of £1 from Lady Sinclair of Ulbster 'for the purchase of music for the use of the various volunteer bands under his instruction.'[57]

Musical gestures like these gave the more prominent women of the community an opportunity to contribute to the expression of local civic identity. Andrew Mackillop has observed that throughout this period 'in the north of Scotland a successful and mutually beneficial form of symbiosis emerged as local power, in the form of landlords and gentry, colonized the state and became its agents and its employees.'[58] In the Caithness County context, these feminine gifts cloaked some rivalry between the Sinclairs of Ulbster and other local families. In the 1869 county by-election, for example, Tollemache Sinclair emerged late as an independent Liberal candidate against the party nominee, Mr Traill, and in his election speeches aimed some particularly strong invective against the Sinclairs of Forss.

Fig. 4: Silver Bugle presented to 1st (Thurso) Rifle Volunteers in 1861. (Photo Credit and permission: Alan McIvor, Thurso Heritage Society.)

Banding Together: County Soundscapes

The regular presence of fit young men parading in smart new uniforms aroused pride in local onlookers. Combining sound and spectacle, Volunteer units marched along roads that joined local communities into wider area geographies. The *John O'Groat Journal* on 11 August 1864 reported the first appearance in Thurso of the Rifle Corps in new uniforms similar to those of other rifle volunteer units in the Highlands:

> The rifle corps turned out last night for the first time in their scarlet tunics and blue trousers. The new uniforms are of superior quality and well fitted, and reflect the highest

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[54] 'Ladies Bazaar in aid of the Thurso Volunteer Corps', *The John O'Groat Journal,* 11 April 1861, 2–3.

[55] 'Caithness & Orkney, &c. (Presentation of Bugles to the Thurso Volunteers)', *The Inverness Courier* 42(2276), 27 June 1861, 6.

[56] 'Presentation of Bugles to the Castletown Volunteer Corps.,' *The John O'Groat Journal*, 25 July 1867, 3.

[57] 'Mr Smith acknowledges', *The John O'Groat Journal*, 14 October 1869, 2 (col. 4, miscellaneous items). The following column ('Concert') reports a concert of vocal and instrumental music given by the 1st Caithness Artillery Volunteers in the Temperance Hall, which showcased Mr Smith's musicians.

[58] Andrew Mackillop, 'The Political Culture of the Scottish Highlands from Culloden to Waterloo,' *The Historical Journal*, 46(3), (2003), 531.

credit on the contractors, Messrs Fraser and Sons, Inverness. Under the command of Captain Tait, the corps marched to Janet Street, and after being drilled there for an hour or so, they paraded the town led by the band, the bright colour of the tunics attracting great crowds, so much so that some of the corners the streets were almost impassable.[59]

Standardised uniforms for the non-musical volunteers connected these local units to wider regional identities. These collective identities were most visible when all the units in a particular area gathered at local county level for their annual reviews by the Lord Lieutenant. Annual inspections presented Volunteer units from different communities around the county for comparative evaluation in the eyes, and ears, of all onlookers, civilian and military.

In Caithness, in the 1860s, travel beyond the county for joint inspection with units from Ross-shire and Inverness-shire was impossible: there was no train service to the far north, and the steamer services were not sufficiently frequent or capacious to transport Volunteer units to a common mustering point.[60] A report in the *Inverness Courier* of 1861, for example, mentions units from Inverness, Nairn, Forres, Elgin, and Ross-shire convening by the Inverness railway station before travelling out to Fort George, but no mention is made of either Caithness or Orkney. In 1860, at the first great review of the Volunteer units of Scotland in Edinburgh, only a subset of the Wick Artillery Volunteers managed the nine-day excursion by steamer to Granton, and they do not seem to have brought any band members with them.[61] These were working men, many of them fishermen, at the height of the summer fishing season. Apart from the Wick unit, the other Caithness units seem not to have had much interest in the national Volunteer movement outside of their own county. The national *Volunteer Service Gazette and Military Dispatch* newsletter repeatedly lists the Thurso units amongst those not subscribing to their publication.[62] After mentioning Thurso once in the 1860s (in connection with the 1860 county inspection at Pennyland), the *VSG&MD* thereafter concentrates on the Wick unit, who bother to subscribe to their reporting of the national movement and to come (once) to Edinburgh. However, from the start, all the Caithness units, and their music bands, were able to take one day off for their annual local inspection, and local reporting shows that these events had a significant impact across the county on those who saw the men making their way to the designated inspection field.

Getting British military bands at any level to play together harmoniously was not always easy. In 1854, a parade to celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday in front of the General Staff of the Crimean allies at Scutari had been reduced to a day of national shame, as the various regimental bands had played the National Anthem in different keys and in different tunings and in a different arrangements. It can therefore be imagined that massing the local Volunteer bands might cause some nervousness.[63] However, by the early 1860s there were national standard specifications for the production of military instruments, so technically at least, they could play in tune together, providing units owned military standard instruments, as was now the case in Caithness. It was also helpful that in 1862, new army regulations for standard military pitch set a standard B flat.[64]

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[59] 'Thurso', *The John O'Groat Journal*, 11 August 1864, 3, 1.

[60] 'Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Wick, Thurso, Orkney and Shetland', *The Inverness Courier* 42(2279), 18 July 1861, 8. Column 6 shows the timetable for once-weekly steamers over the summer. The *Volunteer Service Gazette and Military Dispatch* reports shooting competitions featuring members of the Artillery volunteers from around the Highlands, but not from Caithness in the far north; see 'Highland Rifle Association', *Volunteer Service Gazette and Military Dispatch*, 7 October 1865, 5–6.

[61] 'The Caithness Artillery', *Volunteer Service Gazette and Military Dispatch*, 15 August 1860, 14.

[62] 'The following list of corps not taking etc', *Volunteer Service Gazette and Military Dispatch,* 31 December 1864, 9, col. 5; see also 'Notice', *VSG&MD*, 2 December 1865, 8, col. 2. Of actual subscribers, the paper mentioned only units from Wick; see 'Notice', *VSG&MD* 13 November 1869, 5, col. 2.

[63] Herbert, *The British Brass Band*, 31.

[64] Herbert, *The British Brass Band*, 65.

The *John O'Groat Journal* of 15 June 1865 described the first combined review of all the constituent companies of the Caithness Battalion of Rifle Volunteers at Thurso East, home of Sir George Sinclair and his son and heir, J. G. Tollemache Sinclair: 'The band played at intervals, and the morning being so fine the journey was as pleasant as it could possibly have been.' The Wick corps arrived first, then the Halkirk corps arrived: 'brawny, broad-shouldered, rosy-cheeked fellows, big-boned, and with more beef and muscle on them than is characteristic of either of the town companies. And in marching, what strides they take!' These country lads did not have the sophisticated brass band resources of their town brothers, but were instead headed up by their two bagpipers: Sergeant Mackay, late of the 79th Highlanders, and Alex Murray: 'They came down the hill literally devouring the road … in active service they would certainly be the sappers and miners of the battalion, and for forced marches, as a flying column, they would considerably astonish the enemy.'[65] The stereotyping of the rural 'teuchter' by the urban sophisticate from Wick (in this instance) reproduces the re-purposing of an imagined Highland warrior culture for British military endeavour that haunts post-1745 British imperial writing.

The *Groat* reporter noted on this occasion that the 'Thurso Band' was a composite band with eight players drawn from the 1st Caithness (Thurso) Rifle Company volunteer band, and another six players from the 2nd Caithness (Thurso) Artillery, with one James Mackenzie acting as the 'trumpet major'. The Wick company – 2nd Caithness Rifles – had a twelve-strong musical band, two fewer than the combined Thurso forces. In this report we also learn that in 1865 the Thurso band had 'a distinct uniform from that of either of the Corps', although not yet the glorious tartanry that would be purchased in 1866:

> It is dark green with white facings, and has a very fine appearance, contrasting well with the scarlet and blue of the Rifles and Artillery. Their bandmaster, Sergeant David Manson, acted as field bugler to the commanding officer during the skirmishing. They are unquestionably a first-rate band and play with great taste and sweetness, but notwithstanding their larger number, owing to their instruments being finer in tone than those of the Wick band, the latter is the better for marching music as the power of their instruments makes them distinctly heard over almost any length of column. During the review, after playing for a time alternately, the bands were massed and played together, and the effect was peculiarly fine.[66]

At the end of the formal inspection, the Thurso and Wick bands' joint performance of the national anthem provoked no adverse comment. Afterwards, the amity continued:

> The battalion marched into the town and through the principal streets to the music of the united bands, bringing all the inhabitants who had been left in Thurso to the windows, and having half the country-side at their heels … the Thurso Band played the Wickers out of town with 'Auld Lang Syne.'…The band played at intervals along the road – wherever there were houses, and the rest of the road they sang, while those behind cheered everything and everybody until they got to Wick where they arrived all safe and happy a little before eleven o' clock.[67]

Music from these two Volunteer bands demonstrated their towns' pride in distinctive local civic identities, with local competition contained within a wider patriotism. For those units travelling to the inspection, their various bands' music helped to create a regional county identity, filling the countryside with appreciative applause from onlookers. In 1860s Thurso, the local town band fulfilled both civilian and military functions, although increasingly taking to the uniforms that badged it as a

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[65] 'Review of the Caithness Battalion of Rifle Volunteers at Thurso', *The John O'Groat Journal*, 15 June 1865, 3.

[66] 'Review of the Caithness Battalion', 3.

[67] 'Review of the Caithness Battalion', 3.

military rather than a purely civilian body of amateur friends. In Wick, the Volunteer band seems to have been from its inception more firmly associated with the military function.

The Wick Volunteer Band

Wick was a bustling fishing centre in the 1860s, and had been a royal burgh since 1589. Unlike Thurso, therefore, it was long used to managing its affairs through a freely elected town council. Wick burgh meeting books show the town council to have been energetic in steering infrastructure projects such as breakwater maintenance, lobbying MPs for national support via the Treasury and the Board of Trade, building a new bridge across Wick river, and establishing a new volunteer fire brigade.[68] Wick's status as a royal burgh also meant that it had well-developed traditions of street-level engagement in general elections, as can be seen in newspaper reports of the entertainments that accompanied the general election of 1868, discussed in this section.

The Wick militia band formed in the 1860s, in association with the town's Rifle Volunteer Company. As in Thurso, records of the unit as a whole show them to have attracted a great deal of local patronage, but in contrast with Thurso, this included more middle-class names alongside those of landowners. By 1866, *The Volunteer Service Gazette and Military Dispatch,* presumably using a locally supplied report, lists a truly astonishing list of prizes given by local donors for the annual shooting competitions; these ranged from carriage clocks and silver watches to leather bags, a barometer (useful, considering the fishermen in this group), and a prize concertina.[69] The large number of prizes and donors suggests some degree of civic competition between local businesses and trades.

On 9 January 1862**,** the *John O'Groat Journal* reported that the Wick Rifle Corps now possessed 'a full brass band of 14 instruments; and have engaged an instructor, a Mr Meerfeldt, who has arrived fresh from training bands in the south'.[70] Meerfeldt – a German – reflected the British army's practice of relying on overseas bandmasters from Germany, France and Italy, until the foundation in 1857 of the institution later called the Royal Military School of Music (initially, the Military Music Class) in Twickenham gradually replaced them with British home-trained musicians.

The expense of setting up the Wick unit seems to have been borne by the townspeople collectively through local subscriptions, donations in kind, and public fundraising events such as bazaars and concerts. Public accountability for the income and expenditure of the Wick Volunteer band was therefore important. On its front page of 24 April 1862, the *Groat* published a summary of the company accounts, along with some general standing orders signed off by Major James Horne, Captain in Command. Order number three specified that 'the Band will, until further orders, parade with the Company on Monday and Thursday evenings only, and on Friday evenings will attend private practise'.[71] The income summary, which covered the period from the unit's being first raised to that date, revealed that the corps had received subscriptions from 'Gentlemen and the town' as well as from corps members themselves; had raised a further £275 from a successful fund-raising bazaar; and received a little bank interest. Out of unit expenditure totalling £438 5s 2d, shows that £38 16s 7d was spent on instruments for the music band.

Fundraising continued, with the band's efforts generating additional funds from public appreciation of their music. On 18 December 1862, the *Groat* reviewed a concert by the Rifle Volunteer band in the Wick Temperance Hall that had raised £7 10s: 'This band has cost the corps a considerable sum of money from first to last, and we are glad to say that they have been worth the outlay'.[72] In the 1860s, there was no national grant even for regimental bands, let alone local

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[68] *Wick Burgh Minute Book 1794-1939*, Nucleus Archive, BW/1/4: entries for 21 February 1861, 28 March 1868 and 27 June 1868.

[69] '2nd Caithness (Wick) Rifles', *The Volunteer Service Gazette and Military Dispatch,* 1 December 1866, 10.

[70] 'Rifle Corps', *The John O'Groat Journal*, 9 January 1862, 2.

[71] 'Second Caithness Rifle Volunteers Company Orders', *The John O'Groat Journal,* 24 April 1862, 1, col. 1.

[72] 'Concert', *The John O'Groat Journal,* 18 December 1862, 2.

Volunteer bands, and the army expressed concerns about the high cost of instruments as well as the 'fast dealings' of Mr Boosey, who offered bandmasters incentives to buy his instruments.[73] The growth of bands in the mid-nineteenth century was assisted by manufacturers making instruments available on a hire-purchase basis, often underwritten by local wealthy backers. Henry Distin's 1857 catalogue lists new B flat cornets as retailing at over £8, alto flugelhorns at almost £11, and even cymbals coming in at around £6. Five pounds sterling would be worth just over £200 today, and shipping to the far north by steamer would raise the cost further. Although there would have probably been a discount for any bulk order, and possibly options to pay by instalments, the sums in the Wick accounts cannot have bought new instruments for every bandsman.[74] Some volunteer bands controversially diverted some of their capitation grants into a band fund, but most were mainly funded by some kind of subscription involving officers and the local community, assisted by the band's own contributions to local musical social life.[75] The newspaper reports do not show who guaranteed repayments on the Wick and Thurso band instruments, but likely candidates probably included local landowning gentry – officers such as Major Horne of Stirkoke and, in Thurso, the Sinclairs of Ulbster, their rivals the Sinclairs of Forss and, more locally, the Smiths of Pennyland.

Wick Bands and the 1868 Election

In addition to its activities on the drill ground, the Wick band played for regular annual balls, serving up reels, polkas and other fashionable dances.[76] A further area of band activity that speaks to Wick's pride in its independent civic identity, but which must have been controversial at the time, was the appearance of band members in the context of the general election of 1868. Strictly, this was not legal: a War Office letter of 11 September 1868, widely copied in local British newspapers (although possibly not in the far north), reminded Lord Lieutenants that 'Volunteers in uniform should take part in no political demonstration or party meeting', that 'they are not to assemble their corps for drill or any other purpose between the issue of the writ and the termination of the election in any county or burgh', and that they should remind all officers of all corps of this directive.[77] By September, however, Wick bandsmen had already marched out to accompany candidate canvassing on at least one occasion.

In the national election of 1868, the sitting Liberal candidate for the Northern Burghs, Samuel Laing, hoped to be returned. From a Kirkwall family, Laing was a national authority on railways, a hot topic locally, and he had also played a leading role in national and colonial British government, being appointed as financial secretary to the Treasury in 1859. He had won the Northern Burghs constituency in 1852, defeating the sitting MP James Loch, who was seen at that point as the apologist for the Strathnaver sheep clearance evictions and whose seat in the Commons had extended the Duke of Sutherland's influence into Caithness burgh politics. Laing's success in 1852 had rested on his being 'above' local politics: not in the pocket of noble landowners, nor sullied with the Clearances connection. By 1868, however, the franchise had been extended, and the result depended on the candidate being seen as well-briefed and committed to local issues.[78] Laing, whose activity in parliament had been in national and colonial affairs, was less secure.

Moreover, Liberalism was not a united movement in 1868. The national debates around the Second Reform Act had split the Liberals into two wings, one of which was more radical in its politics

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[73] Lt. Col. P. L. Binns, *A Hundred Years of Military Music: Being the Story of the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall* (Gillingham: The Blackmore Press, 1959), 59.

[74] Binns, *A Hundred Years of Military Music*, 307–8.

[75] Herbert, *The British Brass Band*, 39.

[76] '2nd Caithness Rifles', *Volunteer Service Gazette and Military Dispatch*, 21 November 1868, 3.

[77] 'Volunteers at Elections', *Naval & Military Gazette and Weekly Chronicle of the United Service*, 19 September 1868, 14.

[78] Annie Tindley*, The Sutherland Estate 1850–1920: Aristocratic Decline, Estate Management and Land Reform* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 12, 14.

and often critical of government foreign policy, and the other much more doubtful about the latest franchise innovations. Positions also varied on whether education should be more secular (current arrangements excluded Free Church children from burgh schools run by the Church of Scotland) and on Irish and foreign policy. Laing was on the conservative wing of the Liberals, and was opposed by a rival Liberal, George Loch (son of the infamous James), who was backed by the more forward reformers in the Liberals. George Loch promoted himself as a 'local', reforming, and entrepreneurial candidate, and characterised Laing as overly cautious and aging. Both men were briefly but controversially opposed by a radical independent candidate, Edinburgh man-of-means Edmund Lockyer.

Both Laing's and Loch's campaigns were enlivened by open air band performances and ritual processions through the streets of Wick. The *John O'Groat Journal* openly supported Loch, while the rival newspaper, the *Northern Ensign*, was partisan for Laing. In its editorial of 13 August 1868, four months before polling day, the *Groat* reported on Laing's arrival in Wick to deliver his keynote campaign speech. The candidate had processed through the town accompanied vigorously by the Wick Volunteers' brass band, augmented by fifes and a couple of bagpipers:

> The band played him in to the appropriate tune of "Paddle your own canoe" .... At every corner where a crowd was collected an unsuccessful attempt was made by the fuglemen to get up a hearty and general cheer, but the whole affair was a most miserable failure.

The procession wound through the town, led by Mr Ross on the bagpipes and assisted by 'spangled youths in skin-tights and mounted on seven-league stilts, and followed by all the boys and idlers of the town.' At the New Hotel, there were desultory cheers 'mingled with a good deal of hissing.' The candidate attempted to speak from the hotel window, thanking Wick for its welcome and announcing that he was going to meet the electors in the Old Free Church, and expressing his 'belief that [this gathering] would be a prediction of their success (cheers and hisses).' In the Free Church, however, the *Groat* editor reported that Laing's speech was punctuated with further parenthetical hisses, and finally brought to an end when bags of flour were thrown, to the distress of the candidate's wife and daughters.[79]

The Wick town band that accompanied Laing through the town was named in the *Groat* report as the band associated with the 2nd Caithness (Wick) Rifle Volunteers. It is possible that the bagpiper Mr Ross was also in this company, as the Lieutenant of the 2nd Wick Rifles in the mid-1860s was one Lieutenant Roderick Ross.[80] The band's appearance must have been authorised by a more senior officer, who presumably was happy to have his troops put to political use. While the Lord Lieutenant of the County – the 14th Earl of Caithness, James Sinclair – was the commanding officer of all the militia volunteers in the area, the operational commander of the Wick units – the acting Brigadier – was one Major Horne of Stirkoke, a large landowner just outside of Wick, who emerged as a late and ultimately unsuccessful independent, Conservative-leaning, candidate in the Caithness County constituency in October 1868.[81] If Horne authorised the Wick band's deployment in support of Laing, did Horne think that Laing's cautious stand on some of the issues raised by the Second Reform Act was worth endorsing?

Laing was not the only candidate to co-opt support from the local Volunteer militia. To balance local politics, a couple of months later, and after the War Office circular of 11 September had been widely disseminated, we find bagpiper Ross and the brass band of the 2nd Wick Rifles appearing *en fête* for the other Liberal candidate, George Loch. On 29 October 1868, the *John O'Groat Journal* reported a day of 'Grand Demonstration' on the occasion of Mr Loch's visit to Wick, describing it as

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[79] 'Mr Laing, M.P., At Wick', *John O'Groat Journal,* 13 August 1868, 3.
[80] 'Review of the Caithness Battalion of Rifle Volunteers at Thurso', *John O'Groat Journal*, 15 June 1865, 3 (col. 2, list for Second Caithness (Wick) Rifle Company Officers).
[81] 'To the Electors of the County of Caithness', *John O'Groat Journal*, 15 October 1868, 1.

'one of the grandest demonstrations ever seen in this quarter, rivalling alike in its magnitude, in the heartiness with which it was supported by all classes of the community, and in the imposing magnificence of the display, the long talked of demonstration of 1832'. Comparing it to the visit of Loch's rival in August, the *Groat's* correspondent crowed that 'the demonstration of Thursday as far exceeded it as the mountain exceeds the molehill'.[82]

The procession that accompanied Loch from the countryside south of Wick into the centre of town was heralded by 'the occasional sounds of music marching through the streets.' The trades associated with the town's fishing industry each fielded a body of men: mounted carters, coopers, fishermen, boat carpenters, harbour workmen, masons, and the General Committee of Mr Loch's supporters. Mr Roderick Ross, the bagpiper previously mentioned as having marched in the Laing procession in August, acted once again as marshal of the procession, which was doubtless necessary as 'each trade had its own flag and a band of music.' The town's militia band was not the only band to turn out; Helmsdale and Lybster, both fishing settlements with volunteer militias, also sent their bands up the coast, although this time, the *Groat* reported that the Volunteer band that met Loch off the boat at Lybster was 'not in uniform' – perhaps, then, obeying the letter of the War Office letter if not exactly the spirit in which it was issued. The *Groat* went on to describe the Wick, Lybster and Helmsdale bands, mostly probably comprised of fisherman, as they marched with Loch along the coast road to Wick:

> The fine brass bands which accompanied the procession were three in number. The Wick band marched out with the coopers, and came in with the masons, and in front of Mr Loch's carriage, playing 'Charlie ye are welcome' and 'See the conquering hero comes' alternately. The Lybster band accompanied the fishermen. The Helmsdale band went out with the carpenters and came in with the coopers. The harbour workmen were preceded by three pipers.[83]

This was a carefully curated programme of music, with the Jacobite song (casting Loch as a romantic Young Pretender) alternating with Handel's Hanoverian anthem (associated with British Whig politics). By yoking together two once-antagonistic political traditions, the music projected Loch as the candidate most able not only to reconcile local political differences, but also to bridge local and national political histories.

At one o'clock the word was given to march, and the procession is archly described in mock-epic style:

> The carters' steeds are prancing and enjoying the novelty, and away they go … as the first crash of music breaks out, and the first movement begins; *[a horse bolts]* as if possessed by seven demons, making the crowd fly right and left, knocking over a couple of lamp-posts, and finally coming to grief with his nose on the ground in Brown Place, happily without hurting anybody. The man in charge held nobly on for a while to the maddened animal, and only let go when he was in danger of being thrown down and run over.[84]

There was a bit of difficulty getting the trades' flags past the newly installed low-lying telegraph wires (a modernising initiative backed by Samuel Laing during his time as local MP), and a brief pause to gather up the candidate and carriages containing the candidates and local and national party worthies: 'Mr Loch was in an open waggonette, accompanied by Messrs Crawford and Bruce, Vice-Chairmen of his committee, and Mr Macdonald of London.' The crowd greeted Loch with 'cheer on cheer' as he passed the line of trades, 'standing with head uncovered.' Some young men unyoked the horses of his wagon and demanded to pull the wagon through the street as 'an honour to Mr Loch':

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[82] 'Mr Loch's Visit to Wick', *John O'Groat Journal*, 29 October 1868, 3.
[83] 'Mr Loch's Visit', col. 2.
[84] 'Mr Loch's Visit', col. 1.

'clustering round the carriage like a swarm of bees, it seemed to move without effort on their part.'[85] The choice of metaphor references classical literature, particularly Virgil's *Georgics*, giving this local triumph a Roman civic glamour that was part-ironic, and part-patriotic.

After Loch went into Nicol's Hotel to speak to his supporters, those of the opposition attempted to create a disturbance by baa-ing like sheep (a reference to Loch's father's involvement in the Clearances):

> But their united efforts were all in vain as cheer after cheer rang out from each of the bodies in the procession as they marched past, and all the baa-ing and screaming, and frantic caterwauling of the opposition was rendered inaudible, unless to themselves.[86]

Loch's speech having been delivered without the flour-decorated heckling that had marred Laing's performance, the day ended with orderly votes of thanks and calm dispersal.

The third candidate in the constituency, Edmund Lockyer, withdrew from the race on the polling day. Lockyer had always been very much a maverick outsider. The previous year, at the start of his candidacy for the Northern Burghs, Lockyer's grandstanding support for two elderly blind men who had been thrown out of the Edinburgh Asylum for the Blind had landed him in the Edinburgh papers as a Don Quixote-like figure, a saviour of the weak and dispossessed. That affair had, however, fizzled out without achieving much other than embarrassing all parties concerned. Lockyer had also failed to get himself elected to the board of the North British railway company, an embarrassment widely reported in both national and provincial papers.[87] The *Groat* reported in October 1868 that Lockyer had been arrested and released on £100 bail for bribing a Wick postman to show him a letter passed between Loch and some local supporters which he thought contained details of illegal election practices.[88] By the nomination day (in advance of the official poll) on Tuesday 24 November, Lockyer had circulated libellous notices, pasted to town walls in Wick, complaining about local corrupt electioneering.

Newspapers outside of Caithness were starting to notice that the election in Wick was unusually ill-tempered. On 26 November the *Inverness Courier* noted that 'in all the Northern Burghs great excitement has been caused by the present contest, but in none has feeling run so high as in Wick'. As the three candidates appeared at the final hustings, the unruly crowd numbered as many as 4000, far exceeding the numbers of those actually enfranchised to vote. Speeches were barely audible, although Loch's voice seems to have carried further due to his personal robustness and the crowd momentarily quietening slightly. Lockyer was still under investigation for somehow intercepting and opening letters, and the crowd waved 'letters' above their heads and shouted out oblique references to 'Miss Sinclair, deerskin and letters'. Lockyer, rendered inaudible, pulled open his shirt and beat his chest to indicate his sincerity. The show of hands at the end of the hustings (not the official vote, but an nevertheless important barometer of local intentions) was not private: hands were held up and counted, in full view of all present. Lockyer accepted his cause was lost and withdrew that day in favour of Laing.[89]

After the poll, which returned a decisive majority for Loch, the winning candidate was pulled through the streets in a boat atop a carriage, headed by bagpipes and a flag proclaiming 'our

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[85] The entrance of the candidate, met by crowds outside the town boundaries and conveyed by a carriage pulled by townspeople, is common among 'ritual' election practices found throughout the British Isles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals', 83.

[86] 'Mr Loch's Visit', col. 2.

[87] 'Lockyer Latest!', *The North Briton (Scotsman)*, 14 August 1867, 2, and 20 August 1867; see also 'From Our Edinburgh Correspondent', *Inverness Advertiser and Ross-Shire Chronicle*, 16 August 1867, 2, and 'Notes on Edinburgh', *Brechin Advertiser*, 20 August 1867, 2–3.

[88] 'The Case of Mr Lockyer', *John O'Groat Journal*, 8 October 1868, 2.

[89] 'Nomination for the Northern Burghs', *Inverness Courier*, 26 November 1868, 5.

independence and freedom'. However, by the end of December, Lockyer lodged a formal petition against Loch and for Laing, claiming that:

> "the election of the said George Loch was effected and accomplished through bribery by himself, by his agents, friends and supporters; and by undue influence, violence, threats of violence, and intimidation by his committee and the members thereof, and supporters, agents, and others, and hired mobs; and by treating, and through a very large gratuitous distribution of whisky; and Mr Loch's success was the result of extensive corruption and of proceedings wholly, or at least in large part, contrary to law."[90]

Laing himself was embarrassed by the petition and never backed it, and by the end of February, Lockyer was obliged to withdraw it and bear its expenses.[91]

The entanglements of Volunteer bands with local politics were less explicit in west Caithness. Unlike in Wick, Thurso musicians were not reported as having marched for political rallies before the County constituency poll in 1868, nor did they come out in advance of the rather scrappy County by-election of 1869 between two rival liberal candidates, one of whom was Sir Tollemache Sinclair, but they did celebrate their patron winning with a musical entry procession to the Town. Sir Tollemache's 1869 campaign was otherwise populist: his election speeches referred in general terms to the many ways in which his family, and he himself, had promoted Thurso's emerging civic regeneration. James Traill, the rival liberal candidate, had strong local family connections with the slate-quarrying Traills of Castletown, but was represented to voters as a 'London man' put up by a government-controlled clique. After a campaign marred by intemperate language and a public threat to punch his rival's agent in the face, Sir Tollemache was declared the victor, and was accompanied into his home town of Thurso by 'several bands of music'.[92] The involvement of local bands in these various election processions suggests that public displays to the wider population, not just those qualified to vote, were part of a recurrent pattern of public festivity – including entry to the town, and general street celebration aiming to demonstrate civic assent from the wider town population, men of all classes, women, and youth under twenty-one (spangled or otherwise).

Conclusion

For some decades after 1859, as the far north of Scotland remained beyond the reach of daily railway services, brass bands played an important role in national politics, particularly at the time of the second Reform Act. While those formally enfranchised were encouraged to become involved in elections, the enthusiasm for the bands among the wider population contributed to the energy of civic life. Tradespeople, fisher folk, women, and members of both middle and lower classes raised money for music, instruments and even the costs of band masters to train the musicians and outfit their ensembles, demonstrating that the bands had become a much-treasured part of life in Wick, Thurso and other Caithness communities.

In the later decades of the nineteenth century, the opportunity for local gentry to dress bands associated with the local Volunteer units in the equivalent of their own family livery gradually receded. Military reforms put a stop to idiosyncratic local uniforms; the absorption of the Highland militias by the Seaforth Highlanders in the Childers Reforms of 1881 also saw their amateur counterparts, the Volunteers and their bands, reverting to more standard blue uniforms with silver buttons (*Fig. 5*).

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[90] 'Petition Against the Return of Mr Loch for the Northern Burghs', *Inverness Courier*, 24 December 1868, 6.

[91] 'Withdrawal of the Wick Election Petition', *Saturday Inverness Advertiser*, 13 February 1869, 2.

[92] 'Caithness Election', *Inverness Courier*, 2 September 1869, 6.

Fig. 5: Thurso Town Band c.1900
Reproduced courtesy of Caithness Horizons Museum and Art Gallery, Thurso.

With the demise of Thurso's Volunteer 'Town' band in 1907, the rise of the Salvation Army temperance movement, which welcomed women as well as men to their bands, provided an alternative outlet for morally improving musical activity (*Fig. 6*).

Fig. 6: Thurso Salvation Army Band c.1920–29.
Courtesy of the Johnston Photographic Collection, Wick Heritage Society.

In 1913, on the eve of World War 1, Thurso and District Pipe Band was formed, a Highland expression of musical community identity more familiar to conventional histories.[93] In Wick, however, civilian brass bands continued to feature strongly in civic life, with photographs in the Wick Heritage Centre's Johnston photographic archive showing them turning out for gala days and for the proclamations of royal deaths and coronations in the years between 1900 and 1937.

Thurso 1911 Census (all males)	2179
Wick 1911 Census (all males)	5546
All-Caithness recorded as lost in First World War	1123 (c. 14.5% of total male population in 1911)

Table 2: WW1 casualties compared with male populations of Thurso and Wick, as recorded in 1911 Census.

Looking at the young men pictured in Figure 5, it is hard not to be moved by the thought that they, their peers, and in some cases their sons would go on to fight and possibly lose their lives in the Great War, in many ways the culmination of the militarised civic culture of the nineteenth century. The death toll of army personnel involved in that conflict in Caithness was significant (*Table 2*).[94]

Fig. 7: Wick War Memorial, 1955.
James Valentine Photographic Collection, item ref. JV-D-956.
Courtesy of University of St Andrews Library.

By way of some slight compensation, by 1918, men who survived had been granted the vote; women joined them in 1928. The war memorials raised throughout Scotland remind everyone today of the cost paid for the pride and care these men had for their local and national communities: in both Thurso and Wick, memorials to the dead (*Fig. 7*) stare blankly down the same streets through which

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[93] The Thurso and District Pipe band have just celebrated their 110th anniversary; see their Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/tdpb1913/?locale=en_GB; also an account of their founding years by Bandsman David Manson: http://www.caithness.org/entertainment/music/pipebands/thursopipebandhistory.htm.

[94] Census returns for 1911: *Scotland's People Census Returns*, www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/, searching using the towns of Wick and Thurso and 'male'. The total casualty figures were kindly provided by Valerie Amin, Archive Assistant at the Nucleus Archive in Wick, who manually checked their *List of Caithness Service Personnel Killed in World War One and Two* GB1741/P949 (collated c2019) for the total Caithness army and navy personnel lost in the First World War.

peacetime military bands, in civic procession, helped to forge the link between local civic pride and national patriotism, thereby fueling enthusiasm for the First 'Great' War.

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Singing and the *Dùsgaidhean:* The Impact of Religious Awakenings on Musical Creativity in the Outer Hebrides

FRANCES WILKINS

Abstract

The evangelical revivals (known in English as 'awakenings' and in Gaelic as *na dùsgaidhean*) of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had an immediate impact upon singing and music-making in Presbyterian communities in the Western Isles as well as a significant long-term effect on both traditional and sacred musical practice and performance. Awakenings often led converts to re-evaluate their participation in traditional music-making and singing, and compelled many to give up their secular music practices upon conversion. Even so, music-making itself was not discouraged, and these religious revivals created an environment which encouraged converts to replace their secular repertoire with spiritual songs and hymns, and to embrace the singing and new composition of spiritual songs to express their newly experienced Christian faith. Converts described how communities exchanged secular for religious songs, and how the adaptation of well-known (secular) melodies to newly composed texts invigorated the musical and the religious lives of their communities.

This article will examine the impact of religious revivals on music-making in the Outer Hebrides – particularly Lewis – and the significant musical shifts which took place within communities as a result. In addition to the adoption of both Gaelic and English-language hymnody, vernacular song composition within revival communities contributed to a sizeable new repertoire. We shall explore what this spiritual song repertoire reveals about the atmosphere of the awakenings, and about the thoughts and concerns of those who experienced them.

Introduction

Gaelic spiritual songs (*dàin spioradail*) and hymns (*laoidhean),* alongside psalms (*sailm*) and Gaelic translations of English hymns, have been integral to musical expression in Hebridean Presbyterian communities for centuries.[1] While many spiritual songs remained in the oral tradition and were never written down, several collections of spiritual compositions have appeared in print. Better known twentieth-century publications include Hector MacKinnon's *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor* ('The

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[1] Whilst *dàin spioradail* and *laoidhean* are often used interchangeably to refer to spiritual poetry and hymns, *laoidhean* is more likely to refer to congregational hymns, and *dàin* suggests individual expressions of sacred poetry and song.

Precious Gem') and Iain N. Mac Leòid's *Bàrdachd Leòdhais* ('Poetry of Lewis').[2] Well-thumbed copies of collections by earlier eighteenth and nineteenth century writers Dugald Buchanan, Peter Grant (Pàdruig Grannd), Murdo MacLeod ('Murchadh a' Cheisteir') and John Morison ('Iain Ghobha') are still found in many island homes.[3] Today the tradition remains central to island spirituality, as John MacLeod noted in 2008 when he wrote that the composition and singing of spiritual hymns 'may well still be the strongest indigenous art-form on Lewis and Harris'.[4] Despite the outspoken misgivings of writers including Alexander Carmichael and Francis Collinson – and we shall examine their commentary below – the nineteenth and twentieth century evangelical revivals or 'awakenings' (in Gaelic, *na dùsgaidhean*) which took place across the Highlands and Islands were rich in creative musical expression.[5]

Singing of spiritual songs and hymns was central to the awakenings, and some converts took to composition as a way of expressing their new-found faith. Often the song melodies were adopted from well-known secular songs already in circulation within the communities. The tradition of song composition gives a valuable insight into the atmosphere of revivals and the thoughts and concerns of those who experienced them. As Anne MacLeod Hill has persuasively argued, the compositions that emerged and flourished during such revivals have come to constitute an important genre within Gaelic song, *laoidhean dùsgaidh* ('hymns of awakening').[6]

The focus of this essay is not so much on the compositions themselves but on the context within which sacred singing and composition took place during the Hebridean *dùsgaidhean* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Dùsgaidhean* that occurred in Lewis, Harris and North Uist during the early-to-mid twentieth century were often accompanied by surges of musical creativity among converts. Between 2018 and 2022, I interviewed several people who converted during revivals*,* and their recollections of the singing are included here. I have also drawn from some of the 1970s accounts in Colin and Mary Peckham's book, *Sounds from Heaven: The Revival on the Isle of Lewis, 1949-1952*,[7] and from the unpublished recollections of the Point awakenings compiled by Angus Campbell in 2022.

Awakenings in Northern Scotland

Awakenings in the Outer Hebrides emerged within the much wider context of the Christian revivals which took place across Scotland and internationally. They led to renewed interest in church attendance, and successfully encouraged younger people to profess faith. There were several spiritual awakenings in Lewis and Harris in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although most were local to specific parishes, some were more influential and captured the attention of the wider community at the time. These include the 1822 *Bliadhna an Fhaomaidh* ('Year of the Swoonings') and the 1949–52 Lewis Revival, both of which appear to have started in the parish of Barvas on the west side of

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[2] Eachann MacFhionghain, *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor* (Stornoway: Stornoway Religious Bookshop, 1990); Iain N. MacLeòid, ed. *Bàrdachd Leòdhais* (Stornoway: 1998, 1st ed. 1916).

[3] Mairead MacIver, interview, 18 May 2022. Publications include Pàdruig Grannd, *Dàin Spioradail* (Elgin: Peter MacDonald, 1837); Dùghall Bochanan, *Laoidhean Spioradail* (Edinburgh: Mac-Lachuinn & Stiubhard, 1872); and George Henderson, ed. *Dàin Iain Ghobha: The Poems of John Morison, the Songsmith of Harris.* Second ed. Vol. 1. (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair and Edinburgh: Norman MacLeod, 1896).

[4] John MacLeod, *Banner in the West: A Spiritual History of Lewis and Harris* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008), 324.

[5] Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* 1, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1928), xxx; Francis Collinson, *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 94–5.

[6] Anne MacLeod Hill, 'The Pelican in the Wilderness: Symbolism and Allegory in Women's Evangelical Songs of the Gàidhealtachd' (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2016).

[7] Colin and Mary Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven: The Revival on the Isle of Lewis, 1949–1952* (Christian Focus Publications: Fearn, 2004); Angus Campbell, 'William Campbell and The Point Awakenings 1932-57' (2022). Unpublished manuscript.

Lewis.[8] The 1932–57 awakenings in Point, led by the Rev. William Campbell, lasted over two decades, and likewise had significant impact in the surrounding area. In each of these revivals, the spirit of prayer was considered vital to their initiation, even before the arrival of evangelical leaders.[9]

Some awakenings coincided with times of social and economic dislocation. Donald Meek notes that on occasion a 'national threat to human existence' was the stimulus for revivals, as in the case of the 'cholera revival' in Grantown on Spey in 1832, when people interpreted the outbreak of the disease as 'a judgement on the 'lukewarmness of professors'. That epidemic stimulated an awakening under the leadership of the well-known Gaelic hymn composer Peter Grant (Pàdruig Grannd) who, in addition to preaching, led the singing in church services with his violin, and composed songs to illustrate the messages of his sermons; these songs were later compiled into his book of popular spiritual songs, *Dàin Spioradail*.[10] Meek also draws attention to the intense revival movements which occurred in the Hebrides between the two potato blights in 1836 and 1846.[11] In the North-East Scottish context, Nadel-Klein and Meek have both suggested links between nineteenth and early twentieth century revivals and poor fishing seasons, when fisherfolk were inactive through lack of work and more open to revivalist preaching.[12] In Lewis, James Shaw Grant, a journalist and the editor of the *Stornoway Gazette* from 1932 to 1963, drew a connection between these awakenings and wider social conditions at the time, writing of the 1949-52 revival that:

> I throw out, for what it is worth, the suggestion that there is some connection between these events and the fact that they occurred around the time when unremitting, and largely selective, emigration from Lewis had produced a distortion in the age structure of the population and the balance between the sexes, worse than at any other time in our history, and when the suppression, or attempted suppression, of youth clubs, concerts, dances and all secular activities was at its most extreme.[13]

Evangelism and Communion

In the Outer Hebrides – as across Scotland from at least the seventeenth century – revivals tended to be sparked by the evangelical missions of itinerant preachers. These missions often coincided with the biannual communion season known as *na h-Òrdaighean* ('The Ordinances') or *Comanachadh* ('Communion'). This is a time when Presbyterian churches in each parish host one of several five-day 'communion weekends' over consecutive weeks in spring and autumn.[14] All branches of the Presbyterian church – the Church of Scotland, Free Church of Scotland, and Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland – celebrate the communion season in this way. In the past, attendees willingly travelled considerable distances to attend communions, spending weekends in the homes of family and friends

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[8] John MacLeod, *Banner in the West*, 121; Rev. Murdo MacAulay, *Aspects of the Religious History of Lewis Up to the Disruption of 1843* (Inverness: Eccles, 1988), 116; Margaret MacLeod, interview, 6 October 2022; Calum MacDonald, Donalasdair Smith and Nanna MacInness, interview, 17 February 2020; Mairead MacIver, interview.

[9] Effie MacQuien, personal communication, 27 June 2023.

[10] Donald Meek, 'Gaelic Bible, Revival and Mission', in James Kirk, ed., *The Church in the Highlands*, 114–245 (Edinburgh: Scottish Church History Society, 1999), 122–123. Peter Grant, *Spiritual Songs by Rev. Peter Grant, Strathspey*, ed. by Hector MacDougall (Glasgow: Alex MacLaren & Sons, 1926), introduction.

[11] Meek, 'Gaelic Bible', 137.

[12] Jane Nadel-Klein, *Fishing for Heritage: Modernity and Loss Along the Scottish Coast* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 114; Donald Meek, '"Fishers of Men": The 1921 Religious Revival, Its Cause, Context and Transmission', in *After Columba – After Calvin: Community and Identity in the Religious Traditions of North East Scotland*, ed. James Porter, 135–42 (Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, 1997), 135.

[13] James Shaw Grant, 'Revival that shook up Lewis' GD005/13/24, *Stornoway Gazette* [n.d.]. MAA2/H/3. Accessible at Tasglann nan Eilean, Lews Castle College, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis.

[14] Donald Meek, 'The Literature of Religious Revival and Disruption', in Ian Brown, Thomas Clancy, Susan Manning, and Professor Murray Pittock, eds, *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature Volume 2: Enlightenment, Britain and Empire 1707–1918*, 360–70 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 361.

when not attending church services. These weekends were characterised by an atmosphere of festivity not unlike that of a traditional ceilidh, where hospitality and fellowship would continue late into the night and emphasis was specifically on Bible reading, prayer, sacred singing, and testimony.[15] Kenina MacLeod remembered the special atmosphere of the communion weekends during the Point awakenings in Lewis (1932–57), recalling how people gathered outdoors for singing and prayer:

> At communion times, converts from Lochs and the West Side came. New friendships were made. There was a joy and warmth in these friendships, which never died. Those who are still living today who frequented these meetings have never forgotten the atmosphere. I remember one moonlit night a crowd of converts and older Christians, including a Free Church elder stopping on the top of a hill for prayers and singing. Our hearts were so full then![16]

During these communion weekends, special church services were held to prepare both the church and the congregation in advance of the communion service itself. Donald Meek describes the role of the Evangelical clergymen at the communions as follows:

> In contrast to the so-called Moderate clergymen, the Evangelicals placed great emphasis on personal salvation, and they also tended to restrict participation in the communion service to those with a personal faith. The communion table was effectively 'fenced'.[17]

The purpose of the 'fencing' was to remind intending communicants of the necessity for spiritual preparation. They were not to come forward in a spirit of pride and self-righteousness, but in brotherly love and humility. This process would typically begin with the reading of 1 Cor. 11:23–29, followed by Galatians 5:16–26.[18] Colin and Mary Peckham described the process of 'fencing' in detail:

> The communion would begin on Thursday morning, which was called the fast day; Friday was the testimony day; Saturday was the day of preparation; Sunday was the great day of the feast; and Monday was thanksgiving day when the final service was held in the morning. It was virtually a convention. Normally two or three ministers would be invited and they, together with the minister of the church, conducted the meetings […] The table was fenced off or protected when the minister would preach showing, from a Biblical perspective, who should be allowed to partake of the bread and wine. This was normally a searching word. The church would be full but only those who took their seats in the designated area, marked off by white cloth in the front of the pews, would participate. The Biblical position of allowing only those who knew the Lord to participate in the Lord's Supper was a well-established principle.[19]

The preaching of specific individuals has often been regarded as the stimulus for revivals. Some of the better-known revival preachers included Finlay Munro and John Morison (Iain Ghobha) in 1820s Lewis and Harris, Peter Grant in 1830s Grantown on Spey, and Duncan Campbell in the 1949–52 'Lewis Revival' which started in Barvas. D. R. MacDonald, a church elder and precentor in Stornoway, described a time in the Free Church of Scotland in the early 1970s when a localised revival broke out in response to the preaching of one minister, Murdo MacRitchie:

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[15] Margaret MacIver, interview. For more discussion see Tom Lennie, *Glory in the Glen: A History of Evangelical Revivals in Scotland, 1880–1940* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2009); Kenneth S. Jeffrey, *When the Lord Walked the Land: The 1858–62 Revival in the North-East of Scotland* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press. 2002).

[16] Kenina MacLeod, quoted in Angus Campbell, 'William Campbell and The Point Awakenings 1932–57', 8.

[17] Meek, 'Gaelic Bible', 124.

[18] Effie MacQuien, personal communication, 27 June 2023.

[19] Peckham and Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven,* 22.

There was times when there was spiritual revival in the community, in my time in the early 70s. After I had been converted, there was a spiritual awakening in the congregation in the Free Church here in Stornoway and it was mainly couples in their late twenties, early thirties, who were converted [....] The minister here then was Murdo MacRitchie. He was from the island and he had been in America and he came here in 1966 from Detroit, and this was '71 and it was just through his preaching. It was a strange thing that the Free Church on Kenneth Street, where James MacIver is today, it was being re-decorated, and they moved the services to the town hall, and some of the older people at that time, they weren't happy that the services were being moved to the town hall, because the town hall then used to have a dance on a Saturday night, and the older people weren't comfortable that a place, a building that was being used for dances just the night before, was then going to be used for worship on the Sabbath. So they weren't happy to go, but it was during that time that this revival happened and it was palpable. You would walk into the service in the town hall and it was like you were engulfed with an electric blanket. You could feel it, and one of the signs was that the people, they were like one. Nobody wanted to leave after the service, they just stood and some weren't able, they were speechless, and there's a conversion [....] And it wasn't just in Stornoway, there was other places, there was over in Lochs and in Ness, and in Callanish where the Callanish stones are, and down in Back too. There was times there around that time where there was a spiritual awakening, and it was just God in his mercy applying his word with power, and to the hearts of the hearers, and them being transformed as a result of it.[20]

The Effect of Conversion on Song Choices and Repertoires

Until the late twentieth century, Gaelic was the principal language used by revival preachers who, according to Donald Meek, 'drew their inspiration from the Gaelic Bible.' But while the predominance of Gaelic within the church bolstered the status of the language, other Gaelic cultural practices became subject to change as new converts, 'anxious to make a clear and immediate break with their old life and its symbols' replaced them – at least temporarily – with practices more clearly reflective of their spiritual lives.[21]

This break from secularity among converts led to a clear distinction between sacred and secular aspects of community life, and particularly affected the musical lives of the converted. Sometimes such disruption could be nothing less than a lightning shift. During an awakening in North Uist in 1880, one eyewitness described how 'two boys threw their once fondly-cherished treasure – a profane song-book – into the fire of their own emotion, feeling, I suppose, that they were committing their dearest idol to the flames.'[22] Alexander Carmichael, in his introduction to *Carmina Gadelica*, recollected at length his meeting with a woman in her home in Ness, in the north of Lewis, in the late 1800s, articulating his disappointment at the lack of any visible folk traditions in the area. The woman spoke of her younger days when 'there was hardly a house in Ness in which there was not one or two or three who could play the pipe, or the fiddle, or the trump.' When Carmichael asked her why this was no longer the case, she replied,

A blessed change came over the place and the people…and the good men and the good ministers who arose did away with the songs and the stories, the music and the dancing, the sports and the games, that were perverting the minds and ruining the souls of the people, leading them to folly and stumbling [....] They [the ministers] made the people break and burn their pipes and fiddles. If there was a foolish man here and there who

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[20] Donald Roderick MacDonald, interview with author, Stornoway, Lewis, 23 January 2018.
[21] Meek, 'Gaelic Bible', 141.
[22] Lennie, *Glory in the Glen*, 276.

demurred, the good ministers and the good elders themselves broke and burnt their instruments.'[23]

Carmichael reported similar experiences elsewhere in the Hebrides, such as when he took up residency in Carbost, Skye, in 1861, where he wrote letters describing 'sources' of folklore suddenly drying up and informants' memories having 'forsaken them in a most unaccountable manner'.[24]

While Francis Collinson suggests that the act of instrument burning 'reached its worst during the religious revivals of the early nineteenth century', such activities did not end at that time. He described how his own mid-twentieth century attempts to collect folk songs and tales in an 'outlying district of the Isle of Harris' were met with 'a complete stone-wall of evasion and polite refusal even to discuss such things as the existence of folk-songs and tales.' He was unsurprised to learn that a revivalist preacher had recently been active in the area.[25]

It is important to note that Carmichael clearly had a strained relationship with Highland evangelicalism.[26] Donald Meek quotes Carmichael's view that 'the clergy – especially the Free Church clergy – are much against *sean sgeulachdan* ["old stories"] and denounce them as "ungodly", &c.' By 1888, however, Meek argues that 'nineteenth-century evangelicalism was assuming more culturally benign forms', and 'far from being opposed by Free church ministers, Carmichael was claiming to have gained the sympathy, and the understanding, of two of their leading Gaelic scholars, McLauchlan and Cameron'.

While the lines between secular and religious culture may have blurred over time, what remains clear is that the behaviour of converts, as described by both Carmichael and Collinson, signified a rejection – whether by force or voluntarily, temporary or permanent – of an old way of life in favour of a new one. In this new life, secular music and dance along with numerous other non-religious pastimes had no place.

Neither Carmichael nor Collinson had an interest in what they would have deemed 'contemporary' culture. The spiritual songs which we now consider such a strong aspect of Highland and island culture were viewed as part of traditional folk culture when those two scholars were collecting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were concerned with the preservation of oral material – traditional songs, tunes and stories which were either likely to disappear or were already disappearing from everyday life. Consequently, it is unsurprising that their accounts omitted to discuss the new songs or tunes which may have replaced those that the newly converted had rejected. Neither, for that matter, did they note how a musical shift from secular to sacred was manifesting itself within folk culture in response to revivals.

For some time, the frustration expressed by Carmichael and Collinson coloured the attitudes of other scholars and collectors towards the secular and sacred musical traditions of the Hebrides. Similarly, John Lorne Campbell's focus on collecting in Catholic areas of South Uist, Eriskay and Barra may have led to a notion that traditions had survived in Catholic islands and not in Presbyterian islands. Maighread Challan has noted that the choices of folksong collectors and scholars in the context of North Uist culture gave a false impression of that island's traditions. Fortunately, twentieth century collector (and North Uist native) Donald Archie MacDonald and others have shown that, for many people in North Uist and other Presbyterian islands, a strong sense of their traditional culture

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[23] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* 1, xxx.

[24] Quoted in Donald Meek, 'Alexander Carmichael and "Celtic Christianity"' in Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart, ed., *The Life and Legacy of Alexander Carmichael*, 82–95 (Port of Ness: The Islands Book Trust, 2008), 89–90.

[25] Collinson, *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland,* 94–5.

[26] See Stiùbhart, *The Life and Legacy of Alexander Carmichael*, for a selection of essays on this topic.

survived alongside their participation in the religious life of their communities.[27] As MacDonald wrote in 1988:

> It was a sheer delight to find so much tradition alive in North Uist because Calum [Maclean]'s collecting had largely been in South Uist and Barra previously to that. We had been more or less fed by the doctrine that tradition had survived in the Catholic islands and not on the Presbyterian islands and here was all that stuff lying, not as immediately accessible on the surface, but just below the surface from the Presbyterian communities.[28]

By the time of the mid-twentieth century *dùsgaidhean*, spiritual songs and hymns had become central to cultural expression among converted Christians in the region. Some revival leaders including Duncan Campbell, who led the Lewis Revival of 1949–52, tended to focus their preaching on God's severity. However, many of the songs sung and composed at that time emphasised God's love and forgiveness, and the positive benefits of life as a convert.[29] One example is the hymn *Tha an gràdh seo cho Laidir* ('This Love is So Strong'), a spiritual song composed by Christina Morrison of Scalpay (Harris) in the early 1900s, which was among the most popular sung at the time of the Point awakenings between 1932 and 1957.[30]

Converts spoke of these musical shifts as positive and necessary changes which they themselves undertook because secular songs were no longer meaningful to them. Mary Peckham (née Morrison, 1932–2010), a celebrated Gaelic singer of her time who converted during the 1949–52 revival, related her experience of this:

> I wanted to tell people about Jesus. Over the years I had stood dressed in my kilt on the concert platform in Stornoway and sung to the people, thrilling to the 'Encore! Encore! ' Then, I had nothing to sing about – now, I had a message! 'Please God, give me the opportunity of singing to them about Jesus and of telling them about this great salvation; and later He did give me that opportunity, from that very platform. I used to weave Harris tweed and I would go to my loom in the shed and would sing as I wove. I became conscious at times that neighbours would gather outside and listen. How I sang then! They must hear this wonderful story of Jesus and His love.[31]

In 2023, Nanna MacInnes recalled her own observations of the shift from secular to sacred singing:

> Prior to conversion, we would sing secular songs, in both Gaelic and English. We learned them by listening to tapes and the radio. Following conversion it was the sacred songs, again in both languages. I had never heard them before. They were so beautiful and personal.[32]

One story from the 1949–52 revival tells of two Lewis pipers with The Royal Scots who stopped to attend a revival meeting whilst on their way to perform at a concert in Carloway. During the meeting they had sudden conversion experiences which affected them so much that they never arrived at the

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[27] Maighread Challan, *Air Bilean an t-Sluaigh: Sealladh air Leantalachd Beul-Aithris Ghàidhlig Uibhist a Tuath* (Belfast: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2012), 5–6.

[28] Quoted by Challan, *Air Bilean an t-Sluaigh,* 6.

[29] Peckham and Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven*, 109.

[30] Effie MacQuien and Angus Campbell, personal communication, 28 June 2023.

[31] Peckham and Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven,* 148. To hear Mary Peckham singing a Gaelic hymn, *Is ann a tha 'n èifeachd am fuil an uain* ('The efficacy is in the blood of the lamb' by Pàdruig Grannd) see Tobar and Dualchais, https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/23601?l=en.

[32] Nanna MacInnes, interview with author, Crossbost, Lewis, 23 March 2022, and subsequent personal communication by email, 25 June 2023.

concert.[33] Similarly, song composer and future minister John Murdo Smith had initially been reluctant to convert. He spoke of being 'torn between keeping his promise to play the accordion for Christmas and New Year parties and risking conversion by attending an evangelical meeting.'[34] He described the time of his conversion, the first of the 1949–52 revival, as follows:

> It was December. I had already made arrangements for the Christmas party we were going to have in the village. I was going to supply the accordion music and all the other friends were to be there, and the thought came into my mind, 'Well, surely you're not going to let down your friends after promising to be at the Christmas party and play the accordion. Don't think about accepting Christ as your saviour, postpone it. After all you're still a young person. Time enough for religion and Christianity. Perhaps in your declining years when you've had your taste of earthly pleasures, but – not yet. 'And this battle was raging within my soul. And then the thought came to me, 'Well, if you wait for your Christmas party, what if for you there would be no Christmas? What if the Lord would suddenly call you away? Where would you spend eternity if you died unprepared for eternity? 'And that was the deciding factor. There and then I said to myself, 'Take the world but give me Jesus, all its joys are but a name, but his love abideth ever, through eternal years the same'. When I made my decision, even at that very moment, I felt a great peace flooding into my soul. I felt a great change in my life. I saw everything in a different light.[35]

Sudden life changes and shifts from secular to sacred music remain common themes in such conversion stories to the present day. Converted Christians describe how secular music no longer appeals to them, while psalms and spiritual songs speak directly to their new-found faith. Scott Cameron, an accordionist and minister with the Church of Scotland, spoke of his conversion as a young professional musician in the late 1980s. Afterwards he stopped playing his accordion for two years because the music no longer held meaning for him. He returned to the accordion a few years later, and now uses the instrument to play both hymn and dance tunes, as he explained in an interview in November 2022:

> I grew up passionate about Scottish dance music. I loved Scottish music. Dad played in a band, and that was my dream to have my own dance band, to be on Robbie Shepherd's programme, to be on TV and have my own band there, and that all happened, you know, it all happened before I was even twenty […] I just remember we had been playing in the Highland games in South Uist at the time […] we were down in Lochboisdale, and I remember we were in the hotel there, and now Christianity was about as far from me as anything, but I remember that night the phone rang in the bar, and the barman was laughing and I could see he was speaking to people round the bar there, and they were all just laughing, and I thought 'I wonder what's going on?' And then the barman looked at me and he lifted the phone up and he said, 'Scott, it's your mother' [laughs], and I remember feeling so embarrassed that mum knew to find me in that hotel, and all she said to me was 'When are you coming home?' You know, that was her words, and I remember these words haunted me, and we were to go back to Aberdeen to record our second album with the band in Aberdeen, and I never made it to Aberdeen. I was in Skye for two weeks and it was that Sunday night in the Portree church, it was after the evening service I went up to my bedroom then and when I had that experience of the Lord coming, but then that night I was just so filled with the joy, the whole desire to go

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[33] MacLeod Hill, 'The Pelican in the Wilderness,' 300.

[34] MacLeod Hill, 'The Pelican in the Wilderness,' 300.

[35] John Murdo Smith in *Wind of the Spirit*: *The Story of the Lewis Revival* (Ambassador Productions, 1994), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lufJz78TWJQ&t=224s [accessed 24 November 2023].

back to Aberdeen to record and to get involved in the band, I just knew that I couldn't. It wasn't that I didn't want to or I shouldn't do it, it was just my whole attitude changed, and I just wanted to know more of just this joy that I found, and so I actually gave up the accordion. I stopped playing it, and I think it was about two years I left the accordion aside, and then I remember just people used to encourage me, 'Scott, you don't have to give up the accordion, even although you've become a Christian', and I said, 'I know that, I just don't feel ready', but I remember it was two years – I was working in the job centre at the time, and I remember Psalm 40 just came alive, you know, 'I've put a new song in your mouth to glorify the Lord, and he's placed me on a rock establishing my way', and I just felt as if, you know, and I could feel this, 'Scott, I've also given you the accordion', and you know, 'and it's something you can use for me', and so that's when I took out the accordion again and I started playing it for – just as a hobby around the house, I still like the Scottish Gaelic songs and the tunes, but actually it was the hymns that I just fell in love with a lot of these gospel hymns, and then playing the accordion for them and leading, for me that's where I feel at home with the accordion actually, is when I am playing the gospel songs and the metrical psalms.[36]

Margaret MacLeod, from Barvas, converted at the time of the 1949–52 revival. She recalled how hymns took over from secular songs, but also how secular songs gradually filtered back into everyday life after the revival:

> *Did you ever go back to singing any of the secular songs?*
>
> Yes, when I started teaching in school I had to teach the secular ones, so that was okay. That was part of your work, so that we thoroughly – you know, we enjoyed the secular ones. We listened to them often enough on the radio, but at that time [during the revival] they very much took a back seat.[37]

Revivals clearly affected the practice of secular music within Presbyterian communities, and giving up secular music, song, dancing and other pastimes was, and is, a standard initial reaction to conversion among committed Christians. However, converted Christians would have exchanged their secular pastimes for what they would have considered a rich social life of fellowship meetings with intense discussions of spiritual concerns, and singing of such power and expressiveness that it would rival any 'secular' occasion.

It is important to remember that only a small proportion of the community ever became communicants or adopted this form of asceticism, and that secular music has, in most communities, co-existed successfully alongside spiritual music. We must also note considerable overlap between sacred and secular song, particularly with regard to the regular borrowing of traditional melodies for new spiritual song compositions.

Singing in Revival Meetings
Meetings – both formal and informal – were at the heart of *dùsgaidhean* in the Outer Hebrides. Formal meetings in churches and houses (sometimes known as 'cottage meetings' or *coinneamhan uaigneach*) were followed by informal gatherings both in homes (*cruinneachaidhean*) and out of doors. These meetings provided key opportunities for singing.[38] Mary Peckham recalls how 'people came from all over to these meetings. They came singing and they left singing'.[39] In church meetings, psalmody remained the mainstay of musical worship, and psalm-singing was the only form of song practiced in the Free Church and Free Presbyterian Church. Outside formal worship contexts,

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[36] Scott Cameron, interview with author, Kilmuir, North Uist, 17 November 2022.
[37] Margaret MacLeod, interview.
[38] Peckham and Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven,* 93–5.
[39] Peckham and Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven,* 142.

however, people sang Gaelic and English hymns and spiritual songs, both well-established and newly composed, in addition to the psalms.[40]

Song had long been an essential element of everyday life in traditional Hebridean communities, and this did not change when the repertoire turned to the spiritual. Singing in revivals helped people understand and accept the preaching of the gospel that they heard during the meetings.[41] At the same time, many accounts testify not only to the centrality of such singing to a new-found faith, but to its contribution to a musical soundscape in the everyday lives of those who had been touched by revival.[42] Donald John Smith described the singing at the shielings, the small huts up on the moors where young people stayed in the summer to tend cattle and milk the cows: [43]

> On a quiet night the singing at the worship in our shieling seemed to echo across the loch. Singing from other shielings wafted through the silence. It seemed to spread far and wide.

Similarly, Alexander MacLeod ('Sandy Mòr'), an important figure in the Point awakenings alongside the Rev. William Campbell, described how he would return home from revival meetings in 1939, sometimes as late as five o'clock in the morning, and go straight to work cutting the peats: 'We used to sing as we worked out on the moor, and the singing could be heard a mile away. It was wonderful!'[44] MacLeod later became a respected elder in Knock Free Church of Scotland.[45]

Such rich descriptions of the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs reflect the powerful effect that this music had on people at the time, and suggest that people were captivated by the singing and willingly joined in. Duncan Campbell describes a revival meeting in Berneray, Harris, on 13th May 1953:

> I had a powerful meeting down by the shore before the boats left to take the Harris people home, followed by one to help those in distress of soul. How we praise God for being in the midst of revival again. Seeing the people coming over the hills and along the roads, others coming in boats, was a sight to be remembered, and to listen to the singing of Psalm 122 from the boats leaving the shore was soul-inspiring.[46]

D. R. MacDonald describes the singing of spiritual songs in fellowships and house meetings during a revival in the Free Church of Scotland in Stornoway, and the important role that these meetings had for new converts:

> Where we would normally have sung them [the spiritual songs] is at these communion seasons for example, when you would go to the surrounding congregations and after a church service there would be a fellowship in homes, and so there used to be house meetings [during the revival] and what would take place at the house would be normally a discussion about the service, people sharing their experiences. They would have tea and that and then they would have a worship service in the house and maybe after that if there were people there who were singers, they would sing some of the hymns and

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[40] Torquil MacLeod, interview with author, Stornoway, Lewis, 25 January 2018.

[41] Anna Swynford, 'Music as Catechesis and Cultural Transformation in the East African Revival,' in *The Changing World Religion Map*, ed. Stanley D. Brunn (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, New York, London: Springer, 2014), 2805.

[42] For a detailed discussion in Gaelic of singing in everyday life in North Uist, see Maighread A. Challan, *Air Bilean an t-Sluaigh: Sealladh air Leantalachd Beul-Aithris Ghàidhlig Uibhist a Tuath* (Belfast: Queen's University Press), 35–58.

[43] Peckham and Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven,* 95.

[44] Peckham and Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven,* 161.

[45] Angus Campbell, 'William Campbell and The Point Awakenings 1932-57' (2022). Unpublished manuscript, 4.

[46] Peckham and Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven,* 70.

that would go on. I mean I was at many of these and I could never do it today but in these dim and distant past days you would be at these house meetings and they would be going on until sometimes two, three in the morning, and you would come home and then you were out to work eight, nine the next morning, and you were like that, every night there would be house meetings in different parts of the island and you would be there, and when I was converted we would have them and we would have sometimes forty people in the house in one night, and they would have these fellowship meetings and then the next night would be in somebody else's house and you would go there and you went on like that for weeks and months on end and you never felt tired! […] People were alive spiritually and tiredness didn't affect you, and it was an amazing time in the community.[47]

Conclusion

Far from eradicating folk culture, religious awakenings in the Outer Isles have clearly sparked the creative energies of converts, whose engagement with the spiritual song repertoire and in new composition has enriched the musical legacy of their communities. The song tradition has added to vernacular musical expression within the parameters of religious understanding and a sympathetic spiritual community. While awakenings were occasions when secular music lost much of its immediate relevance, spiritual songs which reflected the concerns and newfound faith of the converts became more meaningful. Music was a positive and inspiring element of revivals, and the often sudden shift from secular to spiritual expression highlighted the subjects and concerns which held particular meaning for people at the time. While the recollections of pipers, fiddlers and accordionists who converted in revivals and abandoned their instruments altogether are testimony to the (often short-term) negative impact of the awakenings on secular folk traditions, we can now recognise that spiritual song and music-making have been, and remain, integral to the cultural life of these communities – a phenomenon whose cultural importance can no longer be overlooked.

Spiritual singing and song composition in the context of awakenings have been vehicles for the expression of new-found faith and vernacular religion within a community context. Spiritual song composition, most prominent during revival times, has been a feature of everyday musical life in the islands since at least the nineteenth century. Many spiritual songs remained in the oral tradition; but many others that were never written down or documented subsequently fell from use and were lost. Gaelic and English hymns from compilations such as *Laoidhean Soisgeulach* and *Songs of Victory* likewise have doubtless been influential, but that influence has not been closely examined in the context of the Outer Isles.[48] While we have gone some way towards exploring the context of this rich and valuable tradition, much research remains to be done.

We have attempted here to assess the role of spiritual song and its cultural and social importance in the context of religious revivals. In a second article, we hope to explore how certain song composers came to the fore during revivals, and how their gifts of composing religious songs and poetry stayed with them throughout their lives. In that essay, we shall focus on the repertoire of the *dùsgaidhean* – not only the psalms, hymns and older spiritual songs, but also the newly composed songs and the composers who emerged from that time.

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[47] D. R. MacDonald, interview.

[48] John Campbell, ed., *Gaelic Hymn Book: Specially Adapted for Evangelistic Meetings* (Pollockshields: Glasgow Highland Mission), 1922.

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Reviews

***Cànan agus Cultar / Language and Culture: Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig* 10. Wilson McLeod, Anja Gunderloch and Rob Dunbar, eds. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 2021. Pp. vii + 280. ISBN 978-1-85752-088-0.**

The most recent volume of proceedings from the biennial *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig* conference, hosted in 2018 at the University of Edinburgh, presents nineteen essays that reveal a lively snapshot of topics interesting today's researchers in Scottish Gaelic studies. A few overarching themes emerge.

Historical topics concerned three writers. Plenary speaker Thomas Owen Clancy ('The Church and the domains of Gaelic in early medieval Scotland') examines how Gaelic expanded between c. 600 and 1100, and how its importance to the early medieval Church in northern Britain and Ireland during this period institutionalised its status and gave it the strength to resist competition from Old Norse colonisers during the Viking Age. Eoin Mac Cárthaigh ('Alasdair mac Colla anns a' Ghaeilge') discusses the cultural reliquiae of Scottish warrior Alasdair mac Colla in Ireland, from his escape to Ulster in 1639 to his participation in the Irish Confederate Wars (1641–53). While his own research drew largely on historical and poetic references to Alasdair, Mac Cárthaigh argues that the persistence of Irish oral traditions referencing the hero and his importance as a cultural icon among today's Irish nationalists would justify further study. An essay by Jamie Kelly ('The SSPCK and Highland elites: Cooperation and criticism, 1709–c. 1745') examines the growth and deterioration of the relationship between the Edinburgh-based Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) and Highland gentry in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Literature was the focus for other contributors. For Skye poet Màiri MacPherson, tangible objects – especially natural objects – carried symbolic meaning: her poems portray gifts of wildflowers and heather as reminders of shared history and common values. Priscilla Scott ('The fabric of the land: Exploring the significance of homespun tweed in the life and work of Màiri Mhòr nan Òran') argues that Màiri's wool-working shows how the texture and colours of the land woven into her textiles similarly reflect nature and memory, 'conveying intrinsic statements of place, cultural values and identity' (103). Anne MacLeod Hill ('Anna NicFhearghais and the growth of allegorical exegesis in Gaelic evangelical song') considers the songs of Anna Nic Fhearghais (1796–1879), a farmer's wife whose spiritual song compositions reflect her understanding and interpretation of teachings from the newly published Gaelic Bible. Contextualising her poems in rural Kintyre, she provides a window not only into the teachings and poetic conventions of the Bible but also into the daily life of her community at a time of religious and social upheaval. Gearóidín Uí Laighléis ('The cultural crossing from Gaelic to Irish') examines how Irish writer and translator Seán Tóibín met the challenges of translating works by Scottish writer Neil Munro for an Irish-speaking readership in the 1920s. Showing how Tóibín censored some themes (e.g., illegitimacy) and altered the treatment of Munro's female characters, she cautions translators to consider not just the linguistic challenges, but also issues of cultural and moral fidelity both to the original work and to the target readership. Finally, Iain Howieson ('Bàrdachd baile – Ath-mheasadh') – in a foretaste of his paper in this volume of *Scottish Studies* – discusses his reasons for exploring the poetic legacy of the nineteenth-century 'village bards', arguing that their poems deserve to be judged, not by modernist criteria, but according to those of the centuries-old tradition of oral composition of which they are a part.

The oral and material culture of Gaelic Scotland inspired several essays. Ronald Black ('The Dewar Project') describes work underway to transcribe and publish the ten volumes of the Dewar MSS, a collection of oral historical narrative tales collected and written down in Gaelic by storyteller and woodsman John Dewar, whom J. F. Campbell described as 'the most matter-of-fact man among my collectors' (75). The manuscripts, as transcribed from digitised copies by volunteers worldwide, will provide an invaluable resource to scholars studying the relationship between oral and written

accounts of historical persons and events. Mìcheal Klevenhaus ('"Cumha Mhic an Tòisich" – bun-stèidh dhan òran "Oh, ono chrio" le Ludwig van Beethoven?') explores the musical ancestor of 'Oh, ono chrio', one of several songs arranged by Beethoven at the behest of Edinburgh publisher George Thomson. The song's title suggesting Gaelic lamentation (*ochòin* in Gaelic), Klevenhaus speculates that the original may have been 'Cumha Mhic an Tòisich', a pibroch song lamenting the death of a Mackintosh chieftain.

Given the gendered assignment of roles and activities typical of traditional Gaelic society, it should not surprise us that vocabulary specific to those roles and activities should be similarly gendered. Ùisdean Cheape ('Briathrachas beatha nam ban') describes how An Comunn Gàidhealach's early efforts to preserve technical terms inspired women such as Katherine White Grant, Mary MacKellar and others to share women's specialised vocabulary and the daily tasks that required it. By contrast, a male work environment was the topic for Magnus Course and Gillebride MacMillan ('Fishing, Gaelic and environment in the Outer Hebrides'), who note that fishing employs a significantly higher percentage of Gaelic speakers than any other economic sector in Scotland. They explore the ongoing symbiotic relationship between fishing and the use of Gaelic in the Islands, pointing out that the specialised knowledge embedded for generations in the Gaelic language – knowledge of navigation, of landmarks, of the seasonal habits of fish – forms 'an essential part of a centuries-old relationship with the sea, one premised on care, custodianship and sustainability' (231).

The Gaelic language and its speakers were the focus of several essays. In a technical review of literature and summary of his own research, phonetician Pavel Iosad ('The phonology of Gaelic tonal accent') revisits a phonetic feature relating to syllabification that has given rise to several earlier theories. Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh ('Cleachdadh, eachdraidh agus freumhachd an fhacail *nàile* sa Ghàidhlig') discusses the linguistic origin, history, meaning(s) and poetic use of the Gaelic word *nàile* ('indeed', 'truly'), and shows how scrutiny of even a single word can shed light on the history of the language and its dialects, both Scottish and Irish.

The challenges of learning and using Gaelic were the subject of three papers. Vicky Chondrogianni, Morna Butcher and Maria Garraffa ('Supporting children with Developmental Language Disorder in Gaelic-medium primary education') report on a Bòrd na Gàidhlig-funded project aimed at assessing language acquisition in Gaelic-medium primary education. Their research focused on the needs of children with compromised language abilities and their integration within the educational process. Michelle NicLeòid and Marsaili NicLeòid ('Luchd-ionnsachaidh dualchasach: innleachdan agus iarrtasan gu fileantas') describe the results of a 2017 study of ten adult heritage learners – people with some familial exposure to Gaelic – and their efforts to gain proficiency in the language. Ingeborg Birnie ('Language management initiatives and language use in public spaces') reports on a study examining the efficacy of measures put in place following the *Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005* aimed at reducing the decline in the use of Gaelic. The study focused on ten public environments in Stornoway, half of which had a Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) in place, and attempted to determine the extent to which the existence of a GLP led to greater use of the language by both staff and members of the public.

Given the age of 'identity politics' in which we find ourselves, it would be a wonder if the vexed topic of Gaelic identity did not come up. Anthropologist Jean Forward ('Cultural heritage: archaeology, mythology, and tourism') surveys three 'landscapes' – Tory Island in Donegal, Iona, and St Kilda – in terms of their archaeological and mythological reliquiae, and shows how an agreed understanding of 'cultural heritage' has helped these communities, both in the past and at present, sustain their economies through tourism while articulating Gaelic identity in positive terms. Clive James ('Peter May – an honorary Gael?') tackled the subject of identity head-on in reviewing the career of English writer Peter May, whose work on the Gaelic television soap-opera *Machair* broke important ground, and whose six best-selling Hebridean novels painted a realistic and detailed picture of contemporary life in the Highlands and Islands. Arguing that May 'has achieved much [more] to raise a wider awareness of the language and culture than traditional novels or previous minority

language television in Gaelic could ever hope to do' (148), James asked the audience at this talk whether the author should be afforded the status of 'honorary Gael'. The listeners being evenly divided, the chair voted 'No'.

Identity was also the focus for Silke Stroh ('Literature and beyond: the uses of postcolonial perspectives in Gaelic Studies'), who considered how reading literary and historical texts through the theoretical lens of postcolonialism might enhance our understanding of how the Gaels have been represented as (colonised) 'other' within the 'insider' (coloniser) hegemony. Such representations continue to inform debates about the future of the Gaelic language, Gaelic culture, the Gàidhealtachd as a geographic entity (or not), and Gaelic identity. By employing postcolonial perspectives, and by comparing the Gaels' experiences with those of subaltern populations elsewhere, Stroh suggests we may become better at building confidence, empowering diversity, and reframing the traditional – and harmful – narratives of cultural and linguistic decline.

Finally, Thomas Clancy, writing about the medieval expansion of Gaelic and its successful resistance to colonisation, describes it as 'the vernacular language with the highest status, and with a close association with religion, and hence, in certain contexts, with identity'. Contrasting that situation with today's tendency to view Gaelic as a low status 'language of the colonised, rather than the coloniser', Clancy suggests that 'there would be much to be gained by further training a more sociolinguistic lens on the fortunes of Gaelic in early medieval Scotland' (37).

In addition to the nineteen essays published in this volume, a further fifty-one papers were delivered at the 2018 Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig conference. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic prevented the 2020 conference from going ahead, and no plans for a subsequent meeting have so far been announced. It is greatly to be hoped that academic colleagues will find the time and resources to re-boot this important series, as there are clearly more than enough scholars with the willingness, energy and commitment to participate.

VIRGINIA BLANKENHORN

Seòl mo Bheatha: Turas eadar Croit is Eilean is Oilthigh. **Dòmhnall Eachann Meek. Inverness: CLÁR, 2019. ISBN: 978 1-9161458-0-1 (pbk). Pp. iv+283; map, illus.** [1]
No Gael of his generation has ploughed as broad a furrow, or harvested as many different crops, as Professor Donald Meek. Crofter and poet, scholar and academic, broadcaster, champion of Gaelic, enthusiastic naval architect, Baptist lay preacher, restorer of ancestral buildings and ancient farm equipment – few of us can claim such a varied and interesting life. This book is his account of it.

Born in 1949, Meek grew up an only child in Caolas, Tiree, after familial duty brought his father Eachann, a Baptist minister in Islay, home to Tiree to look after the croft and its aging occupants. Donald's earliest memories involve these elderly grand-aunts and grand-uncles, and it is those memories – and the rich, idiomatic Gaelic in which they are expressed – that form the beating heart of this book. Combining personal recollections with rigorous research, oral tradition, family genealogy and lively anecdotes, Meek's first twelve chapters provide an extraordinarily detailed ethnographic record of life in Tiree in the twentieth century, told with warmth and humour. While he thoroughly appreciates the difficulties his parents faced in dealing with an old house, a demanding croft and a houseful of elderly people, the overall impression of these chapters is of his own delight: in the land, the sea, the animals, the neighbours, the natural environment, the farm machinery, the dinghies and the ferries, and all that his family and the surrounding community could teach him.

At the same time, Meek's understanding of how things used to be helps him explain the changes affecting island communities in his lifetime. While some of these changes – the banning of the tawse, the coming of the car-ferries – have been benign, too many others have not. The system that

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[1] This review was first published in the *Edinburgh University Journal* 49/2 (2019), 145–6. We are grateful to the Editor for allowing its republication here.

encouraged parents to send their gifted children, aged fourteen, to secondary school in Oban – a plan that Donald managed through guile to delay for two years; the gradual replacement of small shops and vans by supermarkets, and small community churches and the social hubs they provided by centralised congregations; the decline of collaboration among neighbours as farm equipment allowed one person to manage a croft on their own; above all, the constant emigration to the mainland, to Canada and elsewhere – such changes have, over a few decades, undermined islanders' self-confidence and weakened the bonds that for centuries held their communities together. Today, Tiree has become, to many, a rest-haven for successful retirees, or a holiday home for incomers with fancy accents who sail pleasure-boats in the Sound of Gunna and build family compounds where croft houses and cottars' huts once stood. Meek does not hide his bitterness at such developments.

Meek's academic career spanned a period in which the ethos of Britain's universities, the narrowing trajectory of Celtic Studies in Scotland, and the fortunes of Gaelic both as a community language and as a medium of sophisticated discourse were comprehensively transformed. As a scholar, he has written about the historic struggles of nineteenth century Gaeldom, and about the diversity of thought and literature that emerged from those struggles. His studies of the Christian evangelical movement in the Gàidhealtachd have helped us understand this important aspect of religious belief and practice in Scotland. But while Meek's scholarly achievements are widely appreciated, they were hard won. Although scholarly interests are often what propels someone into academic life, today's universities tend to value scholarship not just for its intrinsic worth, but for its financial contribution to their 'bottom line' – an approach that privileges subject areas where research funds are needed, and collaborative work is the norm. Meanwhile individual scholars who need neither research assistants nor expensive resources to conduct their investigations can feel that their work is going unnoticed and disregarded.

For Donald Meek, the dissonance between his expectations of an academic career and what he found when he achieved it became insupportable. Since taking early retirement in 2008, he has devoted himself to projects close to his heart: restoring 'Coll View', the 130-year-old croft house in Tiree where his daughter now lives; naval architecture (in miniature); scholarly interests; painting; creative writing; and family life.

Because Meek's rich observations and trenchant arguments deserve a wider audience, one may hope that a translation may one day appear.[2] Meanwhile Donald Meek must be congratulated on a superb contribution to our understanding of what it means to be a Gael, and on a life well lived.

VIRGINIA BLANKENHORN

***Auld Lang Syne: A Song and Its Culture*. M. J. Grant. Cambridge: OpenBook Publishers, 2021. ISBN Digital (PDF): 9781800640672. DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0231. Pp. xviii+340.**
In this interesting book – which employs diverse sources of evidence – Morag Grant examines the song in its pre- and post-Burns contexts, and in some of its international guises (including its German reception), bringing her discussion up to the modern day.

Robert Burns based his 'Auld Lang Syne' on an earlier song found in oral tradition, stating that he 'took it down from an old man's singing'. Grant's discussion and Appendix material gives us an insight into the poet at work, and presents five extant versions of the song text: a song sent in a letter to Frances Dunlop in 1788; a version from the famous eighteenth-century song publication, the *Scots Musical Museum* (1796); a text which was written into the Interleaved Museum; a text sent in a letter to George Thompson (1793); and the MS text of what is thought to be a 'working version'.

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[2] Donald Meek subsequently published a volume in English which covers some of the same ground, including the history of 'Coll View' and its owners down to the present day, as well as a vivid description of his boyhood in Tiree; see *A Croft in Caolas* (Falkirk: Leabhraichean Tirisdeach/Tiree Books), 2021.

The author presents three core melodies associated with the song: the tune in the *Scots Musical Museum* in 1796 which was the one that Burns intended to be used; the tune best-known worldwide that appeared in George Thompson's *Select Collection*; and a more contemporary-sounding melody from an album recorded in 1980–81 by the Tannahill Weavers – a tune which, as one band member pointed out, derives from that of the Scots ballad 'May Colvin' (246). Earlier sources related to the *Scots Musical Museum* tune include an unnamed melody in the Sinkler MS (c. 1710) and a tune in Playford's *Scotch Tunes* (1700). These can be heard amongst the 13 audio examples (for which there are URL links), which form a useful addition to the publication.

Grant argues (99) that Burns's 'Auld Lang Syne' 'first came to attention in Scotland in the early years of the nineteenth century and then, largely due to the influence of theatre, became firmly established throughout Britain and America in the course of the 1820s and 1830s.' She finds that it was the song's use in conjunction with three traditions – singing with hands joined in a circle, at occasions of parting, and at New Year – that have ensured its longevity. The song's use in group contexts and in 'fraternal-type organisations' is also given detailed treatment.

In the final chapter, 'Auld Acquaintance: Auld Lang Syne Comes Home', Grant notes that two interesting things have happened with regard to the melody: 1) Burns's original tune has returned to the repertoire of modern singers (she presents a table of recordings dating from 1980/81-2003, where the majority use Burns's melody), and 2) the Tannahill Weavers' tune has been adopted by others, including Eddi Reader who sang it at the ceremony to open the new Scottish Parliament building at Holyrood in 2004. In the last section of the chapter, Grant examines the question 'What does Auld Lang Syne have to do with Burns?' She concludes (253) that 'there is certainly more than a small dose of irony in the fact that those elements of Burns's song that have slipped into most widespread use, and into the common consciousness, are also the oldest and most original of the textual elements, dating from long before Burns – the opening line "Should auld acquaintance be forgot" and the refrain, with its reiteration of the sentiment "for auld lang syne"'.

This is an important study for scholars of oral transmission, as well as for those interested in the transmission of Scottish culture more generally, and Morag Grant is to be congratulated on the detailed research and analysis which underpin this scholarly yet accessible book.

KATHERINE CAMPBELL

Iain mac Mhurchaidh: The life and work of John MacRae, Kintail and North Carolina. **Màiri Sìne Chaimbeul, ed. and trans. Glasgow: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, vol. 26, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-903586-12-5. Pp. 310; maps; illus.**

The opening acknowledgments to Màiri Sìne Chaimbeul's long and eagerly-awaited collection *Iain mac Mhurchaidh: The life and work of John MacRae, Kintail and North Carolina* reveal the editor's fundamental *modh*: *modh nan Gàidheal is modh na sgoilearachd, còmhla*.[3] Chaimbeul's manner, mode and graciousness are apparent as she thanks all of those – from local Kintail and Lochalsh tradition-bearers to well-known Gaelic academics here and abroad – whose work, having prepared the ground for her own, allows her to happily correct the impression that 'very little [Gaelic] verse is to be found in Lochalsh and Kintail' (1). But while Chaimbeul generously recognises the fruits of others' labours, her own work in gathering together, editing, translating and introducing all of the poems known to have been composed by Iain mac Mhurchaidh is impressive. This is a pleasurable and inspiring book which deserves to be read and appreciated wherever there is an interest in Gaelic literature in general and diasporic song-poems in particular.

In her introduction, Chaimbeul provides a minutely-sourced, elegantly-calibrated and wide-ranging survey of the poet's life and background, from his origin in Kintail, where his family belonged to the tacksman class, to his life as a planter-settler in the colony of North Carolina on the eve of the

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[3] 'the manner or manners of the Gaels and the mode of scholarship, together'

American Revolutionary War. She focuses on Mac Mhurchaidh's impressive Kintail *dùthchas*, which included chieftains, constables, churchmen, and compilers of Gaelic manuscripts – the *Fernaig Manuscript* among them. The MacRaes were solidly Episcopal in religion and Royalist (Jacobite) in politics. Iain mac Mhurchaidh 'ic Fhearchair 'ic Alasdair 'ic Fhearchair was not a stereotypical late-eighteenth-century Highland emigrant forced to leave his *dùthaich* by the ineluctable forces of history, but one who came from and enjoyed the benefits of a large and well-established family. Here was a man who not only chose to leave but who encouraged others to leave with him, illustrating the principle of chain-migration that explains how so many Gaels from here (the Gàidealtachd of Scotland) ended up there (British North America).

Despite his privileged background, Chaimbeul compellingly argues that it must surely have been the brutal death of his father which most deeply marked our poet, a boy at the time. Murchadh mac Fhearchair was publicly hanged in the aftermath of Culloden, and Chaimbeul describes the competing traditions and chronologies regarding his death at the hands of the Hanoverian State. Summing up this traumatic chapter in Mac Mhurchaidh's life, Chaimbeul writes that 'in every account of Murchadh's hanging, two things are mentioned: …he was innocent and…the tree on which he was hanged withered and died' (14).

Notwithstanding this harrowing story, Iain mac Mhurchaidh subsequently maintained a 'privileged and carefree lifestyle, unhampered by…physical labour and with no shortage of food or entertainment' in Kintail prior to emigrating (32). It is a life and a lifestyle one would expect for a man of his class and background: hunting, fishing, drinking, dining, marrying (well) and composing verse initially witty and free-wheeling but subsequently critical and clear-eyed about the changing world around him. This is a world that Chaimbeul, herself a native Lochalsh Gael, is able to bring to vivid life with the help of local tradition-bearers. Duncan 'Stalker' Matheson, for example, relates that 'three of the biggest landlords in Ross-shire' tried to convince Mac Mhurchaidh not to emigrate by offering him 'any farm in Kintail, Lochalsh and Glen Shiel' (37). But Mac Mhurchaidh had seen the wheel turning, how 'the landlord cared for nothing but the money he could raise in rent, [giving] the land to anyone who could pay, regardless of their character' (35). In the months before he emigrated his verse turned pointedly political, as here in Song 24 (224–27):

Ghabhadh iad, an àite an diùnlaich,	*They would take instead of brave men*
Slaodaire liùgach 's e beartach	*A craven lout as long as he is rich.*
Ghabhadh iad an àit' an t-seòid	*They would take instead of the hero*
An t-òr ge b' ann à spòig a' phartain	*The gold though it would be taken out of the claw of the crab.*

'They' were of course the very Highland gentry and kindred chieftains with whom Mac Mhurchaidh would have had much – and well-lubricated – social intercourse, a fact that distinguishes his finger-pointing from, for example, the criticism levelled at the *maighstir ùr* ('the new master') by the unlettered and unconnected Skye poet Calum Bàn Buchanan, who settled in Prince Edward Island a generation later. Mac Mhurchaidh was 'convinced that only in America would he achieve the quality of life he had enjoyed in his youth' and felt, despite the blandishments of the Gaelic gentry, that he could not stay behind as he had personally encouraged others to sell up and emigrate with him (38). In all the accounts of his emigration two points stand out: his 'reputation as a poet of renown in his own day in Kintail' and the fact that 'he emigrated from choice' (40).

Having departed around 1772 (the actual year is uncertain), Mac Mhurchaidh apparently managed, in a shockingly short period of time, to acquire 'two plantations' along with 'several occupations' and 'considerable personal property' in the British Crown Colony of North Carolina – property that included at least one 'young Negro girl' (49–52). Slaveowning, while 'shocking to modern eyes', would have been unremarkable at the time, as Chaimbeul quotes historian Donald MacDonald's observation that 'a census taken in 1790 proved that most former Highland tacksmen

owned slaves, some in the hundreds' (51–2).[4] So, far from being a landless member of the *tuath* (the Gaelic *demos*) à la Calum Bàn Buchanan in pre-1803 Skye, Mac Mhurchaidh came from standing and ease, if not outright wealth, and ended up a North Carolina plantation owner with at least one enslaved person to his name.

Barely three years later, however, Mac Mhurchaidh was caught up in the American War of Independence, where payroll records of 5 February 1776 list him as a lieutenant in the Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment, raised on behalf of King George. It may seem ironic, given his father's fate following Culloden, that the poet now found himself under the command of officers who had fought for the King in that very battle. But the fact was that, in addition to incentivising recruits with promises of rent-free land, the Crown also required new settlers to swear loyalty oaths before land was granted to them. Consequently, many Highlanders willingly answered the call (56). Mac Mhurchaidh's period of active service was, however, very short: the RHER, short of weapons and quite unprepared, was overcome in battle at the end of February, and Iain mac Mhurchaidh was captured and incarcerated in various insalubrious prisons for the next four years – an experience upon which he reflected with bitterness in Song 30 (258–61):

Tha mi sgìth 'n fhògar seo,	*I am tired of this banishment*
Tha mi sgìth dhen t-strì;	*I am tired of the strife;*
Seo an tìm dhòrainneach;	*This is the tormenting time;*
Tha mi sgìth 'n fhògar seo.	*I am tired of this banishment.*
...	*...*
Tha mi nis air mo dhìteach	*Now I am condemned*
Ann am prìosan droch bheòshlainteach.	*in a disease-ridden prison.*

Released at last in early 1780, Mac Mhurchaidh rejoined the Loyalist campaign and was awarded a captaincy by Earl Cornwallis, who tasked him with recruiting more Highlanders to the King's cause. Unfortunately, his years in prison had weakened his health, and the most credible accounts suggest that Mac Mhurchaidh died in late September 1780, whereupon his wife returned to London with their surviving children and petitioned the Crown for compensation of her loss (67–9).

Uncovering the truth concerning Mac Mhurchaidh's short life and untimely death in North America, from his few years as a settler-planter to the turmoil of the American Revolutionary War, was no simple matter. His name was subject to different spellings ('Murchison', 'Mickeson', 'Mulkeson') in surviving records, and various oral traditions were spread concerning his incarceration and death – traditions which Chaimbeul, with typical understatement, suggests may 'owe more to vivid imaginations than to fact' (67). Chaimbeul's extensive and fastidious research in archives and in unpublished works, as well as among tradition-bearers in Scotland and contacts in the American South, has given us a credible, piercing account not just of Iain mac Mhurchaidh's final years, but also of what many Highland emigrants must have experienced during that tumultuous period.

Having dealt so compellingly with the trajectory of Mac Mhurchaidh's life, Chaimbeul turns to untangling the trajectory of his poetry in both Carolina and Kintail, sorting out the poems that can be credibly ascribed to him from those that may have been attributed to him because he was so well-known on both sides of the Atlantic. As she pithily summarizes the challenge to editors and readers, 'Iain mac Mhurchaidh's legacy endures both as a poet and as a remarkable character, and this legacy requires to be understood on its own terms' (71).

Gathering the poems from oral tradition as well as from manuscript sources that include the late eighteenth-century MacNicol MS and the nineteenth-century Dornie MS, Chaimbeul traces their likely transmission through the emigrant communities of the 'New World' – not just the Carolinas, but also the Canadian Gàidhealtachd that began to take shape with the influx of United Empire

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[4] Donald MacDonald, *America's Braemar: Grandfather Mountain and the Revival of Scottish Identity in the US* (Madison, GA: Southern Lion Books, 2007), 379.

Loyalists, many Highlanders among them, after the Revolutionary War. She follows other threads back to Scotland, where the poet's songs – including those he composed in America – were known in Kintail as early as 1793, thanks no doubt to returning emigrants like one-armed John MacRae (Iain Mac Rath, 'Fear na Leth Làimh'), who returned home around 1782 and lived to the ripe age of 93 (80).

The poems that are at the heart of this book Chaimbeul divides into three groups: those composed in Kintail dealing with local subjects (Songs 1–21); those composed in contemplation of emigration, which take on a more political tone (Songs 22–25); and those composed in America, which reflect the poet's experiences there and his longing for home (Songs 26–30). Each is presented clearly and legibly, with facing English translations and end-notes that name sources and provide alternative readings.

Chaimbeul points out that 'there is a critical watershed between the North Carolina songs and the two previous groups' (74). Given the upheaval in the poet's life at this time, it would be remarkable if such a watershed did not exist. Recently, however, Michael Newton has questioned Mac Mhurchaidh's authorship of the American poems, arguing that they could have been authored by others, or developed from poems authored by others, and that their ascription to Mac Mhurchaidh may have come about simply because he was well-known.[5]

Chaimbeul devotes some fifteen pages of her introduction to addressing Newton's arguments (75–90). Responding to his extended commentary on the so-called 'Carolina Lullaby' (*Dèan cadalan sàmhach, a chuilein mo rùin*, Song 26), Chaimbeul makes several telling points (77–86), two of which stand out. First, in response to Newton's contention that *pàiste* denotes a female child in Kintail Gaelic, she gives several examples, including ones from the Kintail area, in which *pàiste* refers to a male child (82–3). Second, where Newton argues that the line *Gum bheil sinne nar n-Innseanaich cinnteach gu leòr* ('We have become Indians sure enough') reflects the Gaels' fellow-feeling with Indigenous people persecuted, as the Gaels themselves had been, by the British Empire, Chaimbeul suggests rather that the poet is using the comparison 'to illustrate the reduced and primitive circumstances in which the author and his family and friends find themselves', and points out that 'apart from some notable exceptions, it seems likely that the vast majority of Highland emigrants would be no more sympathetic to the plight of the Native Americans than the foot soldiers of the Hanoverian Army and later their own chieftains had beeen to them' (84).

Chaimbeul does, however, acknowledge that Newton's doubts about authorship cannot be entirely discounted (74–5):

> Iain mac Mhurchaidh...possesses what might be termed a 'poetic biography' which covers the principal chapters of his life. Whether this arose solely from his own composition, or...from a desire on the part of the relevant communities to furnish their poet with a 'poetic biography' to match his – and especially their own – known circumstances at a time of considerable social upheaval and displacement, is not an issue that can be settled beyond doubt. ... While we can be more confident about his authorship of songs which have a traditional context attached, we need to consider the possibility that at least some of his alleged compositions may be in whole or part 'borrowed' from the responses of other songsters going through similar experiences.

Indeed, an important aspect of oral composition is 'borrowing'. Perhaps 'modeling' would be a better term. Whatever we call it, the practice of basing a new composition on a pre-existing one is well-documented; and by offering the listening ear something recognisable, it makes the new poem easier to remember, thereby facilitating oral transmission. Chaimbeul argues compellingly that 'even

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[5] Michael Newton, *We're Indians Sure Enough* (Auburn, NH: Saorsa Media), 2001; and 'Unsettling Iain mac Mhurchaidh's slumber: The Carolina Lullaby, authorship, and the influence of print media on Gaelic oral tradition'. *Aiste* 4 (2014), 131–54.

where there is evidence for a song-text predating our poet, it seems plausible to suggest that Iain moulded it and made it his own in ways that are perfectly familiar in traditional Gaelic song-poetry' (87).

This edition of Iain mac Mhurchaidh's poems is the work of a scholar whose ear is finely attuned to the cadences and connotations of her native language, in all its rich and polysemic nuances. Màiri Sìne Chaimbeul is to be congratulated for her sensitive, balanced and painstaking curation of these song-poems, and for contextualising them in a fashion that brings them – and the extraordinarily eventful life of their author – to life for the twenty-first century reader. Well done – *math fhèin*.

IAIN S MACPHERSON

Oral Literature in the Digital Age: Archiving Orality and Connecting with Communities. **Mark Turin, Claire Wheeler and Eleanor Wilkinson, eds. Cambridge: OpenBook Publishers, 2013. ISBN Digital: 978-1-909254-32-9; DOI 10.111647/OBP.0032. Pp. xxiv+164; illus.**

Digitizing collections of oral lore can provide an important resource for minority and endangered languages, especially for community members engaged in preserving and maintaining languages which may exist primarily in oral form. Oral literature, broadly defined here to include oral histories, ceremonial songs, stories and other lore, can be easier to collect than less marked conversational speech, and encodes both the language and cultural beliefs and norms. In this volume, Turin, Wheeler and Wilkinson draw together chapters from several authors that explore the collection, archiving and uses of oral literature in minority languages around the globe.

Following an introduction, eight chapters are divided into two sections. The first section considers the theoretical and technological issues at stake in archiving and conservation, particularly as they relate to the pragmatics of using newer digital archives and formats on one end of the process (Thomas Widlok) and to addressing the differing needs of multiple stakeholders at the other (David Nathan). In the final chapter in this section, Judith Aston and Paul Matthews explore how digital archives can also bear witness during political upheaval and help communities navigate memory, traditional practice, and their own family histories productively. This chapter offers the most pressing articulation of what is at stake in this kind of collection work.

In the second section of the book, headed 'Engagements and Reflections from the Field', five case studies examine some of the specific challenges faced by fieldworkers. Taken from a closer vantage point to their source material and covering a wide range of field sites and situations, these studies may provide the best resource for students and researchers considering their own fieldwork. Despite the wide net, some common themes emerge. Three chapters focus on migration narratives as the centre of their collection: Daniela Merolla and Felix Ameka, in collaboration with Kofi Dorvlo, use video documentation techniques to explore Ewe migration stories in Ghana; Margaret Field explores connections between oral literature, cultural identity and language revitalisation in the Kumeyaay communities of southern California and Baja California; and Ha Mingzong, Ha Mingzhu, and C. K. Stuart discuss documentation of the oral history of the Mongghul Ha Clan in China. Two articles (Ha, Ha and Stuart as well as Jorge Gómez Rendón, who studies the relationship between orality and literacy among indigenous people in Ecuador) examine how specific histories have shaped language policy, while others discuss how local differences (Merolla *et al.*, Field, and Madan Meena, who describes the challenges of documenting a Rajasthani ballad tradition) or generational ones (Rendón, Ha *et al.*) have affected the development of linguistic ideology.

Because this text seeks to do a lot of work – attempting to build bridges between the technical challenges of digitization and archiving, the pragmatic challenges of accessibility, and the social challenges of collaborative fieldwork – the focus on oral literature and the rationale for that focus get a bit lost along the way. There is much that is helpful here, however, especially in terms of examining closely what the field may hold. What emerges from the text above all is the ongoing need for

collaborative collection and archiving work, both for the sake of current research and for the benefit of future communities.

WILLOW MULLINS

***The Complete Works of Robert Johnson.* Elaine Moohan and Kenneth Elliot, eds. Glasgow: Musica Scotica Trust, 2019. ISBN 0-9548865-8-5. Pp. xxviii + 283.**
This is the eighth volume in the main series of editions of early Scottish music published by Musica Scotica, a trust founded by the late Kenneth Elliot in 1996 with the goal of opening up this historical art music repertoire to modern readers and listeners. To date, meticulously researched editions have included substantial collections of sacred music from the later medieval and renaissance, chamber music from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and domestic songs from the nineteenth century, along with individual shorter works, scholarly essays, and conference proceedings. The mission is to facilitate both study and performance.

Robert Johnson – not to be confused with a later English composer of the same name who composed lute songs for Jacobean theatre – was a Scottish priest and composer. According to marginalia in the hand of Thomas Wode, St Andrews minister and compiler of the sixteenth-century Wode Psalter, the Scottish Robert Johnson (*fl.*1520s to 1540s) was born in Duns in the Scottish Borders, but moved to England, possibly because he held heretical (that is, reforming) ideas. Johnson's work shows, firstly, the musical skillset of a clerical musician originally trained in Renaissance Scotland, and secondly, the transitional journey of this music as Protestantism reshaped both texts (from Latin to English) and liturgy. Although much of Johnson's career was in England, his work was nevertheless known in Scotland after 1560, as the reference to him in the Wode psalter marginalia shows. His career suggests how musicians working in the period immediately prior to the Scottish Reformation were working to balance tradition with innovation.

Kenneth Elliot himself set the highest standards for scholarly editing and source analysis, and when he died in 2011, this left his successors quite a challenge. The editorial fine-polishing for the collection has been undertaken by Elaine Moohan, adding to Elliot's unfinished notes her own careful reappraisal of sources and emerging new research resources. Moohan has also redesigned the critical apparatus, so that in each case, the main copy source is clearly identifiable, along with the rationale for its use compared with other variants. The result is a collection reflects both Elliot's eye for scholarly detail and Moohan's sense of what will make the edition accessible for a variety of potential users.

The introduction is a two-hander, led by a biography by Moohan that says what can be said and what might be speculated about Johnson, followed by a guide to the music drafted by Elliot but completed by Moohan that explains in terms that would be accessible to most general readers how the ordering of material in the collection demonstrates the evolution of Johnson's music in response to contemporary musical influences and liturgical reform. The arrangement of material within the collection is thematic (liturgical, secular, instrumental) and within those headings, as far as possible presented chronologically.

The first section of the collection contains nine Latin liturgical works from the 1520s to a speculative end date of around 1560: the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth I, and the eve of the Scottish Reformation. Earlier pieces show a Scottish composer aware of his contemporaries, like Josquin des Prez, who was able to create new works by using existing traditions, and by inserting 'troped' additions to existing chant. In Johnson's compositions, polyphonic psalm settings in Latin give way to English translations, and his early imitative (polyphonic) style gradually becames more chordal (homophonic), reflecting church reformers' concerns about textual clarity. Settings of canticles from the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* demonstrate Johnson responding to the opportunities to compose for the new Morning, Evening, and communion services of the Anglican church.

What happened to Johnson during the reign of Mary I is not known, but this collection shows that he also composed some secular songs and instrumental settings. The latter – viol consort arrangements – are mostly headed with religious titles, suggesting that these could be played in contexts of domestic piety. Of the songs, perhaps the most remarkable is the satirical 'Ty the mare tom boy', which is provided both in a setting for solo voice, and then more fully reconstructed by Elliot as a duet for two voices in variations over a repeating or 'ground' bass line. Moohan suggests the anti-Catholic lyrics in this song may be a parody of a 1547 poem by Scottish poet and psalm versifier William Kethe. Adapting this to Johnson's own times, while 'Tom' could still be Thomas Cranmer, for a Scot working in the 1550s the troublesome 'mare' might be either Mary Tudor or Mary Queen of Scots (or Marie de Guise, her mother). Any of these might suggest why Johnson kept a low public profile in this period, and explain why, for him, returning to Scotland was not a likely option.

The note on editorial method that prefixes the music makes clear to anyone wishing either to perform or study the material what decisions have been made. Rather than providing variants, 'all scores are produced from a single source' (xxiii), and the source survey in each case is laid out in the critical apparatus that follows the music. Initial staves show the original source clefs, key and mensuration, but the scores thereafter use whatever will be easiest for modern singers. This means that the music itself is easy to read for performance, although there is enough information in the critical apparatus at the end of the work for any scholarly reader or conductor to interrogate editorial decisions should they so wish. If a concert programme needs any translations of the Latin texts, Elliott's translations, and translations from the Edwardian 1552 *Book of Common Prayer*, are available in the appendices.

In a 1997 review of Elliott's first edition, the complete works of Robert Carver, Peter Philips (founder and director of the Tallis Scholars) suggested that 'Elliott was creating a library edition, not a performing one'.[6] Moohan, updating Elliott, has managed to provide both. While the printed book will not sit easily on music stands (I've tried), the affordable PDF offprints of individual works supplied by the Scottish Music Centre come with a licence to print multiple copies for ensemble performance.

Buy, read, sing.

JANE PETTEGREE

Dhá Leagan Déag: Léargais Nua ar an Sean-Nós. Philip Fogarty, Tiber Falzett and Lillis Ó Laoire, eds. An Spidéal, Co. na Gaillimhe: Cló Iar-Chonnacht, 2022. Pp. 405. ISBN 978-1-78444-237-8.

In this volume of fifteen essays, twelve deal with the Irish *sean-nós* ('old style') singing tradition and are written in Irish. Three articles, however, are relevant here because they deal with the Gaelic song traditions on both sides of the Atlantic. The articles are written in Gaelic.

Cape Breton island, Nova Scotia, is the only region outside of Scotland where Gaelic song has persisted and flourished over a number of generations. The late Seumas Watson ('Ag éirigh air Òrain an Albainn Nuaidh: Suas e!') provides a survey of Gaelic singing in the island's rural *Gàidhealtachd* communities. After summarising the background to 19th century settlement and the development of distinctive communities, he describes how the tradition flourished. Earlier songs continued to be transmitted, and new compositions were added to the repertoire as local bards emerged. Watson describes the social contexts in which singing continues to thrive, mentions the efforts of recent field collectors, and enumerates the variety of song collections available, including those available in digital form. Both earlier and recent printed sources are ably dealt with. Of particular interest, however, is the availability of live field interviews with Gaels – conversations that lend life and

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[6] Peter Phillips, "Scotland Rules," *The Musical Times* 138, no.1853 (1997): 28-30, p.28

immediacy to the songs discussed, and which provide first-hand accounts from within the tradition that challenge some conventional views, including the notion that Cape Breton song reflected a pervasive sea-divided nostalgia for life in the Old Country. For an area so demonstrably rich in its repertoire of Gaelic songs, it is surprising how narrow a range is available commercially, considering that the older community style of singing is still widely appreciated throughout the island and presently cultivated by a younger generation.

The use of field interviews to reveal more about singing among Cape Breton Gaels is also a central theme in the contribution from Tiber Falzett ('"Tighinn o'n cridhe": Sùil air seinn, seanchas agus meatafor am measg an t-sluaigh'). Here, too, the insiders' perspective is emphasised, as Falzett draws from interviews he conducted for his doctoral research with four of the very few remaining first-language Gaelic speakers in Cape Breton. In seeking to understand more about how traditional Gaels perceive and conceptualise their community song tradition, the writer employs close analysis of his informants' *seanchas* – their conversational descriptions of song and singing. What emerges is the crucial importance of family and community as environments for cultural transmission, and the pervasive effects – above and below the cultural surface – of recent language shift. Unsurprisingly, the accounts provided by these few surviving witnesses express a strong feeling of loss (*call*) and marginalisation within their own people, which Falzett links with modern presentations of the culture in the form of stage performances, competitions and commercialization. He ends by discussing individual words used routinely in his informants' *seanchas* (*shuas* 'up', *cridhe* 'heart', *blas* 'taste) – words often tied to sensory experience that reveal shared underlying cultural perceptions of the quality and value of oral tradition.

For the past century and more, the issues concerning 're-created Gaelic song tradition' in Scotland have received little scrutiny. In a clear and well documented essay, Griogair Labhruidh takes an historical perspective to explore the main motivations for such re-creation and examine the results of the process ('Traidisean seinn ath-chruthaichte nan Gàidheal Albannach'). From the outset, the writer's concerns are not confined to aesthetics, but extend to the initiation and results of 'soft' cultural change as a political issue. In the late 19th-century context of growing economic development and expanding empire, traditional Gaelic singing styles, branded as 'primitive' or 'barbarous', were gradually reinterpreted through a romantic filter, at least in public events, that rendered Gaelic song more compatible with the tastes of people outside the tradition itself. Quoting Calum MacPhàrlain (1853–1931), Labhruidh explores how the promotion of choral singing and the introduction of piano accompaniment to Gaelic song led to trivialization of the words, and the presentation of the solo singer as a musical instrument – a clear departure from what MacPhàrlain called 'the practice of the old singers' (255). Comparing the music of choral versions with recordings of traditional singers, he describes how song airs on the older pentatonic scale were reworked to suit the tempered scale of European high culture, how published collections of Gaelic songs were primarily intended for use by Gaelic choirs, and how these redefined forms of Gaelic song were reinforced by the introduction of the spectacle of public competitions, where standard printed versions became the canon and the performances were judged, not by Gaels, but by outsiders. Almost exactly a century ago it was observed that such 'improvements' had met with considerable success in urban areas but were 'much less pronounced in the country parts' (256).

Drawing upon his extensive and direct knowledge of Gaelic tradition, Labhruidh concludes on a political note. In his view, the 're-creation' of Gaelic song, however intended initially, follows a centuries-old colonial pattern. His clear implication is that it should now be questioned. Together with the two other Scottish Gaelic authors in the present collection, he notes the importance of traditional Gaelic song in maintaining ethnic identity, self-esteem and positive internal social cohesion essential for cultural survival and self-determination.

JOHN SHAW

Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn, *Na Sgeulachdan Gàidhlig*. Iain MacDhòmhnaill agus Moray Watson, deas. Glaschu: Comann Litreachas Gàidhlig na h-Alba, 2022. Tdd. 678.

'S e clach-mhìle chudromach ann am foillseachadh rosg Ghàidhlig a th' anns an leabhar tomadach seo. Anns an leabhar tha an luchd-deasachaidh, Iain MacDhòmhnaill agus Moray Watson, a' cruinneachadh airson a' chiad turas na sgeulachdan Gàidhlig gu lèir a sgrìobh aon de na sgrìobhadairean as cudromaiche a dh'obraich anns a' chànan anns an 20mh linn, Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn. Tha 116 sgeulachdan anns an leabhar, a chaidh fhoillseachadh eadar 1953 agus 1999 (bliadhna às dèidh bàs Mhic a' Ghobhainn), a' mhòr-chuid dhiubh ann an leabhraichean nach eil ann an clò tuilleadh, no sgapte ann an irisean agus pàipearan-naidheachd nach eil ri làimh do mhòran (chan eil e cho goireasach a' feuchainn ri *The Scotsman* 3/12/1983 a lorg anns an Leabharlann Nàiseanta ma tha thu airson "Na Gibhtean" a leughadh!). Mar sin, tha e feumail da-rìreadh na sgeulachdan seo uile a bhith againn ann an aon àite.

Tha na sgeulachdan air an òrdachadh a rèir cuspair, seach a rèir òrdugh foillseachaidh, ann an 11 roinnean-seòrsa: Eilthireachd agus Siubhal (14 sgeulachdan); Dìomhaireachd agus Sireadh na Fìrinne (16); Foghlam agus Cuimhne (18); Àm Cogaidh (8); Gaol agus Conaltradh (10); Uirsgeul Mac-meanmnach (7); Teaghlach (7); Taghadh (7); Ceanglaichean Poilitigeach (6); Dualchas agus Coimhearsnachd (8) agus Sgeulachdan Eile (15). Ann an seòrsachadh mar seo, tha e do-sheachnadh gum 'buineadh' sgeul no dhà do chòrr is aon roinn (m.e. chuir an luchd-deasachaidh "Coigreach" anns an roinn "Teaghlach", ach faodadh e dhol ann an "Eilthireachd agus Siubhal" ceart cho math), ach 's e roinnean ghoireasach a th' annta gus saothair Mhic a' Ghobhainn eagrachadh, seach roinnean a stiùireas ar tuigse air na sgeulachdan fhèin ann an dòigh ro chumhang is rag. Tha an siostam-òrdachaidh seo a' ciallachadh nach eil an leughadair a' faicinn leasachadh sgrìobhadh Mhic a' Ghobhainn tro thìm ma leughas iad an leabhar o cheann gu ceann, ach tha am fiosrachadh uile mu fhoillseachadh nan sgeulachdan anns an leabhar. Mar sin tha e uile gu lèir comasach na sgeulachdan a leughadh ann an òrdugh foillseachaidh cuideachd.

Le foillseachadh an leabhair seo, tha e a-nis comasach sealladh fhaighinn air farsaingeachd ficsean Mhic a' Ghobhainn. Dhan fheadhainn a tha air na nobhailean aige a leughadh, no cuid de na sgeulachdan goirid as aithnichte (anns an dà chànan), cha bhiodh e na annas gu bheil cuspairean leithid eilthireachd, buaidh na h-eaglaise air coimhearsnachdan Gàidhealach, foghlam agus litreachas agus cultar clasaigeach na Grèige agus na Ròimhe (m.e. "Air a' Bhus – 2") a' nochdadh gu math tric anns a' chruinneachadh seo, cho math ri an spèis a bha aige do sgrìobhadairean sa Bheurla – Shakespeare gu sònraichte, ach cuideachd Defoe agus, mar a dh'innseas tiotal aon sgeulachd dhuinn, Jenkins agus Marlow. Cha robh e riamh diùid ann a bhith a' còmhradh ri cultaran agus litreachasan eile, ged a bha aire cho tric air coimhearsnachdan agus fiosrachadh a mhuinntir fhèin.

Ach chìthear cuideachd feartan nach eil cho aithnichte do chuid ann an obair Mhic a' Ghobhainn, leithid sgeulachdan sci-fi agus tachartasan os-nàdarra (m.e "An Dèidh a' Chogaidh", "An Rionnag"). Faodaidh sinn cuideachd co-mheasadh nas doimhne a dhèanamh air an dàimh eadar rosg Beurla agus rosg Gàidhlig Mhic a' Ghobhainn, an dà chuid a thaobh caractair agus sgeulachd (m.e. on a tha Mgr Trill a' nochdadh ann an sgeulachdan san dà chànan) agus a thaobh stoidhle, on a tha a rosg Gàidhlig fada nas sìmplidh agus lom na tha a chuid roisg sa Bheurla (ged nach eil sin a' ciallachadh idir gu bheil na sgeulachdan fhèin simplidh, no bheil gainnead brìghe annta!). Mar sin, 's e ceum air adhart ann an sgoilearachd litreachas na Gàidhlig a th' anns an leabhar seo, agus bidh e nas fhasa rannsachadh – agus teagasg – a dhèanamh air ficsean Mhic a' Ghobhainn a-nis na bha e roimhe, agus an goireas feumail a-nis ri làimh.

A bharrachd air na sgeulachdan fhèin, tha rudan eile anns an leabhar seo a bhios gu feum do luchd-rannsachaidh agus dhan fheadhainn a tha airson tuigse nas doimhne air obair Mhic a' Ghobhainn a bhith aca: fiosrachadh foillseachadh nan sgeulachdan (air an tug mi iomradh shuas), fiosrachadh foillseachadh leabhraichean Gàidhlig Mhic a' Ghobhainn gu lèir (sgeulachdan goirid, duanairean, dealbhan-chluiche, leabhraichean do chloinn agus do dh'òigridh), agus dà aiste leis an luchd-deasachaidh. Tha an dà chuid le chèile susbainteach agus fiosrachail, "Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn:

An Duine agus an Sgrìobhadair" (38 tdd.), le Iain MacDhòmhnaill agus "Am Bodach agus An Guth: A' tuigsinn sgeulachdan goirid Iain Mhic a' Ghobhainn" (48 tdd.), le Moray Watson.

Tha MacDhòmhnaill a' toirt cunntais air beatha Mhic a' Ghobhainn, le tuairisgeul goirid air na cruinneachaidhean de sgeulachdan goirid: *Bùrn is Aran* (1960), *An Dubh is an Gorm* (1963), *Maighstirean is Ministearan* (1970), *An t-Adhar Ameireaganach* (1973), *Na Guthan* (1991) agus na sgeulachdan nach do nochd ann an leabhar, seach irisean agus pàipearan-naidheachd, thuige seo. Tha e ag innse cuideachd mu na feartan sònraichte ann am ficsean Mhic a' Ghobhainn, gu h-àraidh "cion conaltraidh, cion tuigse air a chèile, cion eòlas air beatha a chèile, no beachdan làidir glè eadar-dhealaichte, a' sgaradh dhaoine o chèile" (td. 35). Tha iomradh ann cuideachd air cliù Mhic a' Ghobhainn an dà chuid ann an Albainn (tdd. 4–5) agus gu h-eadar-nàiseanta (tdd. 5–8), rud nach eil cho aithnichte ann an Albainn. Chì sinn ann fiosrachadh mu na duaisean a chaidh a bhuileachadh air, cuiridhean a fhuair e gu fèisean litreachais thall-thairis, eadar-theangaidhean a chuid obrach ann an cànan eile: Fraingis, Pòlanais, Nirribhis, Gearmailtis, Ungairis, Eadailtis, Gaeilge, Cuimris. Tha iomradh ann cuideach air obair sgoileireil air rosg agus bàrdachd Mhic a' Ghobhainn le sgoilearan ann an caochladh dhùthchannan. San aiste aige-san, tha Watson a' sgrùdadh chan ann a-mhàin na h-ìomhaighean agus moitifean ann am ficsean (agus bàrdachd) Mhic a' Ghobhainn, ach cuideachd a' nochdadh na cudromachd a tha aige ann an eachdraidh litreachas na Gàidhlig, on as e "is dòcha a' chiad neach a dh'fhoillsich sgeulachdan goirid ùr-nòsach sa Ghàidhlig, agus tha e coltach gun do dh'fhoillsich e barrachd dhiubh na duine eile a-riamh." (td. 39) Air sgàth sin, tha an leabhar seo na ghoireas air leth do sgoilearan a tha a' rannsachadh litreachas na Gàidhlig, litreachas a fhuair buannachd neach beag bho sgrìobhaidhean Mhic a' Ghobhainn.

Tha an luchd-deasachaidh airidh air moladh airson na h-obrach a rinn iad, a' toirt còmhla agus gu follais farsaingeachd cho mòr de na sgrìobhaidhean aig Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn, agus thathas an dùil gun tig adhartas ann an sgoilearachd air Mac a' Ghobhainn anns na bliadhnaichean a tha romhainn mar thoradh air sin.

Summary:
The publication of this comprehensive collection of Iain Crichtron Smith's Gaelic short stories marks an important step forward in modern Gaelic literary scholarship, making available much that has been long uncollected and/or out of print. This publication will enable scholars to gain a more rounded and thorough appreciation of the work of one of Scotland's most prominent twentieth-century writers, whose Gaelic work connects with and diverges from his fiction in English in different ways.

DONNCHADH SNEDDON

Two books of Irish Interest

Conamara Chronicles: Tales from Iorras Aithneach, compiled by Seán Mac Giollarnáth. Liam Mac Con Iomaire and Tim Robinson, trans. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2022. ISBN 978-0-253-06352-6 (pbk). Pp. xx+309; maps, illus.

Iorras Aithneach, a peninsula located between Cuan Chill Chiaráin ('Kilkerrin Bay') and Cuan na Beirtrí ('Bertraghboy Bay') at the southwestern extremity of Co. Galway, is – or was until modernity caught up with it – one of the principal redoubts of traditional oral culture in Ireland. *Annála Beaga ó Iorrus Aithneach*, published in 1941, was Seán Mac Giollarnáth's largest collection of oral history and traditional lore from this small area. Given the scarcity of the original publication, its re-emergence here, in translation, is very welcome.

Seán Mac Giollarnáth (Seán Forde, 1880–1970) was a native of east Co. Galway. Having joined the Gaelic League and the Irish Republican Brotherhood during a stay in London, he embarked on a career in journalism and in 1909 succeeded Pádraic Pearse as editor of the influential Irish-language

weekly *An Claidheamh Soluis*, in whose columns folklore and rural customs were often featured. Finding journalism a precarious calling after 1916, Forde qualified as a solicitor in 1920, and in the middle of that decade he was named a District Justice in western Co. Galway – a peripatetic assignment that exposed him to the people of Connemara and their way of life. As he began to collect their stories and lore, several of his informants became 'regulars': of the 251 items included in this collection, over ninety percent were contributed by eight men, seven of whom also contributed to collections Mac Giollarnáth had earlier published in *Béaloideas* and elsewhere.[7]

The topics covered reveal much about people's beliefs, values, occupations, and understanding of historical events. Anecdotes about 'holy men' include stories about well-known Irish saints (Patrick, Brigid, Colmcille) as well as local ones whose names and legends enliven the Connemara landscape (Mac Dara, Flannán, Cáillín). A long confessional poem attributed to the cantankerous wife of one holy man, 'Donncha Mór' (possibly Donnchadha Mór Ó Dálaigh?), appears in this section. Known historical figures – oppressive landlord Tadhg 'na Buile' Ó Flaitheartaigh, Fr Myles Prendergast of 'the Year of the French' – are recalled in stories that reveal the role played by Connemara's rough lands and rougher coastline in harbouring fugitives and desperadoes. Stories about 'tories', robbers and crafty smugglers reveal a society living on its wits, because there wasn't much else to live on. The mythic status of money is reflected in legends about dead men's golden hoards guarded by magical creatures, some of which turn out to be the spell-bound owners of the treasure. By far the largest number of anecdotes relate to local people – strong men, scholars, priests, pedlars, kelp-burners, landlords, boat builders and sailors, lame men with quick wits, men who owned famous dogs or who knew the habits of wild creatures or who witnessed magical events, people whose names became by-words for disaster, for long-windedness or learning, for piety or wickedness. A chapter devoted to foodstuffs reveals the precariousness of daily existence as well as the rare indulgence of bread and butter at Christmas. A chapter headed 'Wisps of Straw' contains everything else – placename lore, scraps of Fenian legends, feast days and their meanings, riddles and triads, myths about the 'shilling cobbler' (leprachaun), plants and plant-lore, clever animal tales. As is the nature of *seanchas*, these stories combine a sense of concrete immediacy – hard facts tied to specific points in a known landscape – with the immanence of the supernatural, whether of the Christian variety, or that of an older otherworld.

In the final chapter, Mac Giollarnáth gives eight of his collaborators space to share their own stories. While these are not chronological narratives, they reveal the warm relationship between the collector and his informants that encouraged them to grant 'Justice Forde' custody of their family's and community's traditions. In an appendix, editor and translator Liam Mac Con Iomaire summarises what is known about each of the eighteen listed contributors, including some photographs. Reflecting the interest of editor and cartographer Tim Robinson, the scholarly apparatus includes endnotes (most of which deal with placenames) and a placename index. Presumably neither editor knew why Mac Giollarnáth listed two informants as contributors while attributing no specific segments to them, or why several segments lack attributions altogether. On the other hand, they might have suspected that Mac Giollarnáth himself appears to be the narrator in a couple of segments, while others clearly involved group discussion. Lastly, a complete list of the segments included under each chapter heading – something that Mac Giollarnáth did not supply – might have helped readers more quickly identify items of interest to them.

Tim Robinson's atmospheric essay, 'Space, Time and Connemara' is reprinted here,[8] along with a useful introduction by Liam Mac Con Iomaire contextualising Mac Giollarnáth's life and work. This final collaboration between Liam Mac Con Iomaire (1937–2019) and Tim Robinson (1935–

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[7] Mac Giollarnáth's earlier collections included 'Tiachóg ó Iorrus Aintheach'*, Béaloideas* 3:4 (Dec. 1932), 467–501; *Loinnir Mac Leabhair agus Sgeulta Gaisgidhe Eile*, Dublin: An Gúm (1936); and 'An Dara Tiachóg as Iorrus Aithneach', *Béaloideas* 10:1-2 (June–Dec. 1940), 3–100.

[8] It was published twice previously, in the 1990s; see p. 26.

2020) is a legacy worthy of their friendship and long partnership, and a welcome contribution to our understanding of a remarkable place and time.

Colm Ó Caodháin: An Irish singer and his world. **Ríonach uí Ógáin. Cork: Cork University Press, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-782-05431-3. Pp. viii+280. CD; map; illus.**

A generation younger than Seán Mac Giollarnáth's contributors, singer, storyteller and all-round raconteur Colm Ó Caodháin (1893–1975) lived in Glinsce, about five kilometres north of Carna on the coast of Bertraghboy Bay. For some forty years, Ó Caodháin entertained fieldworkers from the Irish Folklore Commission and other institutions, becoming what Ríonach uí Ógáin calls 'the exemplar contributor to the early days of folklore collecting in Ireland' (6). In this sampler of Colm's stories, songs and lore, we not only learn much about the daily life of a small farmer and fisherman in Iorras Aithneach in the first half of the last century, but also become acquainted with an individual for whom tradition was not simply a repertoire of detachable, collectible items, but something truly inseparable from life itself.

In her introductory chapter, 'Colm and his world', the editor summarises and contextualises Colm's life and his relationship with Séamus Ennis (1919–82), the collector most closely associated with him. In the following chapter, we hear from Colm himself as he describes how his father taught him the rudiments of seafaring and navigation, recounts two miracles at sea that he ascribes to divine intervention, and finally describes how, following a fruitless interlude in Scotland looking for work, he returned home and built a house (52):

> I am a person who got no schooling and who has learned no English and I was able to build the house, thanks be to God. I had never put a slate roof on a house...and I began to think it through, to consider it and to work it out in my head what I should do. At night, when there was nothing else bothering me, I would take down my cardboard, get my scissors, begin to draw wedges and cut them and put them together. But thanks be to God, I immediately saw a way of putting on the slates and I put them on and built the house.

Having built his own house and all the furniture in it, Colm built other houses throughout the district until 'there were no more to build' (52). Well into his forties, Colm at last settled down and began to raise a family.

The next three chapters sample Colm's repertoire, including songs and instrumental music (Colm was a proficient melodeon player); short passages of lore, local custom and belief; and a selection of short tales and rhymes. Material given in Irish is translated as needed, and short explanatory notes provide context and commentary on individual items.

Colm is best known as a singer. Although access to his archival recordings has been limited, Colm's name first became known to a wider audience when, in 1955, Alan Lomax included two of his songs on his influential LP, *The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music: Vol. 2 – Ireland.*[9] This recording became iconic: the late Seosamh Ó hÉanaí often boasted of his family connection to Colm (they were second cousins); and Colm's relationship with Séamus Ennis – whose own career as an uillean piper, singer and raconteur took off in the 1960s – became a well-known part of Ennis's own legend.

Unsurprisingly, the chapter devoted to Colm's songs and music is at the heart of this book. It contains transcriptions, translations and notes for thirty-three items provided on the accompanying compact disc, including fifteen songs in Irish, seven in English, and three instrumental tunes. The recordings reveal the extent to which the celebrated Connemara *sean nós* singing style has changed since professional recording technology came into widespread use in Ireland. Colm's singing is straightforward, rhythmically aligned with the text, not florid, neither ponderously slow nor unintelligibly fast. This is a style that is communicative rather than 'performative' in the modern

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[9] See https://archive.culturalequity.org/taxonomy/term/4861.

sense, uninfluenced by the aesthetic criteria imposed by decades of Oireachtas competitions and today's recording industry. It is singing designed to entertain a small gathering of friends and family, rather than to impress a roomful of strangers. Once he got used to it, Colm even turned Séumas Ennis's recording equipment into a human presence – he called it *an seanfhear* ('the old man'), and suggested that a drink might improve its scratchy voice (10, 148). Despite their roughness, these recordings allow the listener to be the proverbial fly on the wall, to witness the intimacy of the environment in which they were made, and the warmth of the relationship between the singer and listener.

Ennis's work with Colm was at its most intense in the 1940s. While better audio recording technology eventually made it possible to capture more of Colm's repertoire, the bulkiness of the equipment and cost of recording media meant that about two-thirds of his songs and music were only ever taken down in writing. Of those that were recorded, only six were ever publicly released. The CD here includes five of these, as well as twenty-two songs and tunes never previously available outside the archives. One lively song, 'Port na Giobóige' (The Unfortunate Widow's Tune) includes the earliest known sound recording from Colm. Items of Scottish interest include Colm's performance of 'The Keel Row', a fragment of 'Captain Wedderburn's Courtship' (Child 46), and a spirited rendition of 'Miss McLeod's Reel'.

In addition to songs and music, the CD contains eight spoken items. The most remarkable of these is 'An Martháin Phádraig' (St Patrick's Sustaining Prayer), a 'prayer in a form of incantation' that Colm believed had healing powers if it were recited 'without hesitation from start to finish' (131–2). The fact that some words are unintelligible is unimportant because such utterances – like the descriptive 'runs' in hero tales, or the Scottish Gaelic *duain Challainn* (Hogmanay lays) – are functionally and semantically charms, and any verbal shortcomings are of little significance because the meaning of the whole is understood.

In this book, Ríonach uí Ógáin demonstrates her deep sympathy for her subject and her respect for the tradition which Colm Ó Caodháin, with the help of Séamus Ennis, other collectors, and the 'old man', brought so vividly to life. The editorial work of selecting, transcribing, translating, annotating, and contextualising the items included here must have been monumental – but it was only half the job. As archivist, uí Ógáin charts the collection and development of Colm's material in two exhaustive appendixes. The first describes the various audio technologies used to record about a fifth of Colm's repertoire between 1943 and 1973, including what material was recorded and who was involved. The second appendix lists over 500 separate items contributed by Colm and held in the National Folklore Collection. While 261 of these are songs or tunes, Colm also recorded international folktales, religious items, fairy lore and otherworld stories, and a wealth of local lore, historical tales, personal anecdotes, and proverbial wisdom.

Given such a wealth of material, choosing what items to highlight and what to say about them must have been a challenge. As regards songs, the decision to choose only from audio recordings meant that two thirds of Colm's song repertoire – including his own favourites (4) – were omitted, despite having been recorded in Ennis's elegant staff notation. Which songs would Colm himself have chosen to include? As recording technologies and ethnographic fieldwork techniques have become more sophisticated, it has become easier to discern, and thus to convey, the relationship between the tradition bearers and what they choose to share – and why they choose to share it.

This is a book to be studied, certainly; but it is also a work to be enjoyed, one that will allow us to briefly imagine the rich life, multivalent repertoire, and vanished world of this remarkable singer, storyteller, and raconteur – Colm Ó Caodháin.

VIRGINIA BLANKENHORN