"Sgeulachd a' Chait Bhig 's a' Chait Mhóir"*

A Gaelic Variant of 'The Two Travellers' (AT 613)

JOHN SHAW

Bha siod ann: bha cat beag 's cat mór ann. 'S e naidheachd—sgeulachd—na Banrighinne Ruaidheadh a bh'ann: bha nighean aice. Agus ge b'e dh'fheumadh i, nuair reachadh an t-searbhanta amach dha'n t-sabhal a h-uile madainn dh'fheumadh i cupan do bhainne blàth fhaighinn a h-uile madainn nuair thigeadh i astaigh. Ach madainn a bha seo bha 'n cat beag agus an cat mór 'san t-sabhal agus dh'fhalbh iad agus chaidh iad 'sa mhiosair bainne—'sa chuman—miosair bainne bh'aig an t-searbhant' agus bhuail i *slap* orra car . . . an cumail as. Agus dh'fhalbh ròineagan dha'n fhionndadh as na cait, agus chaidh iad 'sa bhainne. Agus cha tug i sian fos dear 's nuair thànaig i astaigh thug i cupa dha'n bhainne do nighean na Banrighinne Ruaidh. Ach, a Dhia, nuair a ghabh an nighean am bainne nach tànaig na ròineagan beò 'na broinn agus dh'fhàs an nighean tinn. Ach co-dhiùbh cha robh fhios ac' . . . Dia 's aig Moire dé bh'air an nighinn.

Ach bha 'n sin seann duine bochd ann. Bha e dall agus e coiseachd a' rathaid agus bha a bhràthair còmhla ris agus cha b'urrainn dha 'n aire thoirt dha agus chuir e taobh a' rathaid e agus cuman uisge aige le thaobh. Agus an sin bha cìobair ann agus a dhròbh chaorach aige agus chunnaic na caoraich an duine seo agus ghabh iad an t-eagal. Ach thuirt an cìobair leis an duine bhochd bha 'na shuidhe seo 's e dall,

"A dhuine, chuir thu 'n t-eagal air na caoraich."

"Chan urrainn dhomhsa cuideach'. Tha mise dall," thuirt esan.

"O, ma tha," thuirt an duine, "a dhuine bhochd, thig astaigh."

Agus chuir e astaigh 'san t-sabhal aig a' Bhanrighinne Ruadh e.

Ach cha robh e fad astaigh a sin nuair thànaig an cat beag 's an cat mór astaigh dha'n t-sabhal. Agus thuirt an cat beag ris a' chat mhór,

"Tha nighean na Banrighinne Ruaidh glé thinn an diugh. Agus cha'n eil fhios aca dé [an tinneas fo Dhia][1] nan Gràsan a th'oirre.

"Ach tha fhios agam-as dé th'oirre," thuirt esan. "Bha mis' an dé 'san t-sabhal ann a' seo agus thànaig an t-searbhant' amach agus i leagail. Chuir mis' amach an goban bochd 'sa mhiosair bhainn' a bh'aice agus thug i buille dhomh aist' agus chaidh na ròineagan agam ann agus shluig i na ròineagan agam agus tha trì piseagan 'na broinn."

"O uill," thuirt an seann chat an uair sin, "cha'n eil fhios a bheil leigheas sam bith air a sin."

* Recorded 19/1/78 from Flora MacLellan, Broad Cove, Inverness County, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. (See page 3 for translation.)

"Tha. Tha uisge 'san tobar ud shios," thuirt esan—an tobar an leithid seo do dh'àite—"agus 's e an aon rud a nì feum oirre. 'S cha'n eil sian nach leighis e agus tha iad a' gràdhainn gun leighis e na doill fhéin cuideachd."

Cha robh fhios aca gu robh 'n seann duine seo astaigh idir. Dh'éisd am fear seo leis 's nuair a chaidh na cait amach dh'fhalbh e. Agus dh'fhalbh e air a ghlùinean 's bha e feuchainn 's a' feuchainn 's a' feuchainn. Mu dheireadh thànaig e gu tobar. 'S uill, tha seans' gur e seo an tobar a bh'ann. 'S bhog e a làmh 'san tobar 's chuir e 'n t-uisg' air a shùilean 's nach d'fhuair e a fhradhrarc! Cha robh fhios aige dé bha ceàrr 's ghlan e a rithist e 's bha fhradhrarc cho math 's a bha i riamh. Dh'fhalbh e 'n sin gu taigh suas an sin agus dh'iarr e soitheach orr' anns an cuireadh e uisge: gu robh toil aige deochan uisge a ghabhail. *All right,* thug bean an taighe sin dha 'n soitheach agus dh'fhalbh e gu àite na Banrighinne Ruaidh. 'S o, dh'fhairich e glaodhaich 's gearain astaigh 'san taigh agus chaidh e astaigh.

"'S cha chreid mi fhìn," thuirt esan, "nach eil duine tinn agaibh a' seo."

"Tha," thuirt a' Bhanrighinne Ruadh, "tha 'n nighean agam tinn bho chionn leithid seo do dh'ùine 's tha mi 'n deagh' a h-uile seud a chosg leath' is tha e fàirlinn orm a leigheas."

"O, uill, nach eil sin uamhasach ait. Am faod mise faicinn?" thuirt esan.

"O, 's tu a dh'fhaodas. Cha dean thu cron na feum dhi," thuirt ise.

Dh'fhalbh e 's thug e amach seo as a phòca na ge b'e c'àite robh e aige.

"Tha stuth agam-as," thuirt esan, "an seo agus tha iad a' gràdhainn gun dean e leigheas do dhuine sam bith agus am biodh gràin agad-as air a ghabhail?"

"O, nach fhaod mi a ghabhail?" thuirt ise. "Cha dean e sian orm co-dhiùbh. Cha bhi mi ach mar a tha mi."

Ghabh i pàirt dha'n uisge. A Dhia dh'fhairich i rud neònach 's leum piseag mhór ghlas amach as a broinn. O, ghabh i eagal a bha gàbhaidh 's,

"Ciamar a tha thu an dràsda?"

"Tha mi beagan na's fheàrr," thuirt ise. Bha i tinn fhathast.

"Uill, dh' fhaoidte gum b'fheàrr dhut beagan eile dhe ghabhail," thuirt esan.

Ghabh i beagan eile dhan uisge seo 's leum piseag mhór, bhàn amach as a broinn. Bha i 'n uair sin . . . ghabh i 'n t-eagal ach air a shon sin bha i na b'fheàrr.

"Dh'fhaoidte gun gabhadh tu dileag eile dha'n uisge seo," thuirt esan. Ghabh i sin 'us leum piseag mhór, dhubh amach as a broinn.

O, bha i 'n uair sin cho math 's a ghabhadh i agus bha i uamhasach 's bha i leighiste 's bha i cho toilichte 's bha a' Bhanrighinne Ruadh cho toilicht' as a h-uile sian a bh'ann.

"Ach dé a nist am pàigheadh a bheir mi dhut?" thuirt àsan ris an fhear ann a seo.

"Uill, chan eil bhuams' ach deise mhath aodaich," thuirt esan, "agus beagan do dh'airgead."

O, cha deanadh sin an gnothach. Bha nighean na Banrighinne Ruadh, bha toil aic' am fear seo fhaighinn ri pòsadh. O, uill, bha esan tuilleadh is bochd 's siod 's seo ach cha dhùineadh is' a beul gus an d'fhuair i e le phòsadh.

Uill, bha e 'n sin air a dhreasadh 's dh'fhalbh iad amach agus iad tha mi cinnteach ann

an *coach*. Agus thachair caraide dha fhéin air do dhuine bochd air choireiginn agus dh'fhoighneachd e dha,

"Ciamar a fhuair thus' a bhith cho beairteach 's cho dreaste sin?"

"O, uill," thuirt esan, "thig astaigh còmhla liom 'sa' *wagon* (na 'sa' *choach* a seo na gc b'e dé bh'ann) agus na biodh e cur trioblaid idir ort dé chuir mise cho math seo."

Agus cha dhùineadh am fear seo a bheul gus an d'fhuair e amach ciamar a fhuair e a bhith cho beairteach.

"*All right,*" thuirt esan, "bi falbh. Cha bhi thu còmhla riumsa tuillidh." 'S dh'inns' e dha nuair a fhuair e 'm beairteas, gun do chaill e a fhradhrarc, gun deach e a shabhal na Banrighinne Ruadh, 's na cait a bha astaigh, agus gun do dh'inns' iad dha mun tobar seo.

All right. Dh'fhalbh am fear seo 's bha e fhéin 'na shuidhe taobh a' rathaid mhóir agus dé rinn e ach thug e na sùilean as fhéin! Thug e na sùilean as fhéin agus shuidh e taobh a' rathaid mhóir 's cuman uisge le thaobh. 'S thànaig an aon chiobair mun cuairt 's na caoraich aig'.

"O, a dhuine bhochd," thuirt esan, "chuir thu an t-eagal air mo chuid chaorach."

"O, chan urrainn dhomhsa sin a chuideachadh. Chan eil fradhrarc agam," thuirt esan.

"O, uill," thuirt esan, "mura h-eil cuiridh mi 'n ath . . . ach cha chreid mi nach tu fhéin a thug na sùilean asad fhéin," thuirt e.

All right. Dh'fhalbh e 's thog e (e) 's chuir e 'n sabhal na Banrighinne Ruaidh shuas e. Agus cha robh e fada 'n sin gus an tànaig an dà chat astaigh 's bha iad a' bruidhinn. Thuirt an cat beag ris,

"Tha mis' a' deanadh dheth gu bheil cuideiginn astaigh a seo ag éisdeachd leinn."

"Saoil a bheil?" thuirt am fear eile.

"Tha," thuirt an cat beag. 'S dh'fhalbh iad mun cuairt dha'n t-sabhal. Mu dheireadh fhuair iad a' fear a bha seo 's gun sùilean ann 's dh'éirich iad air 's dh'ith iad e. 'S chan eil fhios agam-as—dh'fhàg mis' iad an sin.

'S ann aig mo mhàthair a chuala mi bho chionn fhada i.

The Small Cat and the Big Cat

(Translation)

There was once a small cat and a big cat: the story—tale—concerns the Red Queen who had a daughter. And whatever the princess needed, when the maidservant went out to the barn each morning she had to get a cup of warm milk when the maidservant came back in. But this one morning the small cat and the big cat were in the barn and they went and got into the milk vessel—the milk pail—that the maidservant was using and she gave them a slap to keep them out. And some hairs from the cats' fur came out and landed in

the milk. But the maidservant noticed nothing and when she came back in she gave a cup of the milk to the Red Queen's daughter. But, Heavens! When the girl drank the milk what happened but the hairs came alive in her belly and she grew ill and they didn't know in the name of God and Mary what was wrong with her.

Now there was a poor, old man. He was blind, walking along the road with his brother. His brother could not take care of him, so he left him at the roadside with a vessel of water beside him. And along came a shepherd with a drove of sheep, and when the sheep saw the man they panicked. So the shepherd addressed the poor, blind man where he sat, saying,

"My good man, you have frightened the sheep."

"I can't help that. I'm blind," said he.

"O, in that case, my poor fellow," said the other man, "come in here."

And he led him into the barn belonging to the Red Queen.

But he wasn't in there for long before the small cat and the big cat came into the barn. The small cat said to the big cat,

"The Red Queen's daughter is very ill today and they don't know in the name of God above what her illness is.

"But I know what is wrong with her," said he. "I was here in the barn yesterday and the maidservant had come out and was milking. I put my poor little face into her milk pail and she knocked me out of it and my hairs landed in the milk. The princess swallowed the hairs and now there are three kittens in her belly."

"Well, well," said the old cat, "no one knows whether there is any cure for that."

"There is. There is water in the well down there," said he,—the well that was somewhere [nearby]—"and that's the only thing that will help her. There is nothing it won't cure; people say it will cure the blind as well."

The cats didn't know that the old man was in there at all. The old man listened to this and when the cats went out he started off on his knees feeling and groping around. At last he came to a well and it seems that was the very well. He dipped his hand in the well, applied the water to his eyes and didn't he regain his sight! He didn't know what was wrong so he bathed it again and his sight was as good as ever. So he went up to a house above and asked them for a container in which to put water: he wanted a drink of water. Very well, the woman of the house gave him the container and he set out to the Red Queen's dwelling. He heard cries and complaints inside so he went in.

"I believe," he said, "that you have a sick person here."

"Yes," replied the Red Queen. "My daughter has been ill for some time and I have spent everything on her and still I've failed to cure her."

"Well, well. Isn't that curious. May I see her?" he said.

"O, indeed you may. You'll neither hurt her nor help her," she said.

So he went and took this out of his pocket, or wherever he kept it.

"I have a substance here," he said, "which they say will cure anyone. Would you object to taking some?"

"Why shouldn't I?" replied the girl. "It won't hurt me anyway. I'll only be as I am now."

She took some of the water, and by God she felt something strange and a large grey kitten leapt out of her belly. Well, she took a terrible fright, and,

"How are you now?"

"I feel a little better," she said, but she was still sick.

"Well, perhaps you had better have a little more of it," he said.

So she took a little more of the water and a large white kitten leapt out of her belly. She was . . . she took a fright that time but nevertheless she felt better.

"Perhaps you could have another little sip of this water," he suggested. So she did and a large, black kitten leapt out of her belly.

By then she was as healthy as could be—extremely so—and completely cured as well. She was so pleased and the queen was so pleased with everything.

"What payment shall I give you now?" they asked the man [standing] there.

"Well, all I wish is a good suit of clothes," he replied, "and a small sum of money."

But that would not do: the Red Queen's daughter wanted to have him in marriage. Well, he said he was too poor for that, and so on, but she would not shut her mouth until she got to marry him.

Well, he was dressed up then and off they went I'm sure in a coach. And he met a friend of his who was just a poor man and he asked him,

"How did you manage to become so wealthy and so well dressed?"

"Well," he replied, "come into the wagon (or the coach ot whatever it was) with me and do not trouble yourself any more with what made me so well off here."

But the other man would not shut his mouth until he learned how he had managed to become so wealthy.

"Very well," he told him, "but then you must be on your way and not stay around me any more." So he told him when he had come by his wealth: how he had lost his sight and had gone to the barn belonging to the Red Queen and about the cats inside who had told him about the well.

All right. The other man went and sat beside the main road and what did he do but put out his own eyes! He put out his eyes and sat beside the main road with a vessel of water beside him, and the same shepherd came around with the sheep.

"O, my poor man," he said, "you have frightened my sheep."

"O, I cannot help that. I have no sight," replied the other.

"Well, in that case I'll put the next . . . but I think it was you who put out your own eyes," he said.

All right. The shepherd went and took him and put him up above in the Red Queen's barn. And he wasn't there long when the two cats came in and started talking. The small cat said,

"I believe there is someone in here listening to us."

"Do you think so?" said the other cat.

"I do," said the small cat. So they did the rounds of the barn and at last they found the man without his eyes and they attacked him and ate him. And I don't know—I left them there.

I heard this story from my mother long ago.

Commentary

This is the only known Cape Breton example of AT 613 'The Two Travellers', an international tale with a wide distribution and a considerable literary history.[2] A further recording of the tale was made (22/8/88) from the same informant by D. A. MacDonald with the writer, for the School of Scottish Studies (SA1988/48), showing minor changes in the sequence of episodes between the two sessions.[3] No other Gaelic versions have been recorded from Nova Scotia reciters, nor is the tale among those known by storytellers to have existed there earlier.[4] Flora MacLellan gives her mother and her mother's grandmother, among others, as her sources. Her mother was descended from Gillies' at the head of Loch Morar and from MacPhersons in Moidart, in the Western Highlands. Much of the family tradition recorded from Flora and her late brother Archie Dan derives from Morar; thus the Cape Breton story very likely has its origins in Mainland Scotland.

The tale-type is likewise rare in Scotland, with a single Gaelic example, '*Sùil-a-Sporan agus Sùil-a-Dia*', first recorded from the South Uist reciter Donald Alasdair Johnson, Ardmore, by Angus John MacDonald for the School of Scottish Studies (SA1969/120/A1). A subsequent recording from Mr. Johnson was made by Donald R. MacDonald (SA 1970/214 A1), and a filmed version was later recorded by Donald A. MacDonald and the School's technical staff (VA 1973/1). For purposes of comparison the version recorded in 1969 and published soon after (Angus John MacDonald: 1972) can be summarised as follows:

> Sùil-a-Sporan and Sùil-a Dia live together in the same house. Sùil-a-Sporan believes in his purse while Sùil-a-Dia places his faith in God. An argument arises where Sùil-a-Sporan maintains that the purse will supply anything for him and Sùil-a-Dia answers that even if Sùil-a-Sporan is to put out both his eyes God will replace them. Sùil-a-Sporan blinds Sùil-a-Dia and leaves him there.
>
> The cats with their king Gugtrabhad gather that night in a nearby house and the *Piseag Shalach Odhar* [Scruffy Dun-coloured Kitten] gives them the news of a well containing water that will cure all afflictions, including blindness.[5] Sùil-a-Dia, on hands and knees, finds his way into the house and overhears the news of the well and the directions to it. After the cats fall asleep he finds the well, applies the water to his eyes and his sight is restored.
>
> He returns home to Sùil-a-Sporan and Sùil-a-Sporan asks him to go to the same place and blind him. Sùil-a-Sporan reaches the cats' house and conceals himself under the same tub that covered Sùil-a-Dia. The *Piseag Shalach Odhar* arrives with the news that someone was present

the night before, overheard their conversation and is healed because of it. The cats search the house, eventually finding Sùil-a-Sporan [whom they call Mac Mharais], and tear him to pieces, killing him.

Sùil-a-Dia finds the body the next day and removes it. He returns one night and sets fire to the house, burning the cats to death.

A look at the numerous variants of the type recorded in Ireland and further afield makes it clear that neither of the Scottish Gaelic versions has retained the entire story. The Cape Breton rendition does not mention the cause of blindness or the motivating religious and philosophical argument between the two brothers/travellers concerning the belief in God or money. Likewise the episode of the princess' illness and her cure is not contained in the South Uist story. Both episodes, however, are present in slightly altered but recognisable form in Duncan Williamson's rendition of 'True and Untrue' (recited in English and the only other known example of the type recorded in Scotland)[6] and in those published in Ireland.[7] The absence of the introductory quarrel/wager is unique among the published Gaelic versions available, as is the absence of the illness and cure episode with one minor exception in each case.[8] On this combined evidence we may regard the absence of the episodes in Scottish Gaelic as a secondary development.

If we accept the likelihood that the two episodes above were dropped at some time from the South Uist and Cape Breton stories—both recorded in the latter twentieth-century—the main differences between them are those of omission rather than story content. Furthermore they are linked by an episode which appears elsewhere in Highland tradition. In a passage recorded during the nineteenth century describing the demonic properties of cats the slap given to the cat drinking the milk in the barn is paralleled in an account of a woman who catches a strange cat drinking milk in her kirn and raps its nose against the floor. It goes on to describe the cat's return that night with two others:

One said they would take the back of their paws to the woman, but the other said the front of their paws. The resolution was carried by the casting vote of the injured cat, and the woman was torn to shreds (J. G. Campbell 1902: 39-40).

The end of the passage corresponds closely to the cats' treatment of Sùil-a-Sporan in the South Uist story:

Thòisich iad air sliobadh Mac Mharais aig an teine—Sùil-a-Sporan—agus thòisich cùl a spòige, agus thug iad treis air a sin.

"Siuthadaibh a nis," orsa Gugtrabhad, ors ise, "gabhaidh a cùl 's a h-aghaidh," ors ise.

Thòisich na fir air "cùl 's a h-aghaidh," 's ma dheireadh ma'n do stad iad cha robh greim air fhàgail a Shùil-a-Sporan nach robh air a reubadh as a chèile, agus chaidh crìoch air Sùil-a-Sporan bochd ann a shin.

'They started to stroke MacMharais by the fire—Sùil-a-Sporan—and they began with the back of the paw and they went on like that for a while.

"Right, now," said Gugtrabhad, "try both back and front."

The lads started with "back and front" and, at last, before they stopped, there wasn't a bit of Sùil-a-Sporan left that hadn't been torn to pieces, and that was the end of poor Sùil-a-Sporan'. (Angus John MacDonald 1972: 222-9)

Gugtrabhad (or Cugrabhad/Cugarbhad), king of the cats, in the South Uist version, is

known elsewhere as well. Fr Allan McDonald (McDonald 1958: 89) quotes a passage from an unidentified South Uist story: "*A phiseag bheag pheallach odhar, mharbh mo choin Cùgrabhad*", 'Shaggy little dun kitten, my dogs have killed Cugrabhad.' This is undoubtedly the answer given in a story recorded in late 1963 in South Uist titled *MacMhuirich agus na Cait Mhóra,* 'MacMhuirich and the Big Cats', where one of the famous family of bards while hunting with his dogs at Hàbharsal encounters Cugrabhat, a giant cat who fights with and beats his dogs. MacMhuirich, however, captures its kitten and fetches a great dog from Benbecula and the three dogs kill Cugrabhat. Returning home, he tells the kitten of the victory and the kitten, suddenly growing to the size of a stirk asks, "Did the dogs kill Cugrabhat?" MacMhuirich dons a suit of mail and cuts off its head with a sword.[9] Alexander Carmichael gave a similar reference (Carmichael 2: 263) with no location: ' "*Cugarbhad Mor righ nan cat,*"—Great Cugarvad, king of the cats is the title of a weird story full of graphic scenes and elliptical runes, interesting to the mythologist and the grammarian.' The name appears in English in a story from Ayrshire 'The Barn is Burning' (AT 1562A; also an international tale) where the mistress of the house requires the servant to call everything by extraordinary names, and the cat becomes Old Calgravatus.[10]

Leaving aside the question of the absent (or missing) episode of the princess'/king's illness and cure, the South Uist version shares as many features with some of the Irish variants as it does with that recorded in Cape Breton. In the case of one Ulster version (MacManus 1904) the number of shared features is even greater. Of some interest here is the concluding episode common only to the South Uist and one Connaught story (Hyde 1911) of the destruction of the building.[11]

The Cape Breton variant shows correspondences with its Irish counterparts, particularly with regard to the princess' illness and subsequent cure which are strikingly close. We should note that the episode is not confined to a single detail; it incorporates a causal sequence where a cat is struck or abused while trying to take milk or food and leaves its hair or spittle in milk taken by the princess who then falls ill with (usually) cats in her belly. She is then cured by the healing substances and expels them. The episode is found in one of the two published Ulster versions (MacManus 1904; the cause is not mentioned in the other) and in three of the four from Connaught (Hyde 1911; Ó Cadhain 1935; Ó Fotharta 1892).[12] None of the Munster stories contains this episode, or indeed describes the cause of the illness. A more general study of the available Irish material shows that variants from Ulster and Connaught have the closest affinities with those found in Scottish Gaelic and that the Munster stories show marked differences from all of the above.[13]

Evidence of a more general nature from outside the Gaelic world is also helpful in placing the Scottish Gaelic variants of the tale in their context. In his wide-ranging comparative study of the tale-type Christiansen notes the earliest traces in India—the central episode is in the *Pañcatantra*—perhaps from the first half millenium of our era (Christiansen 1916: 118; 191-2). Christiansen divides the mass of Asiatic and European variants into a popular, northern type (A-type), 'more like a real popular tale' (*op. cit.*: 144) and a southern, literary didactic type (B-type) with religious or moral content. The B-type

appears in Jewish tradition in Palestine in the tenth century, being used to illustrate *Proverbs* XI.8 ('The righteous is delivered out of trouble and the wicked cometh in his stead') and in *The Arabian Nights*, possibly from the fourteenth century. This literary type may have entered Europe through Hebrew tradition, and spread through its use as an *exemplum* (*op. cit.*: 162-3). The earliest appearance of the tale in Europe is in *Libro de los Gatos*, a Spanish collection of *exempla* from *c.*1300, and it may have been introduced to Europe at the time of the Crusades. It appears again as an *exemplum* cited by the Hungarian Oswald Pelbart in Timisoara in 1490. All the Southern European variants are derived from Christiansen's B-type (*op. cit.*: 152); the story appears in this form in the novelistic tales of Basile's *Pentamerone* (1637 edition).

In Gaelic tradition the tale adheres closely to the Southern European type[14] and is characterised by the presence of cats to represent the demonic aspects of the animals in the tale. Religious tales, including international types, enjoyed wide popularity in Ireland from medieval times, but there is no evidence to indicate when the tale arrived there. In Ireland as in mainland Europe *exempla* were used by the clergy to illustrate a moral or religious point and passed into the oral storytelling repertoire (Ó Súilleabháin: 18-19; Jackson 1936: 280); a number survive in Irish manuscripts (Greene 1961; Mac Niocaill 1955, 1966).

The literary and didactic antecedents of our tale in Ireland and Southern Europe provide some indications as to probable lines of transmission into Gaelic-speaking Scotland. Given the absence of written evidence of the tale in Scotland we cannot, of course, dismiss the possibility that it may have arrived there at any time from Ireland (or elsewhere) through regular processes of oral transmission as some international tales undoubtedly did. Bruford (1980: 49) notes there is no surviving written record of any complete *Märchen* in Scotland from before 1600, and the distribution patterns of similar tales on Scottish Gaelic territory, particularly *exempla*, suggest another possibility. In the Scottish and Cape Breton Gaelic-speaking areas, both rich territory for the folklore collector, tales of the *exemplum* type recorded are far from plentiful, both in number and in variety.[15] In terms of history and distribution an interesting parallel to 'The Two Travellers' is to be found in the *exemplum* AT 759A 'The Sinful Priest'. The story is in the *Gesta Romanorum*, a medieval collection of *exempla*,[16] and has survived into this century among Irish storytellers (Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen 1963: 97-8, 155; Ó Súilleabháin 1951). There are only three examples of the story in Scottish Gaelic known to me, all of them recorded relatively recently, from Nan MacKinnon of Vatersay; a Lewis reciter; and Joe Lawrence MacDonald of Boisdale, Cape Breton.[17]

One explanation for the relative rarity of our tale and other *exempla* in Gaelic Scotland worth examining is the possibility of their introduction to the Western Highlands and Islands by post-Reformation Irish missionaries in the seventeenth century. At the time of the beginning of the Irish Franciscan mission to Scotland in 1619 there were no Gaelic-speaking Catholic priests in the Highlands (Giblin 1964: viii), and Ireland was seen as the only source of missionaries with the necessary language and training. All the Franciscan

missionaries were from Ulster (Giblin 1964: xii) and their headquarters was the friary of Bonamargy in County Antrim. During the twenty-seven years of their mission in Scotland, extending from Kintyre in the south to the Mainland and Harris in the north, they were instructed to 'try diligently to improve their knowledge of the Scottish tongue; moral themes are to be propounded in their sermons . . .' ['*In Scotica lingua sedulo cavent proficere. Inter concionandum proponant aliqua moralia . . .*'] (*op. cit.*: 26-7). Unfortunately no record survives of the actual content of the sermons and their treatment of moral themes, but there is no reason to assume that the form and content of the sermons differed greatly from those delivered in Ulster or elsewhere in Ireland, once we accept that a large degree of cultural and linguistic unity in Gaeldom persisted into the early seventeenth century. A report in 1626 from missionary Fr Cornelius Ward gives an account of his work in Uist and Barra (*op. cit.*: 83-7) and describes religious dreams and minor miracles reported among the common people of those islands, which greatly facilitated his mission; the didactic nature of these recalls *exempla* and parables from medieval sources as well as recent oral tradition.[18]

Post-Reformation contacts between Highland Gaels and Irish clergy were also frequent in Ireland. Pilgrims from Barra are reported in 1593 to have customarily visited Croagh Patrick in Mayo (W. C. MacKenzie 1937: 193). Some fifty years later Fr Hegarty, a Franciscan in charge of the friary at Bonamargy reported to the Congregation of Propaganda in Rome that 'he has been guardian of the friary of Bonamargy for the past eight years, and that he has done just as much there in the work of converting the Scots as if he were actually labouring in Scotland itself, because Scots converted by him and his fellow missionaries or wishing to be converted flock to Bonamargy daily like bees to a hive; . . .' (Giblin 1964: 180).

Irish missionary activity continued through the latter half of the seventeenth century, most notably with Fr Duggan and the Lazarist Fr Francis White who died in 1679 (Bellesheim 1890: 82-6). During this time considerable activity seems to have taken place in Uist and Barra, and in Morar,[19] Arisaig and Moidart where Fr Ward had preached in 1636 (Giblin 1964: 172). These mainland districts were served by the missionaries active throughout the Highlands at the time, most if not all of whom were from Ireland (Blundell 1917: 135). Morar had a resident Irish priest between 1681 and 1704, and George Fanning, an Irish Dominican, left Arisaig around 1678 having served there for an unknown length of time (Blundell 1917: 87, 117). The need for more Gaelic-speaking Irish missionaries here and elsewhere was expressed in 1664 and again in 1665 by Fr Francis White in his requests to St Vincent of Paul (*op. cit.*: 117-18). During three-quarters of a century the missionaries preached to a large audience in the Western Highlands and the Isles. As early as 1633 Fr Ward claimed that the missionaries had made over 6,000 converts and baptised 3,000 (Giblin 1964: xi). His claims were regarded with scepticism for a time in Rome but were eventually accepted. The combined missionaries' reports indicate that the number of people converted and preached to was in the tens of thousands, and the mission took care not to neglect the aristocracy.

In the absence of datable texts in Scottish Gaelic of AT 613 and other *exempla*, or contemporary accounts of their being recited, our evidence cannot be more than circumstantial. If all, or most, *exempla* were introduced to the Highlands from Ireland during the seventeenth century it would fit well with what is known about the appearance of other similar stories in Scotland. During medieval times—and later, in Gaelic areas—the transmission and spread of tales involved a constant interplay between oral recitation and written sources (D. A. MacDonald 1989: 185). Bruford (1980: 50) notes that tales known from medieval Irish sources generally appear in Scotland in a form which reflects post-medieval manuscripts. Like many of the hero-tales *exempla* had a literary basis, and the occasions were ready-made for them to be presented to a wide audience. According to Bruford's study of hero-tales (*op. cit.*) those which were likely to have been literary compositions of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries could gain the popularity and variety of most *Märchen* among oral reciters. If *exempla* entered the oral repertoire in Scotland in much the same way, we may suppose that their limited distribution is a result of their being delivered orally by travelling missionaries in sermons over a far shorter period than that which witnessed the reading aloud from manuscripts.

NOTES

1 This is unclear on the initial recording. It was added by the informant 17 October 1988.

2 See Thompson 1946: 80-1.

3 In the 1988 recording, the *Banrighinn Ruadh*, 'Red-haired Queen', is a king (*righ*) and the blow to the cat is administered by a male farm-hand. A seer (*fiosaiche*) tells the royal family the cause of the illness, which can only be cured by a man who tells the princess a true story. The blind man returns to his brother, tells him what he overheard in the barn, then finds the well with the healing water and his sight returns. The curing of the princess and the fate of the other brother are as given in the earlier recording. The substitutions over a ten year period of the king and farmhand servant suggest how easily similar differences between Irish variants may have arisen.

4 It does not appear to be among the list of names and fragments of the 70 or so lost tales that I have noted from Cape Breton informants. The Nova Scotia Micmac story 'The Honest Man and the Rogue' (Rand 1894: 120-5) clearly belongs to the same tale-type but does not appear to be closely related to our Gaelic variant. It may well have arrived with Acadian storytellers or clergy; 9 Franco-American variants have been noted (Aarne-Thompson 1961: 223).

5 VA 1973/1: ". . . *chan eil seòrsa anschocair a th'air an t-saoghal," ors ise, "nach leighis e . . .*" ". . . there is no affliction in the world," said she, "that it won't heal . . ." Compare Flora MacLellan above: " *'S chan eil sian nach leighis e agus tha iad a' gràdhainn gun leighis e na doill fhèin cuideachd* ", "There is nothing it won't cure; people say it will cure the blind as well." Angus John MacDonald (1972: 224-5) after a similar passage has "*. . . agus ged a . . . chailleadh tu do . . . fhradharc fhèin gu . . . na faigheadh tu suathadh dhe 'n uisg' ad gu faigheadh tu fradharc.*" ". . . and that even if you were to lose your sight you would get it back if you got a rub of that water."

6 See Appendix below.

7 See References below.

8 De Bhaldraithe (1966) gives a fragment which ends with the beginning of the cat's story. Hyde (1911) supplies an introduction which does not belong to the tale-type. The tale proper begins with a group of mischievous boys, except for the fool among them, being blinded by a ball sent by an old woman whom

they have angered. In Ireland and indeed throughout Europe the tale is often combined with AT 1535 'The Rich and the Poor Peasant'.

9 SA1963/68 B5 Recorded from Mary Ann MacInnes, Stilligarry, S. Uist by Donald Archie MacDonald. The English summary is from the archives of the School of Scottish Studies. My thanks are due to D. A. MacDonald for drawing this to my attention.

10 Could Carmichael's description hint that the story may have belonged to that group which entered oral tradition from sixteenth- to eighteenth-century manuscripts? The reference to Calgravatus is from a letter kindly supplied by Dr Alan Bruford of the School of Scottish Studies. A Fife variant (*Tocher* 3 [1971]: 82-3) calls the cat 'Great Man of Crayantis'.

11 This would seem to be a 'logical' independent innovation except for the fact that the same feature occurs in Russian versions of the tale. According to Christiansen (1916: 154-5) it is connected with his southern B-type (see *infra*), to which all our Gaelic variants, with the possible exception of one from Munster, belong; see note 14 below.

12 In the Ulster variant the princess carries serpents instead of cats and is cured with healing water. In two of the Connaught tales where the episode occurs (Hyde 1911; Ó Cadhain 1935), the healing substance is a plant. De Bhaldraithe's variant ends before this point in the story.

13 Here we should bear in mind that the Irish variants available in publications represent only a small proportion of the total number recorded or in manuscripts. See the listings given in *The Types of Irish Folktale* (Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen 1963: 131-2). These were assembled as a result of the Irish Folklore Commission's massive collecting effort begun in the 30s and show a regional distribution similar to that suggested by the published sources: Ulster 24; Connaught 104; Munster 65; Leinster 7. Barring distortions arising from factors external to storytelling (*e.g.* the rapid demise of Irish in certain districts, or greater folktale-collecting activity in others) we may suppose that the tale enjoyed a particularly strong representation in Connaught, with variants which appear in Ulster and correspond closely with the two Scottish Gaelic examples.

14 *Na Trí Préacháin* (Ó Laoghaire 1908) seems to be an exception. The lack-of-water motif (*cf.* Duncan Williamson's story in the Appendix) and the appearance of crows instead of cats in the tale, both unique in the published literature from Ireland, are associated with Christiansen's northern A-type (Christiansen 1916: 144, 73).

15 See the tale-catalogue at the School of Scottish Studies *s.v. exempla*; MacNeil 1987: 464.

16 So also is the *exemplum* edited by MacNiocaill (1955) from a late-fifteenth-century manuscript.

17 Nan MacKinnon: SA1965/18/B11; the Lewis reciter: John MacInnes 1983: 227-8; Joe Lawrence MacDonald (of South Uist and Barra descent): 212A1 rec. 2/5/79 by the writer. See also Jackson 1936: 276. An interesting exception is AT 910B 'The Servant's Good Counsels' which, by comparison, is popular in Gaelic Scotland (Aarne-Thomson 1961: 313-14; MacNeil 1987: 202-9, 464; with some 20 cards in the SS Tale Archive) as well as being abundantly represented in Irish tradition (O Súilleabháin and Christiansen: 175-6).

18 The Franciscans, along with other mendicant orders, recognised from medieval times the advantages of incorporating *exempla* into a preaching tradition intended to reach large audiences (Welter 1927: 133).

19 Bishop Nicholson notes in a report on his visit to Uist in 1700 that the three (Catholic) schools in the Highlands were in Uist, Barra and Morar (Blundell 1917: 28). By then Morar was recognised as a meeting place for Catholic missionaries in the Highlands.

APPENDIX

The summary below is of a story from the Archives of the School of Scottish Studies, recorded from Duncan Williamson by Linda Williamson (*née* Headlee) at Tarvit Farm, Cupar, Fife, in August 1976 (SA1976/140). It is given here with their permission.

Duncan remembers hearing the story from a close relative, Willie Williamson, who spoke both English and Gaelic. This version deserves to be studied on its own, for it

differs markedly from the others from Scotland given above. Comparative evidence from Christiansen's study reveals a strong affiliation with a group of variants of a popular, non-literary origin (A-type) frequent in Northern Europe: within this group the greatest similarity seems to be to variants found in Scandinavia. No examples of the tale-type are known to have been recorded in England or English-speaking North America.

True and Untrue are brothers. True does not lie, but Untrue lies and does many bad things. Their father sends them out to make a living. They quarrel over food and Untrue blinds True with a burning coal. True climbs a tree and the animals gather below him—it is the 1st of May—to tell stories. Fox tells of a blind king who would give a fortune to see again, and that a dewdrop from a buttercup squeezed into his eyes on the 1st of May will cure him. Wolf tells of a healing well blocked by a bullfrog on a stepping stone, and Hedgehog tells of the tree with the Fruit of Happiness padlocked by a wizard.

After the animals leave True descends, finds the dew from a buttercup and regains his sight. True takes more of the dew with him. He finds the king, who offers him riches which he declines, and cures him. He tells the king how he was blinded by Untrue, and marries the king's daughter. True kills the black bullfrog under the stone at the Well of Health, its curative properties are restored, and he is rewarded with gold. In the next village he cuts the chain binding the Tree of Happiness and is rewarded again with gold.

At the castle True sees his brother Untrue, now an old beggarman. True does not punish him, but tells him his story. It is exactly one year since True was blinded. Untrue climbs the same tree and the animals gather below, but determine not to share their secrets from that night on. Untrue is heartbroken, slips out of the top of the tree and breaks his neck. True becomes king.

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