Nam Bithinn Mar Eun ('If I were a Bird') Re-accessing the paralinguistic dimension of traditional Scots Gaelic storytelling

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In the mid-nineteenth century, folklorist and ethnographer John Francis Campbell co-ordinated a survey of traditional Scots Gaelic storytelling and oral narrative performance in the highlands and western islands of Scotland. His principle concern appears to have been the preservation of what was then a declining oral tradition, and to this end instructed his fieldworkers to, where possible, transcribe 'the very words used by the people who told the stories, with nothing added, or omitted, or altered' (Campbell 1860-2 I, p.xxi).

However, this methodology was not without its critics. On publication of his four volume collection *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, one anonymous reviewer complained:

> His translations also abound in bald and barbarous literalities, one continued train of English solecisms – gross defects which are intolerable in English composition and which might have been easily avoided without altering or damaging the 'Tales' in any degree whatever but rather improving them materially by making the translations smack a little of the English idiom, as there is then no room whatever for doubting, or suspecting the genuineness of the 'Tales' seeing the Gaelic original of each and its English version are printed side by side. (anon. quoted in *NLS* MS268.15)

The predominance of vernacular Gaelic, together with the above-mentioned 'literalities' in translation, however, confirm Campbell's request for the verbatim transcription of his sources' recitations.

Nevertheless, despite this meticulous approach, Campbell's methodology cannot be said to be an exact or complete record of traditional Gaelic storytelling. According to Mallan the mode of narration is equally significant to the plot of the tale itself. Mallan asserts that 'both teller and listener create the story … face, voice, body and personality help to convey meaning and mood' (1991, p. 5). The inherent unsuitability of the written word for the purposes of recording oral narratives is further addressed by Walter Ong in his seminal work *Orality and Literacy* (1982), which asserts that 'a literate person cannot fully recover a sense of what the word is to [a] purely oral people' (1982, p.12). Ong's hypothesis presupposes that although words are grounded in oral speech,

> writing tyrannically locks them into a visual field forever […] In view of this pre-emptiveness of literacy, it appears quite impossible to use the term 'literature' to include oral tradition and performance without subtly but irremediably reducing these somehow to variants of writing. (1982, p.12)

In short, both Mallan and Ong submit that the intangible elements (or paralinguistics) of the folktale are of equal import to the words themselves; a dimension which is largely ignored during transcription.

With this in mind, it is the aim of this present analysis to attempt to identify and re-access the paralinguistic dimension of many of the *Popular tales of the West Highlands*, utilising footnotes, narrative asides and stylistic indicators inherent in the transcriptions

themselves. Consequently, this paper will focus on one particularly extrusive example which calls for the imitation of birds' songs and cries in impersonation of anthropomorphised bird characters common to many traditional folktales.

Anthropomorphosis and Metamorphosis

Anthropomorphosis, or the attribution of human abilities and characteristics to non-human entities, is a well-established device in many Gaelic oral narratives (and particularly in relation to birds). Often this is accomplished by the assumption of human speech. For example, in the tale '*An Dreathan Donn*' ('The Wren'), recorded from the dictation of Alasdair Stewart of Lairg by Hamish Henderson, the wren is able to speak both to different species of animals (such as the sheep and the fox) and to humans (*SSS SA*1957.40). The tale begins with the wren pleading with a sheep '*nach leigeadh tu staigh na do chloimh mi gu madainn*' ('will you not let me into your wool until morning') (*SSS SA*1957.40; my own translation); to which the sheep answers '*trobhad a bhròinein*' ('come you poor thing') (*SSS SA*1957.40; my own translation). Later in the tale, the wren speaks to a farmer '*dh'innis e facal air an fhacal dha gun deach a' chaorag a mharbhadh*' ('he told him word for word how the sheep had been murdered'), and in exchange for information on the perpetrator the wren offers '*bheir mi dhuit … casg fìon thanaig a staigh air a' chladach*' ('I will give you … a cask of wine that came ashore') (*SSS SA*1957.40; my own translation).

The anthropomorphosis of many bird and animal characters is similarly noted by Alexander Carmichael, one of John Francis Campbell's field collectors, in an insight into one of his informants (Janet Campbell, a nurse from Lochskiport, South Uist).

> The reciter had many beautiful songs and lullabies of the nursery, and many instructive sayings and fables of the animal world. These she sang and told in the most pleasing and natural manner, to the delight of her listeners. Birds and beasts, reptiles and insects, whales and fishes talked and acted through her in the most amusing manner, and in the most idiomatic Gaelic. (Carmichael, 1928-71 I, p.60-1)

As with Mallan, Carmichael's description gives equal stress to speech and action: 'Birds and beasts … talked and acted through her'.

The anthropomorphosis of birds may similarly be realised via mimicry of human action. In a variant of the tale '*Cath nan Eun*' ('the Battle of the Birds') published only in English translation, the wren is not only able to communicate with humans, but is also able to perform human work.

> There was once a farmer who was seeking a servant, and the wren met him, and he said, 'What art thou seeking for?' 'I am seeking a servant,' said the farmer. 'Wilt thou take me?' said the wren. 'Thee, thou poor creature; what good wouldst thou do?' 'Try thou me,' said the wren. So he engaged him, and the first work he set him to was threshing in the barn. The wren threshed (what did he thresh with? – a flail to be sure), and he knocked off one grain. (Campbell 1860-2 I, p.48)

The absurdly comic imagery employed here contrasts the size of the wren with the flail and the grain, compounded by the explanation in parentheses 'what did he thresh with? – a flail to be sure'. Whilst it is clear that the principle function here is to amuse, the imagery above is also clearly indicative of an anthropomorphic trend, which accepts that the rational boundaries between human and animal are less relevant in the reality of the folktale (Muhawi & Kanaana 1989, p.6). Later in the same story a raven 'takes out a book, and gives it to his

companion with a warning not to open it till he gets home to his father's house' (Campbell 1860-2 I, p.49), referencing the raven's popular association with precognitive abilities in popular Gaelic folk-belief (see Forbes 1905 for more on this).

Another tale in Campbell's collection (transcribed by Hector Boyd who received it from Donald McKinnon of Laidhinnis, Barra) tells the story of a woman who gives birth to a hen. As the hen grows older, it 'used to be going to the king's house every day to try if she could get something that she might give to her mother' (Campbell 1860-2 III, p.103). After being spotted by the king, the hen challenges the king's wives to an unusual contest.

> *'Leumaidh mi o sparr gu sparr, 's an clobha, 's buthal na poite, slaodadh rium.'*
> *Dh' fhalbh e staigh 's dh' innis e siud do'n bhanruinn. Chaidh 'fheuchainn ris a' chirc 's rinn i e. Cheangail iad am buthal san clobha rithe, 's leum i thar tri sparrannan, 's thainig i air làr. Cheangail iad am buthal san clobha ris a bhanruinn an sin, 's dh' fhalbh i 's thug i leum aisde, 's ghearr i faobhar an da lurga aice, 's thuit i, 's chaidh an t-ionachainn asde. Bha ceithir banruinnean aige 's chuir a' chearc as doibh, air fad, leis an obair seo.*

> 'I [the hen] can spring from spar to spar, with the tongs and the hook for hanging the pot trailing after me.'
> He [the king] went in and he told that to the queen. The hen was tried, and she did it; they tied the pot-hook and the tongs to her, and she sprang over three spars (rafters), and she came down on the ground. Then they tied the pot-hook and the tongs to the queen, and she went and she took a spring out of herself, and she cut the edge of her two shanks, and she fell, and the brain went out of her. He had four queens, and the hen put them all out with this work.
> (Campbell 1860-2 III, pp.103 & 94-5)

This peculiar test of agility again provides a humorous contrast between animals and humans; however, later in the tale it is revealed

that the hen is a woman disguised by a '*cochall*' ('husk', 'mantle' or 'skin', Dwelly 2001, s.v. *cochull*) which the king's son removes. The woman is forced to remain as such, reasoning 'if I get another cochall they will think that I am a witch' (Campbell 1860-2 III, p.95).

This latter tale introduces the concept of metamorphosis; the hen's '*cochall*' successfully masks her humanity from a young age. The same motif can be found in a number of tales in which seals are thought to be able to take their skins off and transform into humans. (See, for instance, '*Bean Mhic Odrum*' (MacCordrum's Wife') recorded from Donald MacDougall, North Uist, in 1968 (MacDonald 1971-2, pp.258-9; see also *SSS SA*1968.212-B1 and Bruford 1994, p.365). For more on this tale type generally, see Earls 1992-3, p.131.)

Bird transformation is not uncommon in the Gaelic folktale tradition; of the one-hundred and sixty-three tales and their variants published in John Francis Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, thirty-four include instances of animal metamorphosis,[1] of which exactly half involve birds.[2] One example entitled '*Sgoil nan Eun*' ('the School of the Birds') recorded by John Francis Campbell from the dictation of John Brown (no date or location are noted), and published in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, depicts a fuller's son who is able to transform himself into various creatures, including birds. In the form of an angel fish ('*mannach beag*'), the fuller's son is able to evade his captors by means of a series of transformations.

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[1] These are tales 1(var.2), 2, 2(var.2), 2(var.4), 2(var.6), 2(var.7), 2(var.8), 3, 3(var.2), 4(var.2), 4(var.4), 7(var.5), 10(var.1), 10(var.3), 10(var.4), 12, 28(var.5), 30(var.4), 30(var.9), 30(var.10), 33, 38, 41, 41(var.2), 41(var.3), 42, 44, 46, 51, 52, 58, 64, 84 and 86.

[2] Tales 1(var.2), 2, 2(var.2), 2(var.4), 2(var.7), 2(var.8), 3, 3(var.2), 4(var.2), 4(var.4), 10(var.3), 30(var.4), 38, 51, 52, 58 and 64.

Fhuair am Manach e fhein a thiormachadh air cloich anns an lon, 's leum e na sheobhag do na speuran; san sud a mach da sheobhag dheug as a dheigh. 'S cha d' rug iad air. Cam gach rathad do 'n t-seobhag ach a dol os cionn tigh an righ; 's bha iongantas fuasach air a h-uil' aon riamh a dha dheug do sheobhagan a bhi a ruith na h-aoin.

The angel fish (*mannach*) got itself dried on a stone in the pool, and it flew as a hawk up in the air. Out at once went twelve other hawks after it, but they did not overtake it. Crooked was every way for the hawk but above the king's house. Every one wondered to see twelve hawks chasing one hawk.

(Campbell 1890-1, p.67)

The chase concludes with the fuller's son transforming into a grain of malt and his pursuers transforming into twelve cockerels. Resuming his own shape first, the fuller's son is then able to kill the cockerels, and subsequently marry the king's daughter.

Another aviomorphic tale recorded by John Francis Campbell occurs as a variant of '*Righ Og Easaidh Ruagh*' ('The Young King of Easaidh Ruadh') transcribed by Hector Urquhart from the dictation of John Campbell of Strath Gairloch in 1859. The published version of this tale is given only in bilingual note form, which relates how a widow's son, in pursuit of his sweetheart who has been kidnapped by a giant, rests at a house thatched with birds' feathers.

He went in and found no man, but two great fires on the fire-place (CHAGAILT) on the floor. SUIL DA DUG E, glance that he gave he saw a falcon coming in with a heath hen in her claws, and the next glance it was, GILLE BRIAGH BUIDH, a braw yellow lad, who spoke as in the Islay version, entertained him and told him in the morning to call on SEABHAG SUIL GHORM GHLENNA FEIST – the blue-eyed falcon of Glen Feist.

(Campbell 1860-2 I, p.19; Campbell's capitalisation)

It is interesting to note that Campbell remarks that the falcon had 'a heath hen in *her* claws' (emphasis added) before it transforms into 'a braw yellow lad' (1860-2 I, p.19). This perceived gender discrepancy may merely reflect the fact that the Gaelic '*seabhag*' ('falcon') is grammatically female (Dwelly 2001, s.v. *seabhag*); however, it is also possible that a sex-shift is implied in the process of metamorphosis (for a more comprehensive discussion of sex-shifting in Gaelic folktales see MacKay 1925, pp.172-3).

Many anthropomorphic and metamorphic bird tales in Gaelic are prefaced with an apologia for their unusual abilities. For example Neil MacLellan's tale '*An Gadaiche Dubh*' ('the Black Thief') is preceded by the explanation

> *an naidheachd a tha mise dol a dh'innse, thachair i bho chionn iomadh bliadhna. Thachair i nuair a bhruidhneadh na cearcan agus na coilich agus a dh'innseadh a' chòmhchag sgeulachd, agus cha b'ann an dé a bha sin.*

> the story that I'm about to relate happened many years ago. It happened when the roosters and the hens could talk and the owl told tales, and that was hardly yesterday.
>
> <div align="right">(Shaw 2000, pp.306-7)</div>

Similarly, Calum Johnston prefaces his tale 'The Fox and the Wolf and the Butter' with the formulaic 'Long, long ago, when all creatures spoke Gaelic …' (Bruford 1994, p.41; see also *SSS SA*1965.10-B4), and a variant of the 'King of the Birds' folktale recorded by Carmichael begins 'When all the birds of the air spoke (Gaelic of course) they met in council to elect a king' (*EUL CW* MS131a.448).

In many tales, the pseudo-historical period when animals could speak is considered to have been a golden age akin to the pre-fall

state of bliss described in the Book of Genesis (Goodrich-Freer 1903, p.232). There are a number of biblical references to talking animals, for example in the Book of Numbers the prophet Balaam speaks to a donkey who pleads with him to stop beating it (Numbers 22: 28-30). Perhaps more famously the serpent in the Garden of Eden speaks to Eve, enticing her to eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3: 1-5).

The subsequent loss of understanding of animal language is explained by mankind's fall from paradise, and is further paralleled by the fall of the tower of Babel in the Book of Genesis (11:9). This apparent congruence with biblical times (and later hagiographies of Celtic saints, particularly the voyage of Saint Brendan, in which he lands on the island of the birds and is able to speak bird language) lends an authority of age to the narrative, reinforced by the narrator's assurances in introducing the tale.

In addition to biblical intertextuality, many anthropomorphic and metamorphic bird tales may also share some commonality with Old and Middle Irish sagas (as well as Welsh material from a similar period) in which characters could routinely 'take on the form of birds' (Ó hÓgain 1990, p.35). A full analysis of the various intertextualities suggested here is worthy of further research, but is unfortunately beyond the scope of this current investigation.

The Mimetic Voice

As stated above, one difficulty in dealing with largely textual source material is the loss of paralanguage, i.e. the non-verbal elements of communication such as intonation, voice quality and pitch (Hill 1958, pp.408-9). Mallan suggests that 'the storyteller connects more directly with the audience through eyes, gesture, voice and

proximity' (1991, p.6), qualities which are not easily conveyed in written records. A number of imitations recorded by Alan Lomax from Annie Johnston and Mrs. MacLeod on Barra in 1951 illustrate the importance of vocal inflection, particularly where mimesis is concerned.

> The black-backed gull and the ordinary gull, the common gull, are out on the hills. And the black-backed gull has come from foreign lands, and he asks the other gull that's up on the hills: 'what's doing, what's the food, what's the food here among the hills?' And the other one answers:
>
> > *dubh-bhlian*
> > only the bare flank, the black [...] you know, the
> diaphragm, that's all.
>
> And the other one says, the black backed gull says
>
> > *is math ann e*
> > that's good enough he says, that's good enough.
>
> (*SSS SA*1951.10.9)

The mimetic dialogue above is quoted in Gaelic: '*dubh-bhlian*' (the 'black flank' or 'flesh') attributed to the common gull; and '*is math ann e*' ('that's good enough') attributed to the black-backed gull are both voiced with a nasal inflection in emulation of the gulls' cries, whereas the earlier dialogue is recounted only in English and spoken in an ordinary tone of voice without any mimetic intonation.

Another tale fragment recorded by Alan Lomax representing a conversation between a hooded crow and a crab illustrates the point that animal dialogue in Gaelic fables and folktales is not always inflected mimetically.

Thig a' mach ars an fheannag gun cumainn còta dhut. Gu dè an còt? ars am partan. Còta-dearg, còta-dearg ars an fheannag.

Come out says the crow to the *partan* 'till I shape a coat for you. What kind of a coat? Red coat, red coat (*còta dearg*) says the crow. You see, the inner coat next to the shell of a crab or a *partan* is called the 'red coat' in Gaelic you speak about the *còta dearg*, you speak about the *còta dearg*, it lies next to the shell. And when the crow breaks the shell you see the *còta dearg* is underneath. The crow breaks it you see . . . to feed, to get a feed.

(*SSS SA*1951.10.9)

From the recording, it is clear that only the phrase '*còta-dearg*' spoken by the hooded crow is intended to be mimetic (also reflected by the use of repetition, a common feature of imitative children's rhymes). The crow's earlier dialogue '*Thig a' mach … gun cumainn còta dhut*', and the crab's response '*Gu dè an còt?*' are both articulated conversationally as reported speech, whereas the mimetic phrase '*còta dearg*' is enunciated with a more guttural phonation impersonating a harsh ventricular voice in imitation of the croaking of the hooded crow.

It is not clear from the above examples whether these imitations are excerpted from longer tales, or if the explicatory prefaces have been fabricated later out of a need to contextualise the mimesis. John Shaw articulates the same ambiguity with regard to the explicatory segments of folksongs, in which the preface to the performance is treated 'as an integral part of the song by the singers' (2000, pp.14 & 24).

Many of the sources for traditional Gaelic storytelling are recorded in literary form, written down between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Despite the loss of orality, it is occasionally possible to detect a number of paralinguistic indicators which offer an insight into the performance aspect of the tale. Often these take

the form of narrative asides, such as descriptions of the reciters themselves, as in the depiction of John MacDonald and his father by Hector Urquhart: 'they do not simply tell the story, but act it with changing voice and gesture, as if they took an interest in it, and entered into the spirit and fun of the tale' (Campbell 1860-2 I, pp. 174-5). Similarly John Gregorson Campbell describes one informant reciting the tale '*An Dreathan Donn*' ('The Wren').

> On another occasion the wren and his twelve sons were going to the peatmoss, when they fell in with a plant of great virtue and high esteem. The old wren caught hold of the plant by the ears, and was jerking it this way and that way, hard-binding it, and pulling it, as if peat-slicing […] Under the severe strain the plant at last yielded, and all the wrens fell backwards into a peat pond and were drowned […]
>   The old man from whom this story was heard [reports] that in winter time, when knitting straw ropes for thatching, he could get all the boys of the village to come to assist him […] on the understanding that the story of "The wren and his twelve sons" would be illustrated at the end. One after another of the boys sat on the floor behind him, and he having a hold of the straw rope was able easily to resist the strain till he chose to let go, then all the boys fell back and the laughter that ensured [sic] was ample reward for their labour.
>
> (1895, pp.121-2)

Paralinguistic indicators may also be detected in the transcriptions and translations of the tales themselves. For example '*Cath nan Eun*' ('The Battle of the Birds') in John Francis Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, collected from John MacKenzie in 1859 and transcribed by Hector Urquhart, appears to use capitalisation in order to suggest a mimetic tone of voice. In order to win the hand of a giant's daughter, the prince of *Na Cathair Shiomain* must perform three Herculean tasks: to clean the giant's byre; to

thatch it with bird's down with no two feathers the same colour and to retrieve five unbroken eggs from the nest of a magpie on top of a fir tree. In the course of these labours, he is assisted by the giant's daughter, who loses a finger in the process. On completion of the tasks, the giant's daughter helps the prince to escape her father's fury. However, on returning home the prince forgets his new wife and is forced into remembering by a silver pigeon and a golden pigeon, who address him:

> *Thubhairt an calman òir ris, na'm biodh cuimhn' agad 'nuair a chairt mi 'm bàthaich, CHA 'N 'ITHEADH TU SIUD GUN CHUID A THOIRT DHOMHSA. A rithist thuit tri gràinnean eòrn' eile, 's leum an calman airgiod agus ithear siud mar an ceudna. "Na'm bitheadh cuimhn' agad 'nuair a thubh mi 'm bàthaich CHA 'N ITHEADH TU SIUD, GUN MO CHUID A THOIRT DHOMHSA," ars' an calman òir. Tuitear tri ghràinnean eile, 's leum an calman airgiod, agus ithear siud cuideachd. "Na 'm biodh cuimhn' agad 'nuair a chreach mi nead na pioghaid, CHA 'N 'ITHEADH TU SIUD GUN MO CHUID A THOIRT DHOMHSA," ars' an calman òir. "Chaill mi 'n lùdag 'gad' thaidhairt a nuas, agus tha i dhìth orm fathast." Chuimhnich mac an rìgh, 's dh' aitnich e co a bh' aige.*

Said the golden pigeon to him, 'If thou hadst mind when I cleared the byre, thou wouldst not eat that without giving me my share,' says the golden pigeon. Again fell three other grains of barley, and the silver pigeon sprang, and he eats that, as before. 'If thou hadst mind when I thatched the byre, thou wouldst not eat that without giving me my share,' says the golden pigeon. Three other grains fall, and the silver pigeon sprang, and he eats that. 'If thou hadst mind when I harried the magpie's nest, though wouldst not eat that without giving me my share,' says the golden pigeon; 'I lost little finger bringing it down, and I want it still.' The king's son minded, and he knew who it was he had got.

<div align="right">(Campbell 1860-2 I, pp.46-7 & p.37)</div>

The phrase '*cha 'n 'itheadh tu siud gun mo chuid a thoirt dhomhsa*' ('thou wouldst not eat that without giving me my share') is stressed using capitalisation, suggesting that this portion of dialogue may have been mimetically inflected when spoken by the narrator. This is certainly the interpretation preferred by Wendy Wood in her *Tales of the Western Isles*, a reworking of a number of Campbell's folktales, which instructs the reader with reference to the above exchange to 'say it like a pigeon's coo' (1952, p.127). An alternative version of this tale recorded by John Dewar has mimesis in the form of onomatopoeia, using non-lexical syllables to represent bird noises (see Campbell 1860-2 I, p.57).

Earlier in this same tale, the giant must cut his way through a black thorn wood. Speaking to a hooded crow, the giant decides to leave his axe and wood knife behind. In response, the hooded crow threatens '*MA DH' FHAGAS … goididh sinn' iad*' ('IF YOU DO … we will steal them') (Campbell 1860-2 I, p.44; my own translation). Again the unusual capitalisation in the Gaelic transcription implies mimesis, a reading which is supported by Campbell's footnote which asserts that the 'principal Gaelic vowels bear some resemblance to the cawing of a hoodie. They are all broad A.' (1860-2 I, p.33). In addition to this, in his notes on the tale '*Murchag a's Mionachag*' ('Moorachug and Meenachug') Campbell adds the note,

> the speech of the Hoodie is always a very close imitation of his note. In another version she says, 'CUIR CRIADH RIGHIN RUADH RIS--Put tough red clay to it;' and the gull said, 'CUIR POLL BOG RIS--Put soft mud to it;' which is rather the speech of some other bird.
>
> (1860–2 I, p.161)

Similarly '*Ursgeul na Feannaig*' ('The Tale of the Hooded Crow'), transcribed by Hector MacLean from the dictation of Ann MacGilvray in April 1859, provides another example of the use of broad vowel sounds and bilabial consonants in imitation of the hooded crow's call. The eponymous '*feannaig*' ('hooded crow') (Dwelly 2001, s.v. *feannaig*) asks the same question to three sisters: '*Am pòs thu mise*' ('Will you marry me?') (Campbell 1860-2 I, p.67; my own translation). The first two refuse him, however the third accepts adding ''*s bòidheach am beathach an fheannag*' ('a pretty creature is the hoodie') (Campbell 1860-2 I, p.67 & p.63). In the English translation, Campbell gives the hooded crow's question both phonetically, and in English: 'M-POS-U-MI, Wilt thou wed me?' (1860-2 I, p.63); again possibly using capitalisation as an indication that the auditory value of '*Am pòs thu mise*' is mimetically significant. The repetitive phrase ''*S fhad' o b'e e*' ('It's long since it was') is translated in a similar manner in the fable '*An Fheannag 's am Madadh Ruadh*' ('The Hoodie and the Fox'), also transcribed by Hector MacLean (Campbell 1860-2 II, p.315). Given John Francis Campbell's stated methodology, discussed earlier, in which he 'begged for the very words used by the people who told the stories, with nothing added, or omitted, or altered' (1860-2 I, p.xxi), it seems probable that his use of capitalisation and phonetic translations are intended to be an unvarnished reproduction of the narrator's use of voice and not a later embellishment incorporated at the transcription or translation stages.

Conclusions

Alan Bruford has highlighted the importance of studying 'not only words but gestures, asides to the audience, tones of voice for

different characters, and every trick of the trade used in this very dramatic art-form' (1994, p.27); in short the paralinguistic qualities of traditional Gaelic folktales. Informed by comparable tales recorded in a purely oral format, one may gain an insight into the mimetic voice as it may have been used in the recitation of folktales now preserved only in published, literary sources. The manipulation of vocal tone, quality, pitch and volume in imitation of birds' cries not only highlights the anthropomorphosis of bird characters in oral narratives, but also reflects the theriomorphosis (or adoption of animal characteristics) of the tale's narrator in the imaginational 'time and space set apart from the rest of life' (Muhawi & Kanaana 1989, p.6) in which the folktale operates.

The fantastical and fabular genres of storytelling in post-Enlightenment Europe have mostly been associated with children's genres; a migration which is perhaps symptomatic of the rejection of irrationality and the imaginative in literature more generally since this time (Cosslett 2006, pp.1-9). This trend is also in evidence in Gaelic storytelling: John Francis Campbell notes that 'children of all sizes listened to them', but adds that many traditional Gaelic tales 'have been despised by educated men … The clergy, in some places, had condemned the practice, and there it had fallen into disuse' (Campbell 1860-2 I, pp.xxvii & xxi), pointing towards the diminishing number of traditional storytellers in the late nineteenth century. Despite this, however, of the one-hundred and sixty-three tales and variants published by John Francis Campbell in *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, sixty-seven (or thirty-eight percent)

contain talking animal characters or human to animal transformations.[3]

The investigation into vocal manipulation for the purposes of mimesis outlined above highlights the importance of audio-visual recording in the analysis of orally collected material, and in the critical scrutiny of oral traditions more generally. The pre-eminence of these materials should not, however, disqualify the examination of published transcriptions of orally collected material. As the above investigation has sought to demonstrate, a number of paralinguistic allusions can be identified which may reveal aspects of vocal or physical performance, thus augmenting the inquiry into the use of voice in the performance of oral narratives.

Abbreviations for Manuscript or Audio Materials

CW   Carmichael–Watson Manuscript Collection
EUL   Edinburgh University Library
NLS   National Library of Scotland
SA   Sound Archive
SSS   School of Scottish Studies

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[3] I.e. tales 1, 1(var.2), 1(var.3), 2, 2(var.2), 2(var.3), 2(var.4), 2(var.5), 2(var.6), 2 (var.7), 2(var.8), 3, 3(var.2), 4, 4(var.2), 4(var.3), 4(var.4), 4(var.5), 4(var.6), 8, 9, 10(var.3), 11, 12, 13, 14, 14(var.2), 16, 17a (fables 1, 3-5, 7-9, 11-13, and 18-21), 17(var.3), 17(var.6), 39, 40(var.3), 41, 41(var.2), 41(var.3), 43, 44, 46, 46(var.4), 51, 52, 58, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 70, 71, 72, 76 and 81.

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