

# A Bawdy New Year's Rhyme from Gaelic Scotland

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The primary purpose of this paper\* is to improve our understanding of a difficult New Year's rhyme, Text H below, whose original was first published in *The Gaelic Otherworld* (Black 2005). In the course of contextualising it a number of emendments will be proposed to the translation of two other New Year's rhymes, Texts G1 and G2 below, which appeared in *Tocher* no. 20 (1975: 144–45), under the title 'Duan Calluinn: Hogmanay Poem'.

*The Gaelic Otherworld* consists basically of a work on Gaelic traditions written by the Rev. John Gregorson Campbell of Tiree (JGC) in and around 1874. It was first published as two books, *Superstitions of the Highlands & Islands* (JG Campbell 1900) and *Witchcraft & Second Sight in the Highlands & Islands* (JG Campbell 1902). The text which is the primary focus of the present article appeared (in translation only) in the chapter 'The Celtic Year' (JG Campbell 1902: 224–307), to which my attention was drawn by Margaret Bennett in 1983 after I had given a paper in a School of Scottish Studies seminar series on the calendar.

JGC died in 1891. A few years later, when Alexander Carmichael was in the process of bringing out *Carmina Gadelica* in a sumptuous two-volume edition at his own expense, JGC's sister Jessy decided to have something done about publishing her late brother's collection of traditions. James Macle hose, the Glasgow university printer, agreed to do it for her, but his strategy was timid. He divided it into two small books so that he could test the market before committing himself fully, and stripped away the Gaelic originals of all texts longer than one stanza. JGC may have inadvertently made this easy by putting them in an appendix.

Both books were a success, as they deserved to be. Macle hose, feeling guilty perhaps about the appendix, showed it to George Henderson in Glasgow, who showed it to Alexander Carmichael in Edinburgh, who made a copy of it in his own hand before sending it back to Glasgow, where it disappeared. The copy is now MS 241 in the Carmichael Watson Collection in Edinburgh University Library. Words cannot express my delight when I found it in 2004. This then is why the Gaelic originals of JGC's longer texts appear in the book edited in 2005 even though they were dropped from those published in 1900 and 1902.

In most cases the text of the originals that I put into *The Gaelic Otherworld* was lightly edited by me for spelling and punctuation. The same applies to JGC's printed works, except that there were a remarkable number of typographic errors, such as 'wine' for 'urine', which I also had to correct. But in a few cases, where the material was particularly difficult, I gave Carmichael's text exactly as it stood in the manuscript, along with JGC's translation, thus exposing any dysfunction to the full view of the reader, and I attempted to deal with it in my commentary. Of our Text H, which was particularly challenging, I was forced to conclude (Black 2005: 579):

I have chosen to present the Gaelic text unedited, exactly as it stands in the manuscript – it requires more detailed commentary than is possible here, and the text which gave rise to Campbell's translation will be more helpful for present purposes than one which raises fresh questions. There are a number of things which I do not understand.

\* Based on one given as part of the Traditional Cosmology Society's seminar series in the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies on 6 November 2007

The process of ‘detailed commentary’ demands prior contextualisation, so at this point we must take a step back and look more broadly at the genre.

A *duan Callainn, rann Callainn* or New Year’s rhyme was spoken or sung on New Year’s night to gain admittance to a house. That is why its characteristic ending is *Fosgail ’s leig a-staigh mi*: “Open and let me in.” It is about opening doors; whether this may be characterised as ‘appropriate metaphor’ or ‘imitative magic’ should not detain us here, but it is certainly an ‘entry ritual’ as defined by Neill Martin (354–55).

The need for a rhyme was common to everyone, but at New Year there seem to have been at least two sorts of people going about. One was adult friends and neighbours bearing gifts. The other was young folk and strangers wearing masks and long white shirts or women’s gowns and making a lot of noise, led by a person wearing an animal skin who represented the sacrificial scapegoat of Leviticus 16. His companions yelled and walloped the skin with sticks to make as much of a drumming noise as possible. They went round the outside of a house three times sunwise, beating at the walls before banging on the door. In the case of island houses where it was possible to walk around the top of the wall, the rhymes show them clambering up to the left of the door, dancing, shouting and banging their way around the thatch, clambering down to the right of the door, and doing the same again twice more. Since they were liable to be drunk and may have been rogues, beggars or thieves, it must have been frightening to the people inside. When they came to the door and spoke their rhymes, the leader produced a *caisean* or *caisean-uchd* (a sheep’s dewlap or similar piece of meat) which was then singed at the fire and sniffed by everyone in the family to symbolise a year of plenty to come (Black 2005: 530–31, 575–78).

There are many *duain Challainn* on record. I gave references to thirty or so in *The Gaelic Otherworld* (Black 2005: 577). A complete collection of disparate texts might consist of fifty, and the addition of significant variants might bring the total up to a hundred. The best known and most fundamental example, at least in recent times, is typified by what we may call **Text A** (Shaw: 24):

*Tha mise nochd a’ tighinn dh’ur n-ionnsaigh*  
*A dh’ùrachadh dhuibh na Callaig;*  
*Cha ruig mi leas a bhith ’ga innse,*  
*Bha i ann ri linn mo sheanar.*  
*Mo chaisean Callaig ann am phòcaid,*  
*’S math an ceò thig as an fhear ud:*  
*Théid e deiseal air na pàisdean,*  
*Gu h-àraid air bean an taighe.*  
*Bean an taighe is i as fhiach e,*  
*Làmh a riarachadh na Callaig.*  
*Rud beag do shochair an t-samhraidh*

*A’ cumail geall air aig an aran.*  
*Fosgail an doras is lig a staigh mi!*

I am coming to-night to you  
 To renew for you Hogmanay.  
 I have no need to tell you of it,  
 It existed in the time of my grandfather;  
 My Hogmanay skin-strip is in my pocket  
 And good is the smoke that comes from it.  
 It will go sun-wise round the children  
 And especially round the housewife.  
 ’Tis the housewife who deserves it,  
 Hers is the hand for the ‘Hogmanay’.  
 A small thing of the good things of summer (e.g.  
 butter)  
 To keep a promise got with the bread.  
 Open the door and let me in!

It can be seen that the central themes here are the *caisean* and food.

Other examples have more of an edge. The following, which we may call **Text B**, is I think the oldest on record (Macleoid: 177–78). It portrays *faoighe* (‘thigging’ or ‘genteel begging’). This was where a person or young couple went around cadging food, seed, wool or other gifts to help them in a specific aim such as setting up house (Black 2001: xxix–xxxii). I have modernised the spelling; the translation is mine.

<i>DUAN CALLAINN, le Dòmhnall MacLeòid, air dha dhol mar chompanach maille ri bràthair a mhàthar do theaghlach an d'fhuair e cuireadh.</i>	A HOGMANAY ODE, By Donald MacLeod, on his having gone along as his uncle's companion, to a family by which he had been invited.	
<i>Ged as tric fhuair mi fialaidheachd 'Na do thalla, Cha d'fhàinig mi gu'n am-bliadhn' ann Riamh air Challainn; 'S tha mi 'n dùil gum bi mi riarachd' Mar as math leam — O tha mo ghille fo fhiasaig Gum faigh sinn fiach às ar damaist.</i>	Though I've often been entertained In your hall, Till this year I've never come here At Hogmanay; And I expect I'll be satisfied As I prefer — Because my servant-lad is bearded We'll get the value of our damage.	4 8
<i>O thàinig gorta sa bhliadhna, Chan iarr sinn riarachadh arain: Gabhaidh sinn bhuat stuth na Tòiseachd, O se as dòcha thogail gean oimn;</i>	As there has been famine during the year, We will not ask to be served with bread: We will accept a good dram of whisky, Because it's most likely to raise our spirits;	12
<i>O se as ilachdmhoire ri riaghladh, 'S o se as lionmhoire ri cheannach, Cha sàraich sinn duine fialaidh Air son spìochdaire dà bhannaig.</i>	Because it is more pleasant to serve, And because it is more widely available, We won't oppress a generous man For a niggardly couple of bannocks.	16
<i>O dh'fhiathaich thu bràthair mo mhàthar, Na leig an làmh aige falamh: Dh'fhàg e bhean 's a chòignear phàistean San rànaich a-staigh mun teallach, An dùil gun robh buinnig sa cheàird sa, Gun sàbhaladh dhaibh an arain — 'S thogair mise tighinn 'na phàirt On tha e fhéin gun dàn gun ealain.</i>	Since you invited my mother's brother, Do not allow his hand to go empty: He has left his wife and five children Weeping at home around the hearth, Expecting gain from this activity, Their not having saved any bread — And I have elected to play his part As he has no ode or poem himself.	20 24
<i>Ghabh sinn an taigh sa mar àraidh O shàbhail sibh ur cuid barra, 'S o tha bhean a th' ann cho bàidheil 'S gun tuigeadh i càs na gainne; Is cinnteach ma shìneas i làmh dha Gheibh e chuid as fheàrr dh'a eallach — 'S ge b'e 'r bith na bheir sibh dhàsan, Thugaibh dhan aos-dàna drama.</i>	We have taken this house as a ladder Because you were able to save your crop, And because its goodwife is kind enough To understand what it means to be short; For sure if she stretches out her hand He will get the better part of his load — And whatever it be that you give to him, Will you please give a dram to the poet.	28 32
Lines 7–8 are of particular interest: I take it that the <i>gille</i> or manservant is wearing a mask, which automatically justifies a reward, as at Hallowe'en on this day. From this it is a small step to actual aggression, as in <b>Text C</b> (Carmichael 5: 378–79).		
<i>Nochd oidhche Chalainn chruaidh, Thàna mi le uan g'a reic,— Thuirt am bodach thall le guraim</i>	To-night is the hard night of Hogmanay, I am come with a lamb to sell,— The old fellow yonder sternly said	

*Gum buaileadh e mo chluas ri creig.* He would strike my ear against a rock.

*Thuir a' bhean a b'fhearra glòir*  
*Gum bu chòir mo leigeil a-steach;*  
*Air son m'ithidh agus m'òil,*  
*Crioman còir agus rud leis!*  
 The woman, better of speech, said  
 That I should be let in;  
 For my food and for my drink,  
 A morsel due and something with it!

Text C has a happy ending, but many others do not, and this can lead to a reaction in which the *gillean* place a curse, as in **Text D** (Carmichael 6: 143).

*Is iad muinntir a' bhaile seo thall*  
*Clannd as dona 'san domhan,*  
*Salach seideagach sodalach sannt,*  
*Loireagach ladhragach ludagach lothan,*  
*Daoine gun tùr gun toinisg gun taing,*  
*Daoine daobhaidh dao-chaidh dona,*  
*Tur air a' bhaile seo thall—*  
*A Chlainn a nall an seo.*  
 The people of yonder townland  
 Are people the worst in the world,  
 Dirty filthy flattering avaricious,  
 Swampy footling little toy hounds,  
 People void of sense, void of gratitude,  
 People ugly [frightful] ill-hued [perverse], wicked,  
 Drought upon yonder townland—  
 The Noel over here [let the Hogmanay revellers come  
 over here].

This is a threat: “If you don’t treat us well, we’ll say the same about you.” The following from Benbecula, **Text E**, tells us more about what *sort* of people are turning up (Carmichael 5: 380–83).

*A nochd oidhche mu dheireadh na bliadhna,*  
*Bithibh fialaidh rium san ardraich,*  
*Dol a ghabhail mo dhuana Calaig,*  
*Thugaibh an aire 'na thràth dhomh.*  
 To-night is the last night of the year,  
 Be generous to me in the dwelling,  
 As I come to sing my Hogmanay song,  
 Give to me timely heed.

*Banais gille dubh an t-snaoisein*  
*'S adhbhar smaointean anns an àite;*  
*Nam bithinn-sa am measg na laoisig,*  
*'S mór bhiodh ann do dhaoine grànda.*  
 The wedding-feast of the black lad of the snuff  
 Is a cause of pondering in the place;  
 Were I among the rabble,  
 Many an ugly fellow there would be.

*Cuid ri brosgal, cuid ri briagan,*  
*Cuid ri briathran mi-ghnàthaicht,*  
*Cuid eile 'g ithe nan ciaban*  
*Bh'ann an cearcan liath a' chàrsain;*  
 Some at flattery, some at lies,  
 Some at words unwonted,  
 Others devouring the gizzards  
 Of the wheezy grey fowls;

*Cuid dhiubh a' stalcaidh nan cùlag*  
*Anns na h-uilt bha 'n cùl na tònach,*  
*'S cuid dhiubh 'nan dalla-chrùban*  
*Ann an cùil air torr bhuntàta.*  
 Some of them fixing their back-teeth  
 In the back joints of the cattle,  
 And some of them hunkering down  
 In a corner on a heap of potatoes.

*Tha iad as gach cearn de'n dùthaich,*  
*Ceachairean nan cùil 's nan carnan;*  
*'S e rupall an cuirp thug triùir dhiubh*  
 They are from every quarter of the land,  
 The hungry ones of the corners and the  
 cairns;  
 'Tis the rumbling of their bodies has  
 brought

<i>Air astar co dhiùbh do'n àite.</i>	Three of them, at any rate, to this place.
<i>. . . an isean ann á Leódhas, Cas-a-luidean á Ceann tSàile, Sliopaireach mór bha 'n Tir Iodha Dh'ith an t-imdeal 'm Baile Mhàrtainn.</i>	. . . the chicken here from Lewis, A ragged-foot from Kintail, A great clumsy lout that was in Tiree Who ate the milk-pail-cover in Balemartin.
<i>Bho nach fiù dhomh bhith ag ìnnseadh Mar tha 'n tìr seo leis a' ghràisg ud,  Tha mi 'n dùil gum faigh mi mìrean, 'S gum bi ìm air agus càise.</i>	Since it is not worth my telling The state of this country with yon rabble, I hope that I shall get a morsel, And that there will be butter and cheese on it.
<i>Guidhim leannanachd is sìth dhuibh Gu bliadhna bho'n tìm seo, chairdean, 'S bho na tha mo chasan rùisgte, Fosglaibh dhomh dùnadh na fardraich.</i>	I pray for you sweethearting and peace Until a year from this time, O friends, And since my feet are bare, Open to me the fastening of the house.

The impression given here is that these are criminals and hungry ones at that. This man is basically saying, "If you think I'm scary wait till you meet my friends." His idea of good wishes is not *Dia dhuibh* 'God be with you' but *leannanachd is sìth dhuibh*, 'for you sweethearting and peace', as Carmichael has it.

*Leannanachd* is a good word for what is going on in our 'target' texts G1, G2 and H. Before approaching them, however, we must consider the curious case of 'Duan na Ceàrdaich' ('The Lay of the Smithy').

'Duan na Ceàrdaich' is an Ossianic ballad which came in recent times to be employed as a *rann Callainn*. Versions of it were published on several occasions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in none of these was any Hogmanay connection noted (Gillies 1786: 233–36; McCallum: 216–20; J.F. Campbell 1862: 378–402; J.F. Campbell 1872: 65–68). The earliest evidence for its use in this way appears to come from one of Fr Allan McDonald's folklore notebooks. Writing in 1891 in what is now EUL MS CW 58B, ff. 25v–26v, Fr Allan notes down a version of the ballad under the heading 'Duan Chùllaig' (*sic*). At the end he states (ff. 26v–27r): "The above is called Duan na Ceardach I got it from a Kenneth McLeod in Dalibrog who recited it on Hogmanay night. He learned it from his grand uncle . . . Second version from a woman from North Uist."

Later evidence is furnished by Margaret Fay Shaw, who prints the ballad in Gaelic and English then explains: "Taken down from John MacDonald, South Lochboisdale, 30th September 1934 . . . This was always one of the most popular of the Ossianic ballads amongst the people, and many versions have been preserved; it was frequently recited on Hogmanay (the last verse here makes this clear)." Indeed, her 'last verse' consists of a traditional quatrain with a significant addition:

<i>Claidheamh luinneach an làimh Mhic Cumhail, Nach do dh'fhàg fui[dheal]l feòla caoineadh; Mise a nochd sgèth mar thà mi An déidh bhith 'g àireamh na buidhne.</i>	A swift sword in the hand of Mac Cumhail  Which never left a remnant of flesh lamenting; Tired am I to-night in my condition, After numbering (recounting) the companies;
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*Fosgail seo 's lig a staigh mi.*

Open the door and let me in.

If we ask why this particular ballad should have become a *duan Callainn*, the answer is provided by a glance at its content. The Féinn are approached one day by a one-legged man wearing a leather apron. He is a smith called Lon mac Liobhainn, he says, and he places them under *geasa* (taboos, spells) to come back with him *gu dorsaibh mo Cheàrdaich* ('to the doors of my smithy') where he toiled for the king of Norway. Arriving there after a long journey, there is a terse exchange between Lon and Daorghlas, who happens to be *fear (fh)aire* (or *gharadh*, or even *ghlanadh*) *na ceàrdaich*, watcher (or stoker, or cleaner) to the smithy of the Féinn (Shaw: 30–31):

‘Fosgail, fosgail’ ars an gobha—	‘Open, open,’ said the smith;
‘Put romhad e’ arsa Daorghlas;	‘Push it in before you,’ said Daorghlas.
‘Cha n-fhàgainn dorus mo cheàrdaich	‘I would not leave the door of my smithy,
An àit’ gàbhaidh ‘s mi ‘nam aonar.’	In a place of danger, while I was alone.’

Sure enough, the smithy is a weird and dreadful place, manned by four- or seven-handed slaves. The delighted Féinn set everyone to work making weapons, however, and among much else they forge Fionn’s celebrated sword *Mac an Luin nach fhàg fuigheall beuma*, ‘Lon’s son who leaves no stroke unfinished’. Lon declares that it must be tempered in human blood; lots are cast, and it falls to Fionn to find a victim. He goes to a neighbouring house where he finds an old woman, Lon’s mother. She has not seen her son for a long time, and Fionn tells her kindly that she will find him in the smithy. As she goes through the door Lon, who is expecting someone else, thrusts the new sword through her body and kills her. Afterwards Fionn fights Lon and kills him (Christiansen: 197–215).

It can thus be seen that ‘Duan na Ceàrdaich’ is about doors. The fact that invisible terrors lurk behind these doors appears to have made it more, rather than less, suitable for recital at New Year. Whether other such ballads, songs or poems were ever used in the same way I do not know.

The penetration of Lon’s mother by *Mac an Luin* appears to lead us, in symbolic terms, to the *leannanachd* of Texts G1, G2 and H. First however something must be said about metrical structure. I pointed out in *The Gaelic Otherworld* (Black 2005: 579) that most of Text H is

clearly in *snéadhbhairdne*, a verse-form which consists of alternating lines of eight and four syllables with end-rhyme linking the shorter lines, e.g. *ceòlmhor : stròdhail . . .* The use of *snéadhbhairdne* was largely restricted to a curious type of composition called *croasanachd* in which serious verse alternated with comic prose . . . Typically, an individual was praised in the verse while his enemies were satirised in the prose. It may well be, then, that the passages with no discernible structure are not poetry at all but prose; all of them are clearly intended to be comic. The sixteen lines from *Bhuail e gnogag to S e lan toraidh* consist of comic verse on a sexual theme. The *crambail*, *crambaid* or ‘stick’ (harp-key, *crann*) is the male sexual organ, the harp the female one; the scenario is as in the Blind Harper’s song ‘Féill nan Crann’ (‘The Harp-Key Fair’ . . .) except that here the key is broken, there it is lost.

The keen-eyed reader may already have noticed that lines 1–6 of Text B are in *snéadhbhairdne*. The term *croasanachd*, Irish *croántacht*, comes from *crován*, a carrier of crosses in medieval religious processions who became a travelling musician and satirist (Harrison: 35–53). The *croasanachd* mode was popular in Gaelic Scotland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As an example of its appearance and atmosphere, here, as **Text F**, is

a snatch of 'Crosanachd Fhir nan Druimnean' ('The Laird of Drimnin's Crosanachd') by the Mull poet Iain mac Ailein (Black 2001: 104–07). This was made in 1731 when the laird of Drimnin in Morvern had a row with a shoemaker about his bill, which resulted in the laird pulling up the poor man's kilt in full view of his other customers and assaulting him on the bare buttocks with his shoemaker's belt. It was a huge scandal at the time, and Iain mac Ailein made no less than four poems or songs about it. It can easily be seen that the subject of lines 1–14 is the shoemaker's private parts. In the prose the poet is at pains to defend *nighean Shomhairle* from any insinuation that she was observing the evidence of the shoemaker's fertility with the evil eye, that is to say, appropriating it to her own husband; then we return to the verse.

<i>A' chuideachd do'm bu chòir bhith diamhair</i>	The company that should be private	
<i>'S a ghnàth am falach,</i>	And always hidden,	
<i>Cha d'fhàgadh da'n dìon bho chunnart</i>	There wasn't left to keep them safe	
<i>Sion de dh'earradh.</i>	Any clothing.	4
<i>Bha iad aon uair an làthair fianais</i>	They were once exposed to witness	
<i>An taigh greusaich;</i>	In a shoe-shop;	
<i>Thuirte nighean Shomhairle le ràbhart,</i>	Said Samuel's daughter, always civil,	
<i>'S a gnàths sìobhalt',</i>	With great humour,	
<i>"S còir gum beannaich sinn gu saidhbhir</i>	"It's right that we should richly bless	
<i>Cuid gach Crìostaidh.</i>	Each Christian's gear.	10
<i>"B' fheàrr leam, ged nach eil mi maoineach</i>	"I only wish, though I'm not wealthy	
<i>No luach gearrain,</i>	Or worth a mare,	
<i>Gum bitheadh coltas do thriùir</i>	That Calum had something like your trio	
<i>Gu tùrn aig Calum!"</i>	Just for a while!"	14
<i>Se adhbhar thug don mhnaoi bheusaich, cheart, chòir, seo a ràdh, a rùn deagh- chneasta, chum gum biodh aig a fear fhéin a leithid 's a bhiodh aig a nàbaidhean; 's nach sùil ghointe no lombais a bh' aic' air cuid a coimhearsnaich, mar bh' aig Gillebrìde Mac an t-Saoir ann an Ruthaig an Tiridhe, a mhort an ceithir fichead cearc le aon bheum-sùla 's a bhris long mhòr nan cùig crannag, a dh'ainneoin a càblaichean 's a h-acraichean. Uaithe sin a dubhradh: "Sann den cheàird a' chungaidh."</i>	What made the virtuous, proper, decent woman say this was her perfectly kind wish that her own husband should have the same as her neighbours; and not any evil eye or covetousness that she had for what belonged to her neighbour, as had Gilbert Macintyre in Ruaig in Tìree, who murdered eighty hens with one look and destroyed a great five- masted ship, despite her cables and her anchors. That's why it has been said: "The tools go with the trade."	24
<i>Tha bith ùr an tìr na Dreòllainn</i>	There's a new fad in MacLean lands	
<i>A thog am Baran,</i>	That the Baron's started,	
<i>Air gach aon fhear a labhras buna-chainnt</i>	That every man who speaks plain truth	
<i>Rùsgadh feamain.</i>	Must bare his tail.	28

An earlier example of full-blown *crostanachd* is ‘Eireóchthar fós le cloinn gColla’ (‘Colla’s race will rise again’, c. 1640), in which a trained poet from Benbecula, Cathal MacMhuirich, elegantly mocks his chief’s political enemies, the Covenanters, and his own professional enemies, the untrained poets (Black 1979: 335–37). A later one is ‘Baran Suipeir’, made by a certain John Bethune or Beaton about 1770 when James Maxwell, the duke of Argyll’s factor for Morvern and Mull, had the misfortune to defecate while sitting next to the duchess on a much-delayed ferry crossing (Gillies 1780: 101–06; Ranauro). So we can say that *crostanachd* had a particular association, but by no means an exclusive one, with satire, with low life, with bawdry, with obscenity, with scatology, and with the county of Argyll.

When *snéadhbhairdne* appears on its own, without prose passages, it may have a hidden satirical function. It is open to us to argue, if we can, that the overt part of the satire was contained in lost prose passages. Equally, the prose passages have been turned into mangled verse. Metre is the key. We must look for lines of roughly eight syllables, then four, then eight, then four, in which the four-syllable lines rhyme with each other. If we seem to have this in some places but not in others, then perhaps the dysfunctional portions originated as prose.

It occurred to me to wonder if this analysis could be applied to texts G1 and G2, which are set out in *Tocher* as long rhyming couplets, e.g.

*Oidhche dhòmhs’ air Challuig mar a b’ àbhaist*  
*Thug mi chiad sgriob a Thaigh a’ Ghàrraidh.*

Obviously my eye was caught by the reference to playing the *clàrsach*, which occurs twice at the beginning of both G1 and G2. So let us see what lessons can be learnt from these texts before we move on to Text H.

Texts G1 and G2 are described in *Tocher* as ‘typical of the locally-composed poems, a mixture of local satirical references and pure nonsense, which used to be recited in the Gaelic-speaking areas by men going around the houses at New Year’. **Text G1** (SA 1974/107/A1) was recorded from Jonathan MacLeod, Vatersay, in 1974 by Mary MacDonald and Emily Lyle, and transcribed by Murdo MacLeod. Except where stated in my commentary, both text and translation are exactly as in *Tocher* but rearranged either as *snéadhbhairdne* or, where it fails, as prose.

<i>Oidhche dhòmhs’ air Challuig</i>	One night when I was Hogmanaying	
<i>Mar a b’ àbhaist</i>	In the usual way	
<i>Thug mi chiad sgriob</i>	My first call was	3
<i>A Thaigh a’ Ghàrraidh:</i>	To Taigh a’ Ghàrraidh:	
<i>Chualas a’ nigheà’ mhór</i>	The big girl could be heard	
<i>A’ seinn na clàrsaich.</i>	Playing the clarsach.	6

<i>“Fire, faire, Chairistiona, cà’na</i>	“Well, well, Christine, where did you learn	
<i>dh’ionnsaich thu na puirt mhara?”</i>	sailors’ tunes?” “I learned them as a young	
<i>“Dh’ionnsaich mi iad òg ’nam chailinn a’s</i>	girl in the wheelhouse. The tricks of	9
<i>a’ chuibhleas.” Bhuinigeadh a’ chlàrsach</i>	music-making were got from MacCairin in	
<i>air MacCairin a’s a’ chuibhleas — an</i>	the wheelhouse – the west turn and the east	
<i>iorabho ’s an earabho ’s an ceòl gàire.</i>	turn and the merry music. Put it in, put it	12
<i>“Wick e, Wick e (?), gille nam both!</i>	in, the lad of the actions! . . .	

<i>Beairtich an t-each ’s gum bithinn</i>	Equip the horse so that I can	
<i>A’ falbh leis.”</i>	Go off with him.	
<i>Cha do lig iad mise ’nam chuideachd</i>	They didn’t allow me to be company	

<i>Air son airgid.</i>	For money.”	16
<i>Thill Calum</i> <i>Far na fochainn,</i> <i>'S bhrìst e 'dhà lurga</i> <i>'S chaill e 'ghartain.</i>	Calum came away From the young cornfields, And he broke both legs And lost his garters.	20
<i>'S an cogar thug Murchadh do Ruairidh</i> <i>'S a' Chàrnaich,</i> <i>Chuala Calum air Tràigh Bhainein</i> <i>E 's a' bhàta.</i>	And what Murdo whispered to Roderick In Carnoch, Calum heard it on Tràigh Bhainein In the boat.	24
<i>Bha dùil aig Dòmhnall Ruadh a' Mhuilinn</i> <i>Le 'bhalg mineadh</i> <i>Gu faigheadh e nighean Uilleim,</i> <i>Bean mo ghille.</i>	Red-haired Donald from the mill With his bag of meal was hoping To get William's daughter, My boy's wife —	28
<i>'S ann a chuile latha féilleadh</i> <i>Bhiodh i maistreadh,</i> <i>'S gheobhainn fhìn</i> <i>A' chiad cheap dheth.</i>	She used to churn Every holy day, And I was the one to get The first lump [of butter] from it.	32
<i>Thug i mach na cóig ginidhean òir</i> <i>As a pòca,</i> <i>Na cóig cearca móra fireann</i> <i>'S an coileach boireann</i> <i>'S an clàr fuineadh, 's biodh</i> <i>Siod aig Uilleam.</i>	She took the five gold guineas Out of her pocket, The five great male hens And the female cock And the baking-board, and William Was to have that.	35 38

- 1 The translation of this stanza in *Tocher* is: “One night when I was Hogmanaying in the usual way / My first call was at Taigh a' Ghàrraidh: / The eldest daughter could be heard playing the clarsach.” It can thus be seen that my only change is from ‘the eldest daughter’ to ‘the big girl’. The latter is the literal meaning.
- 4 *Taigh a' Ghàrraidh* ‘Garden House’ suggests a house with a walled garden, something of a rarity in the eighteenth-century Highlands. Even in 1773, Johnson and Boswell found that some of the island gentry, such as Ullinish and Lochbuie, possessed a garden, while others, such as Coirechatachan, did not (Black 2007: 258, 275, 406). On the mainland, the governor of Fort Augustus had one (*ibid.*, 108), and there had been one at Acharn in Morvern as early as 1725 (NLS Adv. MS 29.1.1, vol. 2, f. 187). Our *Taigh a' Ghàrraidh* was in or near a place called Carnoch (see line 22); I do not know whether MacDonald of Glencoe’s residence at Carnoch near Ballachulish had one, or indeed whether the house had any name beyond the obvious *Taigh na Càrnaich*, but it is very likely that Sir Alexander Murray’s residence at Strontian (‘Horsey Hall’, as it came to be called) had one. The text imposed on Murray’s map of Loch Sunart (Bruce 1733) speaks of ‘Inclosing, bringing in, & Cultivating both Garden & other Grounds’; in April 1730 the number of gardeners employed by his estate of Ardnamurchan and Sunart appears to have stood at three or four, and it is unlikely that all their efforts went into the garden at Mingary alone (see appendix 11 below). It may be worth pointing out in passing that the Mingary garden is almost certainly the subject of the following stanza in Alexander MacDonald’s *Allt an t-Siùcair* (Mac-Dhonuill: 85; Macdonald: 46–47):

<i>Bidh lòchrain mheala lùbadh</i>	The stalks bend with honey lanterns
<i>Nan sràbh 's brù air gach géig</i>	And every branch has a womb
<i>De mheasaibh milis cùbhraidh</i>	Of the sweet and fragrant harvests
<i>Nan ùbhlán is nam peur;</i>	Of apples and of pears;
<i>Na duilleagan a' lùgadh</i>	The leaves are curling upwards
<i>Is fallas cùil dhiubh fhéin —</i>	From the sweat on their own backs
	—
<i>Is clann a' gabhail tùchaidh</i>	And bairns get hoarse from licking
<i>D'an imlich dlùth le'm beul.</i>	Them closely with their mouths.

*Allt an t-Siùcair* 'The Sugar Burn' is *Allt a' Choire Mhuilim*, which reaches the sea near Mingary. The song was made about 1743 (Black 1986: 31–32).

- 6 For a brief account of musical metaphors for sex in European literatures see Atkins 1978: 179–80. In Gaelic 'playing the harp' seems to have been a firm favourite, see Black 2001: 164–65, 352–53; note also the wry humour of *eud bean a' chlàrsair, a' chlàrsach fhéin* 'the harper's wife's jealousy, the harp itself' (Dwelly: 397). Clearly the metaphor survived the demise of the harp itself, which had given way to the violin in Gaelic society by c. 1700. The latter instrument provides the classic instance of the motif in English literature, in Shakespeare's *Pericles*, act 1, scene 1, where the hero takes Antiochus's daughter by the hand and describes her incest with her father:

You're a fair viol, and your sense the strings;  
 Who, finger'd to make man his lawful music,  
 Would draw heaven down, and all the gods to hearken;  
 But, being play'd upon before your time,  
 Hell only danceth at so harsh a chime.

- 7 The translation of this section in *Tocher* is: "'Well, well, Christine, where did you learn sailors' tunes?' / 'I learned them as a young girl in the wheelhouse (?)' / The clarsach was won from the Duke of Argyll (?) in the wheelhouse – / The *iorabho* and the *earabho* and the merry music.' / 'Send him to Wick (?), the ranter and raver!'"
- 10 The name *MacCairin* is a likely one for a Gaelic-speaking seaman from the Firth of Clyde area. As *Mc carran, Mc Carran, McCarne, mc charen, Mc Carrane* or *mc Cayrn* it occurs eighteen times in the Argyll name-lists of 1685 and 1692 – eight times in Kilmichael Glassary, five times in Knapdale, twice in Melfort, once each in Kilfinan, Dalmally and Kilmore/Kilbride (MacTavish: 7, 9, 18, 29, 30, 39–40, 42–44, 55). See also Text G2 line 11. *Cuibhleas* will be a Gaelicised form of English 'wheelhouse', just as *cuibhle* is a Gaelicised form of 'wheel'.
- 11 The *iarabho* and the *earabho* clearly contain points of the compass, *iar* 'west' and *ear* 'east'. In the Highlands and Islands, awareness of the points of the compass was formerly so acute that they were used habitually for everyday purposes. A person might be said to be standing *tuath ort* 'north of you' instead of *ri do thaobh* 'beside you', and might go *sìar* 'west' to fetch something from the back of the house in the same way that nowadays one would 'go into the kitchen'. Here the compass points are being used of sexual activities. I take *wick* to be an otherwise unrecorded verb, English or Gaelic or a mixture of both, related in some way to English 'wag' (of the tail) or 'fuck', and/or to Gaelic *bog* or *buig* in the meaning 'steep', 'dip', 'wag', 'fuck', see Thomson: 115, line 1213, and Black 2001: 372.
- 12 For this use of *gille* 'lad' see line 28 and Text H line 17. Alexander MacDonald uses *feàr* 'man' in the same way (Watson 1959: 114), while an anonymous poet gives his

*membrum* the name *Dòmhnallan Dubh* 'Little Black Donnie' (Black 2001: 78–81); William Ross's *ladie dubh* 'black laddie' brings us back, albeit in translation, to *gille* (Calder: 108–09). *Both* comes up three times here in the meaning given by Dwelly (111): "Both, *s.m.ind.* Perturbation. 2 Furious agitation. 3 Declamation. 4 Vehement action of body. A' cur nam both dheth, *in great agitation.*"

- 13 The translation of this section in *Tocher* is: "Harness the horse so that I can cart him off.' / They wouldn't let me into their company for [love or] money." I differ from the *Tocher* translators, and from their parenthesis, in that I think that this is all the girl still talking, explaining to us that she was paid in kind, in this case with a horse. There may be a hint here that the girl is being kept away from the better class of client, the kind that might conceivably be able to pay in cash. In the eighteenth-century Highlands cash was in notoriously short supply, but horses were small and plentiful. Among the exceptions to the renewal of tacks and wadsets detailed by Sir Alexander Murray in his memorandum of 1726–27 (appendix 3 below) are the reservation of Ariundle for the maintenance of 'my horses & Cows kept by my Miners' and of the moss of Achnanellan on Loch Shiel 'for the maintenance of my horses to be employed in my woods', the latter being chosen 'first because it lyes in the center of all my woods – & so hinders my horses to be scattered here & there or from running into other peoples hain'd grass or Cornes – Secondly because thereby I become less troublesome in borrowing the horses of the Countrey' (NLS Adv. MS 29.1.1, ff. 232r, 232v).

It is equally and additionally possible, however, that the horse is metaphorical. In early modern Europe the riding of horses (or other animals) by women was a trope for the inversion of moral order as represented by such activities as prostitution and witchcraft (Zika: 293, 331–32).

- 18 *Fochann* is a masculine noun meaning 'young corn in the blade', but here the noun is feminine. In any case we cannot take 'young corn' literally, as this is of course happening in winter. There is, or was, a feminine noun *fochain* meaning 'cause, motive, reason, disturbance' (Dwelly: 443). So either *fochainn* here means 'disturbance' or young corn is being used as a metaphor for girlhood. Breaking both legs and losing one's garters is slapstick comedy of the kind to be expected in a bawdy song.
- 21 This stanza offers more broad comedy – a drunk man in a particular township thinks that he is whispering when he is actually talking so loud that he can even be heard offshore.
- 22 I know of four places called Carnoch, though no doubt there are others. One is near Ballachulish on Loch Leven, and was the residence of the MacDonalds of Glencoe until the nineteenth century. Another is at the head of Loch Sunart, two miles east of Strontian (appendix 4 below). The third is in Arisaig, and the fourth is at the head of Loch Nevis in Knoydart. As Iain Thornber has pointed out to me, the name appears to mean a place with a prehistoric cairn – there is a large one at the head of Loch Sunart, while a similar one in Arisaig was destroyed during the building of the railway. Slate was quarried at Ballachulish from 1693 to 1955 (RCAHMS 1975: 277; Fairweather 1985, 1, 4), and my initial working hypothesis was that the poem was set in that area during the quarrying boom in the mid- or late eighteenth century. However, other factors – the numbers of men involved in each case, the lack of evidence for prostitution at Ballachulish, the emergence of information about 'Mr Campbell' and the bark trade – have convinced me that the Carnoch in question is the one at Strontian. At Ballachulish, 322 people were employed by 1791, rising to 587 by 1875 (RCAHMS 1975: 277; Fairweather 1985, 1–2). At Strontian 400–500 men were employed as early as 1725, most of them imported from England, Wales and the Low Countries, and by 1740 the community numbered about 1,500 people (RCAHMS 1980: 255; Cummings: 258, 280).

In 1746, by which time the mines were closed, it was estimated that 200 soldiers could be accommodated there (Terry: 327).

- 23 The *Tocher* translation of this couplet is ‘Calum heard it in the boat on Tràigh Bhainein.’ As with *Taigh a’ Ghàrraidh*, the clear identification of a place-name *Tràigh Bhainein* close to one of the four Carnochs would fix the location of our poem beyond reasonable doubt. I have failed to make such an identification, but at least it is possible to say what lies behind the name: it is *Tràigh a’ Bhaidnein* ‘the Beach of the Little Boat’, from *baidnein*, pronounced *bainnein*, ‘little boat, yawl, pinnace’ (Dwelly: 58, s.vv. *baidean*, *baidne*, *baidein*). Curiously, all of the Carnochs offer beaches, modest or otherwise. In particular, at Ballachulish in 1790 vessels of any burthen could be beached ‘most commodiously in fine smooth sand, so near the shore, that they may be loaded by throwing a few planks between the vessels and the shore’ (McNicol 1791: 500). At the head of Loch Sunart, rock-strewn sands are exposed at low tide at the mouths of the Strontian and Carnoch rivers, and ‘the head of Loch Sunart’ is frequently referred to in eighteenth-century sources as a meeting- or gathering-place, being conveniently accessible by sea as well as by land (Fergusson: 197; appendix 3 below). Iain Thornber points out to me that Kinlochsunart came to be the site of an important cattle market, and was also frequented by hundreds of herring-boats at a time, the nets being laid out to dry along the short stretch of shoreline between Strontian and Carnoch.
- 25 In this stanza there is a strong hint of payment in kind.
- 28 I do not think that *nighean Uilleim* was anyone’s wife in a literal way. *Mo ghille*, ‘my boy’, ‘my lad’, seems to be the poet’s way of referring to his own prize possession.
- 32 The parenthesis ‘of butter’ is in *Tocher*, but *ceap* simply means a ‘lump’ or ‘snatch’, so in the bawdy context the introduction of butter is unhelpful.
- 34 The spelling *pòca* correctly represents what the Vatersay reciter said. It does not rhyme with *boireann*, however, unless we remove the lengthmark and interpret it as ‘bag’ rather than ‘pocket’. This interpretation appears to be confirmed by Text G2 lines 24 and 40, see notes on those lines.
- 35 For the ‘male hens’ and ‘female cock’ see Text G2 line 41, note.
- 38 All in all, then, Cairistiona takes her earnings (a jumble of money and goods) out of her bag and gives them to her father. As this appears to raise the issue of prostitution in Ardnamurchan and Sunart in the years 1723–29, it would be as well to state here what is known about it. Appendix 12 below alleges that a certain Nellie McMorphy, housekeeper at Horsey Hall in our period, was a ‘very bad woman’ who had slept with the factor, Donald Cameron, and was now ‘talking openly She got herself pepper’d in this family by the Laird’. This seems distinctly possible, as Sir Alexander had separated from his wife in 1714 after four unhappy years of marriage (Cameron: 444) and was the father of a child in London, for whose upkeep he paid £10 to the relevant parish (NLS Adv. MS 29.1.1, vol. 4, ff. 175–76). Although Nellie was married to an Irishman, her surname McMorphy (*Mac Mhurchaidh*, MacMurchy) suggests a connection with Islay or Kintyre. There is also the case of Mary MacDonald, mentioned in the records of the Presbytery of Mull as an adulteress in the parish of Ardnamurchan in 1739, and subsequently as an adulteress in the parish of Kilninian in Mull in 1747, ‘but who lived formerly at Stron’tsíthen’ (Black 1986: 22). She may be the woman to whom the poet Alexander MacDonald (catechist or schoolmaster/catechist in Ardnamurchan, 1729–45) composed his obscene but brilliant ‘*Marbhrann na h-Aigeannaich*’ ‘Wanton’s Elegy’ (Mac-Dhonnail 1751: 153–58). The problem of sexually transmitted disease became so acute in the parish that he also published ‘*Tinneas na h-Urchaid*’ ‘Venereal Disease’, a health warning in eight quatrains (*ibid.*, 159–60). He begins *Gu bheil tinneas na h-urchaid / Air feadh Àird nam Murchan* ‘Venereal Disease / Is throughout Ardnamurchan’, then describes the symptoms of syphilis and its treatment by mercury

(Rosebury: 123). He does not mention Strontian, mines, migrant labour or prostitution, but concludes by warning his flock against 'alien diseases' (MacilleDhuibh).

*Thig oirbh easlaintibh coimheach,  
Bolgach, plàigh agus cloimhean,  
Gur sgrìos is gur clomhadh  
Mar eich bhrothach bhios  
seannda.*

You'll have alien diseases,  
Smallpox, plague and the scabies,  
Destroying and corrupting you  
Like many horses grown old.

The dangers of gonorrhoea are mentioned in MacDonald's much longer '*Òran nam Bodach*' 'The Song of the Old Men' (Mac-Dhonnell: 123–34): *Mhoire nach iadsan / A smiarthe le clapa / Gun fhòirinn da'n urchag / Gun phurgaid da'n aiceid?* 'Might they not, Holy Mary, / Be smeared with the clap / With no remedy to heal them / And no purge for their pain?' A satire on two men in Ardnamurchan – one named Angus son of Allan and one named Allan – who have allegedly taken to whoring at the age of eighty, this poem appears to be motivated as much by personal grudge as by social concern. Close reading of one stanza, the seventh of fifteen, reveals cross-references back to Sir Alexander's regime and to the mines at Strontian (*ibid.*, 128).

*Gur neònach am fonn  
A thachair sna bailtibh ud —  
Is mìos' a chinneas druim iomair  
Na ùrlar nan claisean unnt',  
Is cho dàrail na seann tairbh  
Ri trì-bhliadhnaich acfhainneach  
'S ge math feur nan Coirean*

*Is seachd sona feur Fhaisgeadail.  
Marbhaisg air na bodaichibh:  
Bhuairleadh na beartaich leo',  
Thairgeadh màl dùbailt  
'S bunndaiste gearrsmainn ast'  
Le staodhrum 's le mosradh  
'S le bodradh nan  
tailceanach  
As briosairneach frogaiseach  
Cochallach taplaichean!*

Some extraordinary land  
Is to hand in those townships —  
A rig-top grows worse in them  
Than bottoms of furrows,  
The old bulls are as horny  
As well-equipped three-year-olds  
And though the Corries are  
verdant  
It's far grassier in Faskadale.  
Confound the old buggers:  
They've run rings round the rich,  
Double rent has been offered  
And a grassum fee out of them  
By caressing and schmoozing  
And shafting the ludicrous  
Frolicsome stalwarts  
Whose wallets are bulging!

*Claisean* 'furrows' bears the double meaning 'grooves, groves', the term used for the mine-shafts at Strontian (see appendix 13). *Marbhaisg air na bodaichibh* could equally be translated 'A plague on the peasants'. Who is paying double rent and a grassum fee to whom is not entirely clear. On one level we may guess that Angus and Allan have obtained land at Faskadale which the poet wanted for himself (cf. Black 1986: 20). On another level, this may be a reference to the extortionate rent of £3,600 which the York Buildings Company (in the person of its governor, Col. Samuel Horsey) agreed to pay for the mines in 1730, and to the lump sum ('grassum fee') of £6,000 also paid to Sir Alexander and his partners in compensation for their expenditure on the works, not to mention 'the royalty of the sixth dish to the overlord' – the feudal proprietor, Sir Duncan Campbell of Lochnell. The then manager, Francis Place, an experienced mining engineer, considered £3,600 to be seven times what the works were worth (Murray 1883: 70).

An alternative version of Text G1, **Text G2** (SA 1974/91/B9), was recorded by the same fieldworkers from a Mrs MacCormick, who was in her seventies, at Earsary in Barra. It was transcribed by Donald Archie MacDonald. The editors of *Tocher* give lines 17–44 only, saying that what precedes these is ‘very similar’ to the Vatersay version. In what follows, therefore, lines 1–16 were transcribed and translated by myself, while the rest is as in *Tocher*, except where stated in my commentary (but rearranged into *snéadhbhairdne*).

<i>Chaidh mi aoigheadh air Chullainn</i> <i>Chon mo chàirdean</i> <i>'S thug mi chiad sgrìob</i> <i>A Thaigh a' Ghàrraidh.</i>	I went guesting at Hogmanay To my relations And the first visit I made was To Taigh a' Ghàrraidh.	4
<i>Bha iomas 'ic Iain Mhóir an Fhirich</i> <i>A' seinn clàrsach:</i> <i>“Càit, a Chairistiona a chridhe, an do</i> <i>dh'ionnsaich thusa</i> <i>Na puirt mhara?”</i>	Big John of the Moor's son's inspiration Was playing the harp: “Where, Cairistiona my love, did <i>you</i> learn Nautical tunes?”	8
<i>“Dh'ionnsaich mi iad òg 'nam chailin</i> <i>'S mi 'nam mhaighdinn:</i> <i>Bhuinnich mi clàrsach Mhic Garaidh</i> <i>Air a' chuibhneas,</i> <i>An iorabho 's an earabho</i> <i>'S an ceòl gàire.</i>	“I learned them when I was a young girl As a virgin: I won Mac Garaidh's harp On the wheelhouse, The west turn and the east turn And the merry music.	11 14
<i>“Thig iad am buath, thug iad a-mach,</i> <i>B'e sin cnoidhein,</i> <i>'S ann bu choltach e ri barpa</i> <i>'S dà chois fodha.”</i>	“They come in a frenzy, off they went, That was a small pain, It was like a chambered cairn With two feet underneath.”	18
<i>'Se Uilleam bu mhiosa dh'fhalbhadh</i> <i>Dhe na daoine:</i> <i>Rug casadaich air is anfhadh</i>  <i>'S a' bhreith aoise.</i>	William was the worst of the men Who could go: He was seized by coughing and shortness of breath And the (?) debility of old age.	22
<i>“Fuirich Uilleim, fear na sochair,</i> <i>Ris a' bhaga!”</i> <i>'S bhris e 'dhà lurgainn 's a churrachd</i> <i>'S chaill e ghartan.</i>	“Wait, William, you idle fellow, For the bag!” And he broke both legs and his cap, And lost his garter.	26
<i>Moire, gum bu h-éibhinn</i> <i>Dhut, Eachainn!</i> <i>'S ann a chuile latha féilleadh</i> <i>A bhiodh tu maistreadh:</i> <i>Gheibhinn-sa bhuat uibhir an t-séidhir</i> <i>De dh'aona cheapair.</i>	Marry, joy To you, Hector! You used to churn Every holy day: I would get a piece like a chair-seat from you On one sandwich.	29 32
<i>Chaidh impric Iain Mhóir an Fhirich a</i> <i>Shasunn</i>	Big John of the Moor's son's inspiration went to England	

<p><i>A chreic annlainn,</i> 'S thug i leithe barc <i>Do Mhaighstir Caimbeul.</i></p>	<p>To sell condiments, And took with her some bark For Mr Campbell.</p>	<p>36</p>
<p><i>Moire, gum bu slàn a thig ise</i> <i>Far a turuis:</i> 'S ann thug i dhomhsa na deich gini <i>As a pòca</i> 'S na ceithir cearca móra boirionn <i>'S an coileach firionn</i> 'S an criathar mór a nì an t-aiseag <i>'S an clàr-fuine.</i></p>	<p>Mary, send her back safe From her journey: She gave me the ten guineas Out of her bag And the four great female hens And the male cock And the big sieve that serves as a ferry And the baking-board.</p>	<p>40 44</p>

1 The first stanza is similar to that in the other version, but some of the vocabulary is different: *aoigheadh* 'guesting, visiting' and *Cullainn* instead of *Callaig*, both literally 'Calendar', for Hogmanay.

4 *Taigh a' Ghàrraidh*: see Text G1 line 4, note.

5 *Iomas* 'ic turns into *impric* at line 33. As it is clear that the girl is called Cairistiona, *iomas* cannot be a name and must be a word – presumably a rare Scottish example of early Irish *imbas* 'great knowledge, poetic talent, inspiration, foreknowledge, magic lore' (*DIL*), modern Irish *iomas* 'intuition, inspiration, manifestation, a guess' (Dinneen 1927: 604). It thus represents a first hint of the witchcraft which surfaces again later (see note on line 41). As for *Iain Mór an Fhirich*, obviously if this person could be identified we would have further evidence for the locus of the poem. *Fireach* is widely used in mainland dialects for 'hill, moor, mountain, acclivity' (Dwelly: 439). *Druim an Fhirich* is marked on maps at the head of Glen Borrodale in Ardnamurchan. However, it is safer to regard *Iain Mór an Fhirich* as a name that could apply to any big mountain man called John.

6 In this stanza, *clàrsach* and *mhara* do not make good rhyme, so there may be something wrong.

8 *Na puirt mhara* is a pun. It means both 'nautical tunes' and 'seaports'.

9 Clearly this stanza shows Cairistiona telling how she lost her virginity.

11 *Mac Garaidh* looks like a corruption of the unfamiliar *MacCairin* (Text G1 line 10). The preservation of *Mac Garaidh* in this context allows us to hypothesise a development *MacCairin* > *Mac Garaidh* > MacGarry. 'M(a)cGarry' is quite a common surname today in the west of Scotland, but there are no instances of it in the Argyll name-lists of 1685 and 1692 (MacTavish). It is unlikely to be related to *Mc gorry* (MacTavish 1935: 57–58), which is readily derived from *Gofraidh*, *Goiridh* 'Godfrey'.

13 See Text G1, note on line 11.

14 *Gàire* would not normally be considered to rhyme with *mhaighdinn* and *chuibhleas*, so my reconstruction may be faulty here. In Text G1 I made this line part of a prose section.

15 This stanza is a description of coitus from the woman's viewpoint. The *Tocher* text begins right in the middle of it. However, the rhyme between *cnoidhein* and *fodha* shows clearly that these lines belong together. *Thug iad a-mach* means literally 'they took out'.

17 The *Tocher* translation of this couplet is: "...He was just like a chambered cairn standing on two feet."

19 This is the translation in *Tocher*, and it is a very good one indeed, but I doubt if the translators realised that it was a description by a prostitute of her least favourite client.

- Again the rhyme shows that these four lines belong together. In text G1 Uilleam was the name of the girl's father, but not so here.
- 22 The '(?)' is in *Tocher*. I believe the translation is entirely correct.
- 24 The bag must be the one referred to earlier (Text G1, note on line 34) in which Cairistiona puts her earnings. Uilleam seems to have run off without putting anything in it, and either broke his legs in the process or had them broken for him (I take it that *currachd* is here a kneecap). If that means there was a pimp involved, we may well be meeting him, speaking in the first person, in line 39. In the circumstances, I am not sure that 'idle fellow' is the best translation for *fear na sochair* – *sochair* is primarily a benefit, a privilege, so here I think *fear na sochair* may mean 'a man who tries to get away with a freebie'.
- 27 In this stanza we have rhyme between *éibhinn*, *féilleadh* and *t-séidhir* as well as between *Eachainn*, *maistreadh* and *cheapair*. The girl turns from her least favourite to her most favourite client, and tells us of the generous payments of meat, cheese and so on that he makes to her.
- 33 The *Tocher* translation of this stanza is: "Big John of the moor's retinue went to England to sell condiments, / And took with her a boat for Mr Campbell." The word 'retinue' is there footnoted: "Impric, 'a flitting', seems to be used in this version of the poem as a girl's name (like Oighrig): it also replaces 'a' nighean mhór' in the third line." In my opinion this makes much less sense than *iomas 'ic* in Text G1 line 5. I suspect that what happened is that, not understanding *iomas 'ic*, the reciter here substituted *impric* 'flitting' because that is what the rest of the line is about.
- 34 I think the idea of selling 'condiments' in England is a pun inspired by the previous stanza. 'Condiments' is the usual translation of *annlann*, which means anything eaten with bread, such as meat, cheese or crowdie.
- 35 As *Tocher* makes clear, in Mrs MacCormick's recitation *barc* is short, unlike *bàrc* 'boat' which has a long vowel. (In the original it may have been *barca*, rhyming with *Shasunn*, in line with the poem's structure of disyllabic line-endings, but *barc* / *Do* conveys the same effect in any case.) This is suggestive of the English word 'bark' (of a tree), usually in Gaelic *rùsg*. Oak bark was used for tanning and birch bark for packaging and tinder, while willow and wych hazel bark have medicinal properties. Sir Alexander Murray's correspondence reveals his constant anxiety to realise the value of the bark on his Ardnamurchan and Sunart estate (appendices **1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10** below). At the same time, the ships which plied up and down Loch Sunart were regularly referred to as 'barks', and in appendix **6** we see Sir Alexander turning these into 'barques' for the sake of clarity. Appendices **7** and **13** reveal the economic conundrum with which he was wrestling: the lead smelters and furnaces at Strontian, which were leased to his mining partnership and subsequently sub-let to the York Buildings Company, consumed enormous quantities of timber from his estate, from which the bark had first to be stripped and packed for export to pay the cost of harvesting the trees. Unfortunately, the more timber the mines consumed, the more bark was produced, whether it was in demand or not. Edward Lothian's remark in appendix **13** that 'Your Factor got always the Bark, the proceeds thereof, would pay the value of the Wood' should not be taken to suggest that the bark was the factor's perquisite, but that it was his responsibility – and his headache.
- 36 From 1723 to 1729 the factor on Sir Alexander Murray's estate of Ardnamurchan and Sunart was Donald Campbell, younger of Octomore in Islay. He is routinely referred to in the estate papers of the period, now NLS Adv. MS 29.1.1, as 'Mr Campbell', sometimes as 'Long Donald Campbell' (see appendix **8** below). The Octomore Campbells were a branch of the Airds family. George Campbell, fifth son of George Campbell of Airds (tutor of Cawdor), obtained Octomore by marriage to Anna, widow

of Lachlan Campbell of Daill and daughter of Archibald Roy Campbell of Octomore, who was baillie (factor) of Islay in 1685 (Alastair Campbell of Airds, personal communication). George Campbell of Octomore had at least four sons (Donald, Alexander, John, Colin) and one daughter, Margaret, who married Colin Campbell of Crackaig in 1717. Donald, a particular friend of Sir Alexander Murray's brother Charles, appears to have come to Sir Alexander's attention in connection with proposals for mining in Islay in 1722. He ran the estate with an attention to detail which met Sir Alexander's approval, but his letters to Charles are incautiously frank. In 1729, when the estate was in deep financial trouble, he was dismissed in the reorganisation which introduced Captain Edmund Burt as manager of the mines and Donald Cameron as factor (appendix 8 below).

'Long Donald' appears to have served the Airds estate in Appin and Lismore for all or part of the next seventeen years, during which time Donald Campbell of Airds, the duke of Argyll's factor for Morvern, was building a splendid new house at Airds in the south of Appin and moving out of Castle Stalker, which had been the residence of his family since 1627 (RCAHMS 1975: 193–94: 245; Campbell 1992: 22). On his father's death in 1737, Long Donald granted his rights in Octomore to his brother Alexander ('Sandy'). In 1745 his role at Castle Stalker, midway between Dunstaffnage and Fort William, became vital to the Government's tenuous hold on the West Highlands. He received the rank of captain in the Argyll militia, with a garrison consisting of a sergeant, a corporal and twenty men (Fergusson: 195, 250). He was responsible for the storage of military supplies, the custody of prisoners, the control of shipping in Loch Linnhe, and above all the transmission of intelligence, for which armed boats called every other day (*ibid.*, 113–14, 145, 228; Terry: 291). Prior to Culloden, he was the recipient of one of the most celebrated letters in Highland history, that of 20 March 1746 in which Lochiel and Keppoch threatened the Campbells with reprisals for 'their burning of houses and stripping of women and children and exposing to the open field and severity of the weather, burning of corns (i.e., corn or grain), houghing of cattle, and killing of horses' (Black 2007: 329–30). Lochiel and Keppoch did not know that the policy of carrying out these brutal acts was initiated by Cumberland and mitigated as far as possible by the commander of the Argyll militia, General John Campbell of Mamore (Fergusson: 122–24). After Culloden, still with his ear to the ground, Octomore provided the Government with some of its most accurate reports about Prince Charles's wanderings and other Jacobite activity (*ibid.*, 241–42; Terry: 228–30, 238–39). He is given two quatrains in Alexander MacDonald's long poem '*An Àirce*' ('The Ark'), which describes the retribution to be visited upon individual Campbells by a latter-day Noah in the event of a flood overwhelming Argyll (Mac-Dhonnail: 179; Macdonald: 262).

<i>An Dòmhnallach Ìleach an rasgal, An glagaire fada bòstail, Thoir urchair dha chum an aigin, Gu leaba-chadail nan sòrnan.</i>	Donald Campbell from Islay, the rascal, The long, clacking-tongued boaster, Give him a push, down to the deep, Down to the sleeping-bed of the skates.
<i>Mac Dheòrs' òig, ged thuit e 'm peacadh Le impidh prasaigain, 's le gòraich,</i>	The son of young George, though he fell into sin Through the rabble's incitement, and folly,
<i>Leig plumadh dha chum an aigin 'S thoir gu grad a-steach le d' ròp e.</i>	Give him a dip right down to the bottom, Then quickly haul him in with your rope.

- 37 The *Tocher* translation of this stanza is as follows: “Mary, send her back safe from her journey: / She actually gave me the ten guineas out of her pocket / And the four great female hens and the male cock / And the big sieve for a ferry-boat and the baking-board.” This is the end of the poem, and all, I think, is revealed, as my remaining notes show.
- 40 Again I think the text originally had *poca* ‘a bag’ and not *pòca* ‘a pocket’. That is certainly what the rhyme with *turuis* suggests.
- 41 The male hens and female cock now turn into female hens and a male cock, which makes *less* sense in terms of witchcraft (see following note). Male hens and a female cock sound like the diabolical sort of thing a witch would have. They are also suggestive of cross-dressing, a common practice at Hallowe’en and New Year.
- 43 The ‘big sieve that serves as a ferry’ is a clear allusion to witchcraft. In Gaelic tradition witches routinely sail across water in sieves or riddles (Bruford: 21; Black 2005: 174, 180; *Tocher* 58 [2005]: 18). Thus a connection is established between witchcraft and prostitution. If we exclude the importance of sex to the iconography of witchcraft (for which see Zika: 269–304) and the fanciful ‘carnal compact’ with the devil demanded by witchcraft legislation, such a connection is remarkably hard to find in surviving transcripts of witchcraft trials. As Jensen has pointed out (162) with reference to early modern Europe as a whole, “Women who violated gender expectations might be viewed as prime candidates for charges of witchcraft, but those who entered into prostitution as a career were playing a role that was quite well integrated into patriarchal society. The prostitute engaged in sexual activities with an assortment of men in the real world and had little reason to pursue secretive or fantastic relationships with Satan or to waste time in unpaid sabbatical orgies.”

In his examination of the sixteenth-century Eichstätt trials, Durrant probes the issue in some detail with respect to specific individuals who “would seem to conform to the stereotype of the marginal old woman who fell victim to accusations of witchcraft”, being in their sixties, having a history of poverty and sexual indiscretion, and being also in one case ‘a known wisewoman who used herbs to cause abortions for indiscreet young women, many from the households of councillors, and to then help them get pregnant’ (171, 174). Clearly the services of such people were useful in different ways to both men and women. Pointing out that the traditional role ascribed to the prostitute by medieval society was as a means of sexual relief ‘for the Catholic man away from home and the widower’, Durrant concludes tellingly that witch commissioners and witnesses alike ‘seem to have understood the direct connection between poverty and prostitution’ (*ibid.*, 175, 234).

This picture of the healer-prostitute in the bottom layer of society, partly respected, partly feared and seldom prosecuted, rings true for Gaelic Scotland. Curiously, one of the clearest recorded cases of a link between common prostitution and criminalised witchcraft comes from southern Italy (Gentilcore 2002: 100), a part of Europe which has been bracketed with the Highlands due to the crucial importance in both areas of belief in the evil eye, the consequences of which are unintended and therefore seen as distinct from witchcraft (Larner: 8).

- 44 The baking-board can also be seen as an occult object. There was a prominent superstition that meal could be removed by fairies unless specific precautions were taken (Black 2005: 127). In literal terms, the reason why Cairistiona has given the poet all these things can only be that he is her pimp (see note on line 24). In terms of metaphor, however, a kneading-trough and sieve were used in early Irish law to symbolise rightful possession of a disputed holding by a female, while in *Noínden Ulad* Crunncu’s fairy wife brings a kneading-trough and sieve, among other things, to

assert her position as mistress of his house (Kelly: 188). The appearance of these two objects together at the close of a New Year's rhyme from Gaelic Scotland, in a context reeking of 'entry ritual' (Martin: 294–95), seems to go beyond coincidence into the realms of genuine archaic survival.

What lessons have been learned from this study of texts G1 and G2 that can be taken into our study of text H?

- Reconstruction of text as *croasanachd* (verse in *snéadhbhairdne* with prose passages) seems to work well;
- Hogmanay rhymes can lead us into a bawdy-house;
- as suspected, the *clàrsach* is a key that can open this 'can o' worms';
- like any other language, Gaelic possesses a lexicon of bawdy imagery (e.g. *maistreadh* 'churning' for sex) which must be more fully identified and explored;
- it is possible for tradition-bearers, collectors, translators and editors to be blissfully unaware of salacious content;
- there is a social connection between prostitution and witchcraft which deserves to be further explored;
- the Strontian setting that has emerged, and the use of loanwords like *cuibhleas* 'wheelhouse', suggest that this tradition of bawdry may not be indigenous, while the use of *snéadhbhairdne* suggests the opposite.

We may now move on with renewed confidence to **Text H**, which JGC introduces by saying (Black 2005: 532): "The following New Year's rhyme must have tried the breath of the speaker and the patience of his listeners considerably. It consists probably of several separate rhymes tagged together . . . The rhyme is given as it came to hand." We should be on the lookout, therefore, for non-sequiturs and other clues that may indicate the end of one original text and the beginning of another.

JGC gives no indication of provenance. The words 'as it came to hand' suggest that he received the text in writing. He was minister of Tiree, and the source may have been one of his parishioners, but Islay appears to be mentioned at line 16, while the name Martin (line 23) is associated above all with the Portree area of Skye, with which JGC had strong connections (Black 2005: 620). Dialect evidence points both ways at once: *dhutsa* (line 37) is a northern form, *dhuit* (line 43) an Argyll one.

As explained above, the Gaelic original of this text is based on JGC's 'lost appendix' as transcribed by Alexander Carmichael into CW MS 241 and published *verbatim et literatim* in *The Gaelic Otherworld* (Black 2005: 533–34). I attempt to rationalise it here as *snéadhbhairdne*, as other metres or as prose, and I edit it for spelling and punctuation. Except where stated in my commentary, the translation is JGC's (JG Campbell 1902: 234–36); I edit it here for punctuation and rearrange it to echo the reconstructed original.

<i>Beannaich am brugh fonnmhor</i>	Bless this cheerful dwelling	
<i>Mar ghuth ceòlmhor</i>	With a musical voice	
<i>Bhith coltach ri àros rioghail</i>	That it be like a royal palace	
<i>Gun bhith stròdhail.</i>	Without being wasteful.	4
<i>Beannaich gach aon duine</i>	Bless each person	
<i>Dh'iadh mu choinneamh</i>	Who has encircled a gathering	
<i>Eadar am fear a dh'fhàs liath le sinead</i>	From the one grown grey with seniority	
<i>Gu aois leinibh.</i>	To the one of infant's age.	8

<i>Beannaich ar daoin' uaisle</i> <i>'S ar clann òga,</i> <i>Gach neach a thàrlas an uair seo</i> <i>Teachd air Dòmhnall.</i>	Bless our gentle men And our young children, All who chance at this time To come to Donald's.	12
<i>Fheara, se seo tùs mo sgeula</i> <i>'S fheudar innse:</i> <i>Bho gach taobh gu taobh eile</i> <i>Hó gu Ìle!</i>	Men! This begins my tale And I must tell it. From each side to another side Hó to Islay!	16
<i>Rinn mo chuid-sa, chliath mo ghille</i> <i>Tuill an tora —</i> <i>Sin mar thuirt Mairearad, fheudail</i> <i>uile:</i> <i>“Tuill an tora.”</i>	My equipment made, my lad treaded The wimble holes — That's what Margaret, everyone's favourite, said: “The wimble holes.”	20
<i>Sin mar thuirt Màiri:</i> <i>“Ghràidh, mo chéile,</i> <i>Tha Màrtainn cùl na còmhla,</i> <i>'S e gar n-éisteachd.”</i>	That's how Mary said, “Darling, my spouse, Martin is behind the door, Listening to us!”	24
<i>“Seo lethsgheul dhàsan,” ars ise,</i> <i>“Hu fadar he feadar / fodar,</i> <i>Suas, a bhleidein!” Dh' éirich</i> <i>cuisnean</i> <i>Garbh air Dòmhnall,</i> <i>Bhuail e air Mairearad</i> <i>Fìor spreòdadh.</i>	“That is his excuse,” said she [Margaret]. <i>Hu fudar!</i> Hey drinker! Up with you, you teaser! A thick member Rose on Donald, He aimed at Margaret A veritable frenzy.	27 30
<i>Bhuail e gnogag air a' chlàrsaich</i> <i>'S ghairm na teudan;</i> <i>Thug e grad tharraing air crambail</i> <i>'S theann ri gleusadh.</i>	He gave a tap to the harp And the strings sounded. He quickly drew a crambat And tried to tune it.	34
<i>“Rinn thu mìostadh,” ars an</i> <i>clàrsair,</i> <i>“As leam nach misde —</i> <i>Mo chreach léir a dh' éirich dhutsa</i> <i>'S do chrann briste.</i>	“You have done a mischief,” said the harper, “That I don't regret! Utter ruin has come upon you With your broken stick!”	38
<i>Sann agads' tha 'm ballan</i> <i>iocshlaint' ,”</i> <i>Ars an clàrsair —</i> <i>“Nuair a dh' fhiachar riut a-ris e,</i>  <i>Nì thu slàn e!</i>	“You have a healing vessel,”  Said the harper. “When you are tried with it a second time, 'Twill make the stick whole.	42
<i>Do chuid dhuit den bhallan-</i> <i>iocshlaint'</i> <i>Fheudail uile,</i>	So your share be yours of the healing cup. O dearest sir!	

<i>Do chrann buadh-mhor 'S e làn toraidh."</i>	May that stick of many virtues Be full of produce!"	46
<i>Chaidh mi Oidhche Choilne thaigh nam maragan reamhar. Dh'iarr mi fosgladh, 's an doras gu brosnach teann. Labhair bleidire mór na sràide facal brùideil: "Nam biodh mo chaman odhar am' làimh, cha do leig mi do cheann slàn on doras!"</i>	I went on Calendar Night to the house of fat puddings. I asked to be let in, the door being tightly closed with brushwood. The big sneak of the street spoke a brutal word: "If I had had my brown shinty- stick in my hand, I wouldn't have let your head away from the door in one piece!"	49 52
<i>Chaidh mi tuaitheal an dorais — B'e sin tuaitheal mo chrochaidh! Bhuail mi òrdag mo chois Ann an aodann na cloiche.</i>	I took the north turn to the door, That was a north turn of mischief to me: I struck the big toe of my foot In the face of a stone.	56
<i>Thuit am pinne, thuit am painne, thuit a' chliath-chliata san doras, rinn i gliong glang meanachan/neanachan.</i>	The pin fell, the pan fell, the harrows in the door fell, they made a cling clang clattering!	59
<i>Éirich a-suas, a bhean òg 'S a bhean chòir a choisinn cliù, Bi gu smearail mar bu dual — Éirich a-suas, a chailin duinn.</i>	Rise up, young wife And kindly wife who has won fame, Be lively as was in your blood — Rise up, my brown-haired lass.	63
<i>Càbag na h-aghaidh réidh 'S pàirt de mhionach réidh gun sùgh — Mur eil sin agad ad' chòir, Fóghnaidh aran is feòil duinn!</i>	The smooth-faced cheese And part of smooth gut without juice; If you don't have that to hand Bread and meat will do as well.	67
<i>"Chan e lon-craois thug dhan bhaile mi, ach maois air muin mo ghille-sa: gille geal gam ghlacadh, saill gam losgadh — fosgail 's leig a-staigh mi." "Is fìor sin," arsa fear an taighe. "Leigibh a-staigh e!"</i>	"It's not gluttony that has brought me to the township, but a hamper on my servant's back: a whiteboy seizing me, fat burning me — open and let me in." "That's true," said the man of the house. "Let him in!"	72

- 1 *Brugh*, as JGC points out elsewhere (Black 2005: 7), is 'the fairy dwelling viewed as it were from the inside' – bigger inside than outside, all lit up with wax candles, and full of music and dancing.
- 5 JGC's translation of this stanza was: "Bless each man / Who surrounds this gathering / From the one grown grey with seniority / To the one of infant's age."
- 6 This seems to be a reference to the way everyone has gone three times around the house sunwise for luck.
- 13 JGC's translation of this stanza was: "Men! This begins my tale / And I must tell it. / Ho! Each black, black generous one! / Hò-go! Each generous one!"
- 15 This line and the following are uncertain. JGC's original was: *Ho gach du du fheile / Ho gu eile*. He took *du* to mean 'black' (*dubh*), but I suspect that, as elsewhere in his

- work (Black 2005: xiv), it represents a misunderstanding of *taobh* 'side'. Rhyme with *innse* suggests not *eile* but *Ìle* 'Islay'. If I am right, this is a sailor's rhyme about a woman of easy virtue, and it appears that Islay was where she lived.
- 17 JGC's original was: *Roinn mo chuidse / Chliabh mo ghille / Tuille toraidh / Sin mar thuir Mairgearad / Fheudail uile tuille toraidh*. His translation was: "Divide this portion / My servant harrowed! / More produce! / Then it was that Margaret said, / 'O dear! More produce!'" The adjustments which I have made to the Gaelic text are very slight but make an enormous difference to the translation, which is now full of strong sexual innuendo. *Cuid* for the male genitalia is in Text F line 10. *Cliath* is the verb used for the copulation of chickens. *Gille* for the male organ appears in Text G1 lines 11 and 28. The metaphor of wimble-holes or gimlet-holes is particularly vulgar. It seems to be in the plural because more than one woman is involved, as the following stanza reveals.
- 21 JGC's translation of this stanza was: "Then said Mary, / 'My dearest dear! / Martin is behind the door, / Listening to us!'"
- 22 Bearing in mind *bean mo ghille* 'my boy's wife' at Text G1 line 28, I think *céile* 'spouse' may be said to be a relative term. Its use as a metaphor was put on a firm footing by Alexander MacDonald when in '*Moladh air Pìob-Mhóir Mhic Cruimein*' he described the bagpipe as the piper's *céile*, the fiddle as the fiddler's *céile* (MacDhonnail: 65, 73, 74; Watson: 104, 110, 111).
- 23 Bearing in mind Text G2 (line 24, note), I think the implication of Martin's being behind the door is a threat to the client to pay up and cause no trouble.
- 25 JGC's translation of this stanza was: "'That is his excuse,' said she. / Hu fudar! Hei fedar! / Up with you, you cajoler! / Fierce icinesses rose / On Donald, / He levelled at Margaret / Fair abuse!" Perhaps the less said the better.
- 26 As it stands this line is meaningless. If the rhyme is on the sound *é*, going with the previous stanza, perhaps what we have is *feudail* 'darling'. If it is on *ò* to go with *this* stanza, which is semantically more likely, it could be the vocative case of *pòitear* 'a hard drinker'.
- 27 I take *cuisnean* to be the same as *cuislean*, defined by Dwelly (1977: 296) as a little vein or artery, a chanter or a little pipe.
- 33 Carmichael's *crambail* may be a misreading of *crambait* in JGC's lost original. JGC's 't' could easily be mistaken for 'l' in an unfamiliar word (Black 2005: 639). Dwelly gives *crambaid* as 'metal on the end of a sword-sheath or -stick, ferrule' (260). It is the English word 'crampet'. The metaphor is of a harp-key, a key for tuning a harp, presumably inspired by the Blind Harper's hilarious song '*Féill nan Crann*', where he tells how he lost his *crann* or harp-key and the women of Dunvegan clubbed together to send to Barra for a new one (Matheson 1970: 12–19). It is full of doubles entendres like: *Chaidh ionnstramaid o ghleus / On chaill e fhéin a chrann*. "His instrument has gone out of tune / Since he lost his harp-key." There is a possible inference that if a man had lost his sexual potency he would find it again in Barra, perhaps because at that period, c. 1700, religious sanctions against promiscuity were in particularly short supply in Catholic areas, or perhaps because the MacNeil of the day encouraged promiscuity or failed to control it. This is of some interest given that in more recent times Barra and neighbouring Vatersay were the source of texts G1 and G2.
- 35 JGC's translation of this stanza was: "'You have done a mischief,' said the clerk, / 'That I don't regret! / Utter ruin has come upon you / With your broken stick!'" His 'clerk' for 'harper' was a slip of the pen, I think, due to the similarity of sound between *clàrsach* and 'clerk'. The harper is clearly the owner of the harp, that is, the pimp who runs the brothel. He does not care whether the clients perform or not, as long as they pay.

- 39 JGC's translation of this stanza is good. It sounds to me as if the pimp/landlord is persuading the drunken client to take even more drink on the basis that it will actually bring back his potency.
- 43 Again, JGC's translation of this stanza is good. Whether he had suspicions about what it really meant, we will never know. He was already eleven years dead when it was published in 1902, which helps explain how it got into print.
- 46 With the client dead drunk and no use for anything, we say farewell to bawdry.
- 47 Obviously this prose passage begins something new. The theme is not sex but food, and I have made many changes to JGC's translation, which ran: "I went on Candle night to hold New Year revel / In the house of fat puddings, / I asked admittance at the door, / Coaxingly with fair words; / The big clerk of the street spoke / A senseless word: / 'If my gold crook were in my hand / I would not let your head whole from the door.'" "
- 49 *Brosnach* is clearly the adjective from *brosna*, a faggot of wood. In many of the poorer island homes where wood was in short supply, loose faggots were the only door-closures the people had. Perhaps here, since the poet is saying that these people had plenty to eat, it means that there was a proper door but that the householder was so mean that he had jammed it tight with faggots.
- 51 JGC has the poet wishing that he had his *caman òir* or 'gold crook', but I am fairly sure that it was a *caman odhar* 'brown shinty-stick' or 'dun-coloured shinty stick'. New Year's day was associated above all with shinty matches (Black 2005: 536–37).
- 53 What JGC calls a 'north turn' is what we would call going anticlockwise – this frustrated first-footer tries to get his own back on *bleidire mór na sràide* by going round his house in the devil's direction to curse it, with predictable results. This is the first piece of verse in this new section, and it is clearly not in *snéadhbhairdne*. There is in fact a closely related text in *Tocher* no. 41 (1987–88, p. 286), got from Mrs Christina Shaw in Harris in 1973 as part of a more conventional Hogmanay rhyme.

*Chaidh mi timcheall na creige—  
B'e siod timcheall mo chreicheadh:  
Bhuail ordag mo choiseadh  
Ann an aodann na cloicheadh.  
Fhuair mi leagadh anns a' pholl:  
Siod an leagadh a bha trom!  
Dh'éirich coin a' bhail' air mo  
dhrum.*

I went around the rock—  
That was a disastrous turn:  
My big toe hit  
The face of the rock.  
I fell flat in the mud:  
What a heavy fall that was!  
The township's dogs set upon my  
back.

The Harris version does not make a lot of sense in itself, but JGC's helps us understand its dynamic. It started off as a curse, as I have shown, but by the twentieth century in Harris *timcheall* had been substituted for *tuaitheal*.

- 57 The translation is JGC's, and it stands up well. Whereas in Harris our hero falls in the mud and the dogs set upon him, in Tìree all the metal objects hanging in the doorway fall on him instead. Either way there is much noise and fun. That is clearly the end of this particular *rann Callainn*, which could perhaps be characterised as belonging to the 'aggressive reception' type, like Text C.
- 60 This is the start of a mainstream *rann Callainn*, again not in *snéadhbhairdne*, but very eccentrically translated by JGC: "Rise down, young wife / And honest dame, that hast carried praise, / Be womanly as thou wert wont / And bring our Christmas gifts to us." In fact he had already cited and translated a very similar one (JG Campbell 1902: 233–34; Black 2005: 532):

*Éirich a-nuas, a bhean chòir,*

Rise down, young wife,

<p>'S a bhean òg a choisinn cliù;  Éirich a-nìos, mar bu dual,  'S thoir a-nuas ar Callainn duinn.  A' chàbag air am bheil an aghaidh réidh  'S an t-ìm nach do bheum sùil —  'S mur bheil sin agad air chòir,  Fòghnaidh aran is feòil duinn.</p>	<p>And young wife who hast earned  praise;  Rise (and come) down, as you were wont,  And bring down our <i>Calluinn</i> to us.  The cheese, that has the smooth face,  And butter eye has not blinked;  But if you have not that beside you,  Bread and flesh will suffice.</p>
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*Ìm nach do bheum sùil* is properly 'butter not struck by the evil eye'.

- 63 Given his translation (see previous note), I think JGC believed that this line had come in from a love-song by mistake for *Thoir a-nuas ar Callainn duinn* ('Bring down our Hogmanay to us' or 'Bring down our Christmas gifts to us'). It should be remembered that in Protestant Scotland there was total confusion between Christmas and Hogmanay, especially after the introduction in 1752 of the Gregorian Calendar, which caused Old Christmas Day to fall on 5 January.
- 64 JGC's translation of this stanza was a little careless: "The smoothed-faced cheese / And entrails prepared with juice; / But if these are not convenient / Bread and cheese will suffice." I have emended as necessary; the important point is that our visitor is hungry.
- 68 Here the verse crumbles into prose, but what it says is fascinating. JGC's translation was: "It was not greed with open mouth / That brought me to the town / But a hamper on my servant's back! / A white servant catch me, / Fatness burns me! / Open and let me in! / 'True for him,' said the goodman, / 'let him in.'" As can be seen, I have made a few small emendations.
- 69 The poet insists that what he is engaged in is 'thigging', as in Text B. The hamper on the servant's back is reminiscent of a graphic description of thigging by the Rev. Thomas Pococke, who travelled in Sutherland in June 1760 (Kemp: 8): "I, this day, met an aged person, who had much the look of a gentlewoman. She had about her shoulders a striped blanket, and saluted us genteely. She was followed by a maid without a cap or fillet, with a bundle at her back; this was a sort of decayed proprietor, who, I suppose, was going round a-visiting; and as they are very hospitable to all, so they are not uncivil to such unfortunate persons."
- 70 With regard to the extraordinary 'whiteboy seizing me, fat burning me', Hogmanay lads disguised themselves with white hoods, cloaks and masks, a tradition which could certainly have sinister or aggressive undertones. These were picked up from Scottish settlers in the southern states by what became the Ku Klux Klan (cf. Hayward: 569), while their Irish equivalent evolved into the agrarian resistance movement called the Whiteboys. This is the only place where I have seen one of the *gillean Callaig* referred to as a *gille geal*, but it makes perfect sense – as does 'fat burning me', because, as pointed out earlier, at the heart of the Hogmanay ritual was a *caisean(-uchd)* or sheep's dewlap which was brought to the house by the *gillean Callaig*, singed at the fire and sniffed by everyone in the family. This was a fatty piece of meat, and here it sounds as if it was being used almost as an instrument of torture. So the man of the house says: "Let him in."

Thus, in spectacular fashion, do we reach the end of Text H. Thanks to contextualisation, we have reached a pretty good understanding of it. As a result of the exercise as a whole, a potential typology of Gaelic Hogmanay rhymes has emerged. Firstly there are the 'standard' rhymes, such as text A, in which the *caisean-uchd* is presented and a polite appeal is made for food and drink. Secondly there are the thigging rhymes, where the *caisean-uchd* is dispensed with and the begging is 'up front' and professional. Thirdly there are rhymes

containing elements of physical and/or verbal violence, including threats and curses. Fourthly there are sexual rhymes, and fifthly there is 'Duan na Ceàrdaich', which raises the possibility that other rhymes about doors may have been pressed into service in the same way. With regard to form, we have noticed the *snéadhbhairdne* metre being used for the sexual rhymes in particular. Prose passages may occur with any kind of metre, though in some cases these may equally be regarded as unscannable free verse or as corruptions of good verse. Text H lines 47–50 look scannable, for example.

Since I have proposed adjustments to translations published in *Tocher*, I would like to emphasise that this is in no way intended to reflect on the professionalism of any member of that journal's editorial team, past or present. The translations of Gaelic material in *Tocher* have been of a consistently high quality since it was founded in 1971, and remain so today. The blame lies entirely at the door of past scholars who have denied the existence of a tradition of bawdry in Gaelic literature, or suppressed the existing record of it to justify their views. For the latest discussion of this problem see W. Gillies: 160–61.

It may well be asked whether it is possible that Texts G1 and G2 derive from an otherwise unknown poem by the celebrated Alexander MacDonald (see Text G1, note on line 38). It may be argued that he was fond of bawdry, that he employed the 'harp' metaphor for sex, that he made copious use of *snéadhbhairdne* in his greatest poem, '*Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill*', that he was born and brought up at Dalilea, seven miles from Strontian, and that he served as catechist or schoolmaster/catechist for Strontian (as part of the parish of Ardnamurchan) from 1729 to 1745. Indeed, it is against the backdrop of the mines that he made his first appearance in fiction (Watts: 51, 90). On the other hand, it would have to be pointed out that *Maighstir Caimbeul*, 'Long Donald' Campbell of Text G2 line 36, lost his position as factor in the year that MacDonald was first appointed as catechist, so one promising connection appears to fall away. It seems to me that the most persuasive argument in this matter is the existence of Text H, which confirms that there was a popular tradition of New Year being spontaneously celebrated with the composition of *crossanachd* consisting mainly of bawdy rhymes in *snéadhbhairdne*. MacDonald may have participated in this tradition, just as he participated in the making of waulking songs, but there is no evidence that he invented it.

This allows me to make some further points from a more strictly ethnological perspective. Firstly, Neill Martin has asked (352, 379) whether Hogmanay rhymes from Gaelic Scotland reveal the vestiges of a dialogic tradition analogous to those associated with marriage rituals or with the admission of St Brigid to the house on the February quarter-day, involving 'the householders – perhaps mainly the women – in ritual acts amounting to more than merely lifting the latch'. Judging from our three poems, the answer is yes. Text G1 is a dialogue between a client and a prostitute. Text G2 adds the voice of a pimp. And text H appears to boast a whole cast of characters, including a narrator, a client, prostitutes called Margaret and Mary, a pimping innkeeper called Martin (also referred to as the *clàrsair* 'harper'), and a thigger.

Secondly, this Gaelic material makes a good fit with its Lowland equivalent, the Galoshins play, as described by Hayward. In the form in which it is known today, the Galoshins seems to be a late seventeenth-century invention, but the Gaelic material is suggestive of an uninterrupted medieval tradition, elements of which may have been practised at one time throughout Scotland. There is so much about sex and the cure of venereal disease in the Galoshins that Hayward says (566): "All this tends to the conclusion that the original action was the bringing of fertility, dramatised by applying black, the colour of sexual vigour, to the male and female sex organs."

Thirdly, our material could be fed very successfully into the discussion of festive misrule in Humphrey's *Politics of Carnival*: to what extent do these rhymes represent a subversion of the norms of social behaviour (that is, real social change)? To what extent are they a mere

safety-valve by which traditional society lets off steam once a year in well-defined circumstances in order to preserve conservative values intact through ‘symbolic inversion’? Humphrey seeks to find a middle road between these constructs by taking the sources for festive misrule one at a time and examining their specific context. This is what I have tried to do. And to *that* extent, I think JGC was on the right track when he wrote about Text H in 1874 (Black 2005: 532): “The allusions it contains to the ‘big clerk of the street’, etc., make it highly probable the ceremonies of the evening were remains of the Festival of Fools, and had their origin in the streets of Rome.”

### Appendix: Correspondence of Sir Alexander Murray

Sir Alexander Murray (1687–1743), third baronet of Stanhope in Peeblesshire, was a Jacobite entrepreneur with a passionate interest in exploiting the mineral wealth of the West Highlands. In 1723 he purchased the estate of Ardnamurchan and Sunart from Sir Duncan Campbell of Lochnell. Setting up his headquarters in Mingary Castle, he made grandiose plans for the development of the lead mines at Strontian. With the help of his brother Charles and a partnership of investors who included the duke of Norfolk and Field-Marshal George Wade, several veins of ore were opened, principally at Bellsgrove (Bell’s Groove), and accommodation was created for 500 workers. The mines lost money from the start, and were leased to the York Buildings Company in 1730, whereupon the settlement became known as New York.

Things then went from bad to worse. In 1735 the unpaid miners took possession of the ore. In 1737 an Edinburgh merchant, Francis Grant, took over the management of the works on a sub-lease from the company. In 1738 Murray’s estate was sequestered, and in 1740–41 the mines were abandoned. They were worked again with occasional success, however, during the years 1751–60, 1767–??, 1800–71, 1901–04 and, finally, 1982–86, when up to sixty-three workers were employed supplying barytes to the North Sea Oil industry (Murray: 68–78; Cameron; RCAHMS 1980: 254–55; Cummings: 234–86; Clarke). Strontianite, which gave its name to the element strontium, was discovered there in 1790 (Murray). The spoil heaps and broken rock are being crushed and used in local road works to this day (Iain Thornber, personal communication).

Sir Alexander’s correspondence is contained in the seven bound volumes of NLS Adv. MS 29.1.1. It is a rich source of detailed information on his life and times, his family and contemporaries, his estates and enterprises. It has been quarried in the past by such scholars as Basil Megaw (1963) and Ian Fisher (RCAHMS 1980: 253–55); also on one occasion, thanks to information from Dr Megaw, by myself (Black 1986: 20). Regrettably it is poorly organised and uncatalogued, so it is hoped that this little guide to material of particular relevance to students of West Highland history may be of use:

Vol. 1, ff. 11–27, 40–42, 54–55, 89–92, 97, 103–85.

Vol. 2, ff. 102–10, 157–58, 176–248.

Vol. 3, ff. 101–27, 187–259.

Vol. 4, ff. 11–12, 70–71, 84–94, 98–99, 104–09, 114–18, 121–22, 125–31, 140–43, 148, 151–54, 157–58, 161–64, 175–76.

Vol. 5, ff. 125–54, 208–09.

Vol. 6, ff. 21, 73–156, 190–251, 260–61.

Vol. 7, ff. 33, 36–38, 49–60, 76–77, 80–82, 95, 122–23, 133–34, 137–42, 152, 161–63.

The following excerpts have been chosen to illuminate points made above about gardens (Text G1 line 4, note), Carnoch (Text G1 line 22, note), the head of Loch Sunart (Text G1

line 23, note), prostitution (Text G1 line 38, note), bark (Text G2 line 35, note) and Donald Campbell (Text G2 line 36, note). They are here arranged in chronological order.

(1) vol. 1, ff. 136–39 (Donald Campbell, factor, Mingary, 30 September 1723, to Sir Alexander Murray), f. 136v: “As to the Cutting and peeling of Wood; ’till Keepers are appointed, a Court held, the whole people old & young Sworn as is usual, ffinnes imposed and severely exacted, and withall private and trusty inspectors commission’d both over the Countrey People & publick Keepers of the Woods, I don’t really see at present what can be done that way further than publickly & privately to warn and exhort them which I have already frequently done.”

(2) vol. 6, ff. 79–80 (Donald Campbell, factor, Camustorsay, 21 July 1726, to Charles Murray, Strontian), begins acephalous f. 79r “. . . God’s sake let me have your advice – My own opinion is that the Barks should be sent off with the greatest haste that so the whole may not be lost – and yet I dread it’s rotting and turning useless before it can be sold off – In short I am heartily vex’d about it – The Rogue Will Rea is still and gives no attendance Once I clear Accompts [79v] with him I’ll turn him off – I am much vex’d at what has happen’d your face – ffarewell my dear Charles and may God bless you Return the bearer in the greatest haste and let me know how you are I am / Yours [*signed*] DonCamp. / Camustorsay 21st July 1726 / [80r] After a second Thought I think its not proper to take Wm. MacLeod off from his Labouring least he should make an Excuse of it afterwards for not fulfilling his Bargain Refuses his Expence – The Barks will not make near so many Barrels as was thought at first The wind proves so very favourable for my brother that I think . . .” Remainder illegible.

(3) vol. 6, ff. 81–82 (Donald Campbell, factor, Mingary, 13 August 1726, to Charles Murray, Glasgow), f. 81r: “John MacLean will I suppose write to you from the head of the Loch about what Tackling Anchors & Cables &ca. will be wanting for our Boats – which are already very near being useless for want of Such.”

(4) vol. 2, ff. 224–35 (memorandum by Sir Alexander Murray, acephalous and undated, c. 1726–27), f. 225v: “The lands of Strontian & Carnuck a pendicle thereof is possessed by one Mckay who has the stock of Cattle belonging to the late Dungallons nice upon Steellbow – The Baillie of Morvin being the said Girle’s nearest agnate did sett the said goods to the said Mckay & took upon him to sett it him for 5 years altho’ at the time of setting him the same the 7 years of prolongation granted by Sir Duncan were expired so that it was & is in my pow’r to remove [*‘all’ deleted*] him & all concerned in the said Wadsett – This I mention the rather because I was thraiten’d likewise this year by Donald Mcallan & Baillie of Morvin to be hindered from building houses upon Strontian ground – & the said Mckay did begin to give me opposition so much as to lead Wood from of my own grounds of Carnuck untill I fell upon methods of Bambusleing [*‘all’ deleted*] him as well as the Baillie of Morvin & Donald Mcallan – for first haveing heard of the Baillie of Morvin’s design of giveing me opposition in building houses at Strontian I pay’d him a visite & told I resolved to to take Strontian into my own hand and to take the Girle’s stock of Cattle from Mckay & put them upon my grass in Ardnamurchan upon the same terms that Mckay pay’d for them. By [226r] By this means said I to the Baillie I shall be able to satisfy Donald Mcallan for his loss of Ariundel by giving him Carnuck to join to his lands in Morvin – Strontian it self is more than I want at the head of Loch Sunart. This took with him immediatly, whereupon we promised all mutual friendship to one another – he promised to concurr in every thing with me in turning away the goats &ca.”

(5) vol. 2, f. 232v (at this point in the memorandum Sir Alexander is telling his unknown correspondent that he will meet the gentlemen of his new estate and tell them that he is resolved to continue them in their wadsets and tacks, with certain exceptions, of which the fifth and sixth are as follows): “Alltho by my wadsett contract I am not obliged to allow [*them* deleted] you any manner of wood – & altho’ I might pursue the wadsetter & other tennents for all the dammadges already done by cutting barking [233r] barking or destroying my said woods – yet I am willing to pass over all that’s past provideing you come in to reasonable terms for the future – I am content on the one hand to allow timber for all manner of houses provideing they do not exceed the number presently built upon the saids lands – whereof a list must be given me up from all & each tennements of the Countrey & mentiond in the Contract providding that no wood except Birch wood be taken – and that at the sight of Servants to be employed by me for seeing the saids woods cutt down – and at proper times of the year – I mean for preservation of the bark – providing likewise that the walls of all the future houses to be built shall be made of Stone & that no Creel houses whatsoever shall be either built or repair’d. 6to That all the Goats shall be removed out of all & Sundry the lands of Sunart at & betwixt the term of Whitsunday 1727.”

(6) vol. 2, f. 189 (Sir Alexander Murray, Mingary, 21 July 1727, to John Cameron, ‘Son to Euan Cameron In Respole’), f. 189r: “Dr John / Having hir’d a Bark for some time to Carry up lime Stone from this to Strontyan, and to bring down timber from the woods to this place – [*fitt* deleted] I must intreat you would upon Sight of this my letter get as many of the Countrey people as you can for dragging down the timber of all sorts that you can find in all places nearest the Shore that so it may be caried or dragd by little boats or in floats to the Side of the Barque and so put aboard [*thereof* deleted] of her.

“In the first place let all the Birch timber which was bark’d last year be draggd to the Shore – and at the Same time let all the pieces of old [*Squar’d* deleted] oak whither Squar’d or fitt for any use which you may find near the places where the said [*Barkd* deleted] peeld Birch dos lye be likewise dragd to the shore and Sent of with the Said [*Birch* deleted, *Barqued* deleted] peeled Birch wood –

“When you have drawn [*as much as you can* deleted] all the said wood to the Shoar, than [*sic*] let all the other Squard pieces of oak lying along the Braes of the Loch Side be nixt dragd to the Shore to be ready to be put aboard the Said Barque by the help of our little Boats – and so brought down hither

“but in case you have not [*enough* deleted] as much of timber for use of the above kinds got ready dragd to the shoar as will throughly load the Barque then [*load her* deleted, *fill* deleted] make up her loadning with the Oak fire wood which lyes upon the Shoar Side already [*and employ likewise people to* deleted] laid together

“[189v] I leave it intirely to your [*self* deleted] own discretion to agree as reasonably as you can with Such people as will work for Meal & wadges – and shall pay the money every Saturdays night – and have sent you up two bolles Meal to be given Such of them as wants –

“In short as you have been very usefull & faithfull to me So I expect you & your brother will continue to be so in your turns and [*now* deleted] you may depend if god spare me you shall not repent it give my kind service to your honest father and advise with him in this matter – so as by the help of floats I mean tying & Swimming a parcell of Birch wood together and dragging it after a boat to the Barque Side you may make great dispatch. [*I am* deleted] Mr Lachlan McLean will help you in the way we used in floating last year / Dr John / your assurd ffriend to serve you – AM – / Mingary July 21st / 1727 / I expect your answer as the boat return’s but pray see she don’t come back unloaded –”

(7) vol. 2, ff. 176–77 (Sir Alexander Murray, London, 30 June 1729, to Mr Benjamin Kirkup, Newcastle upon Tyne, his adviser on the ‘Iron trade’ and therefore also on his woods), f.

176v: "I desire to know 1mo if the Bark will not pay a considerable part of the Charge and how much you think it may be worth – or whither you mean that it should be allowed to the undertakers – they paying me only the said 3 sh: per Cord – if this be your meaning tho I shall not even grudge them this advantage, yet surely by a good management they may make a vast profite – for I got betwixt five & six shilling pr barrell for the Birch bark which for a tryall I [*'sold' deleted*] sent [*'into Ir' deleted*] and sold at Newry in Ireland – and there is thirty six thousand barrel computed –

"But this you see naturally leads me to repeat 2do the desire of having as many of my former Questions anent Bark answerd as you can by the help of people dealing in that trade – which I beg therefor you would do as soon as you can."

(8) vol. 3, ff. 198–99 (Donald Cameron, factor, Strontian, 23 December 1729, to Sir Alexander Murray, Edinburgh), f. 198r: "Sir / After parting with you I made all possible speed home, not only to look after my own Family affairs; but also to put my Commission in Execution, that you had given me. So as soon as I came home; I went to Mingary upon Martinmass Day; shewed Mr. Campbell your Commission: And besides I sent my Servants through the whole Tenants of Ardnamorchan, desiring them, to tell them plainly, not to pay their Rents to Mr Campbell this year: or if the[y] did, that his discharge would not be valid; and that you, if you pleased, might cause them to pay the same again. Mr. Campbell told me, that he had taken up some Cows at May last; that he was very well pleased with your proposal; he would raise no more of the Rents, but Concluded that he would, within four or five days at most, take his Journey for Edinr. come to Strontian and settle all affairs in the most proper Manner; and give me a true List of all such as had made partial pay[men]ts to him of part of their Rent: But no sooner was I come home, than he changed his Resolusion, and declined his coming, at ye Time appointed: And as the Tenants tells me, he sent his Officer thrice, over the whole Towns of Ardnamorchan, chargeing them to come in with their Rents. Such as were his favorites, and did not fear what I had formerly warned them of, came and paid him their Rent. And such as feared double payment observed my warning and kept up their Rents for me. However by the way I see plainly that there is partiality amongst your Tenants, and that they are divided into Factions. At last when I lost hopes of Mr Campbell's coming up, (not knowing what detained him) I went down a second Journey to Ardnamorchan, and to my great surprize found, that he was Just waiting a fair Hour to go off the way of Mull, and not see me at all: His reason for so doing is best known to himself; he told it not to me, and as little I enquired after it."

(9) vol. 3, same letter, f. 198v: "I made all diligent enquiry about your Barks & Timber in order to answer your demands concerning them: as to ye first, I have not as yet mett with any, that could truly Inform me. The best intilgence I got, was from your old Servant Thomas Durham, who says that the Bark-Barrel should Contain 16 Gallons Scots, or 64 Gallons English, which Barrell of Bark might be stripped and Kiln-dried for about Twenty pence: But as to ye pryces of Carriage, and value to the owner, he did not pretend to know. And he says that ordinarily a Bark Merchant will be a wood Merchant also. As for the Timber part, I have gott no information of as yet. But how soon soever I can be informed of that affair I will send you word.

"However, be pleased to take a view of a Scheme that some Gentlemen of your welwishers, & I, had of your Bark-trade; which is briefly thus: That you should make Enquiry for, and find some fitt Merchant to buy a Certain quantity of Barks, either from Ireland, or in Scotland; and so inform yourself of the best prices, which merchant being found; that he must buy the Barks for so much per Tun, or Barrell, to the Proprietor, when it is ready to be putt on Board the Ship, or Boat: That he is to find Strippers, dryers, & Carriers himself, and likewise bear their Expences. That you should only allow him to make use of

such and such spots of your Woods, as you think may make the quantity of Bark he has agreed for: keeping only one Man to over See the whole work. The reasonableness of this proposal we maintain by this following Consideration; That you will be at great Expences for Stripping, drying, Grinding, Carrying and Sea Freight for the Bark; that if the Season prove moist you will undoubtedly Loss it altogether: it may gett Seadammage or be cast away when transporting and so lost: Besides if you should trust your Barks with some Sly Irish Skipper to Ireland, perhaps you would have the last account of both at departure. And lastly Merchants are more brisk in buying when they are obliged to look out for their wares, than when they come home to their Doors in our humble oppinion this is the safer way when money is gotten for Barks at delivery with little Expences and no hazard.”

(10) vol. 3, ff. 207–08 (Euan Cameron, Resipole, 4 February 1730, to Sir Alexander Murray), f. 207r: “Honrd Sr. / My Sone tells me that ye desired him to tell me that I Should Inform mySelf the best way I Could how undertakers would take in hand to make Each barrell of Bark by which I understand ye’ll not Get Each Barrel below two Shill: Ster: which will require a deal of money, and Some Irishmen tells me that the price they gett for Each Barrell of Birch Bark is Eight Shill: Ster: whither this be truth or not I doe not take in hand to Confirm it for truth, for the Irishmen that wanders here what they Say Cannot all be believed – To my Opinion If ye Could gett people to buy your Bark before Sirped [= *stripped*] it would be more to your Advantage for you’ll be att much Charges or [= *ere*] ye Gett your Bark made and sold in Barrels pardon me for telling you my weak Opinion – If ye donot think this Method proper ye’ll require to have faithfull Servants to Oversee your Workmen in Cutting & Stirping [= *stripping*] your Woods who by Some Experience may Inform you what ye will require to Give to undertakers for making Each Barrel of Bark.”

(11) vol. 4, ff. 128–29 (Robert Blackburn, Mingary Castle, 4 April 1730, to Sir Alexander Murray, Strontian), f. 128r: “Bartholemew McManus Gardiner is fully Determined to leave the service tomorrow and the Reason why because hes not Allow’d [expenses for] plants. I have Argued with him pretty warmly upon this point and told him that his Demand was very unreasonable Considering that his day wages was Extraordinary. Andrew the Gardiner is lying Indispos[e]d since he Arrived from Mull so that I am at Demur. Seeing theres a Necessity for a Man to be close in the Garden and particularly at this Juncture your Answer to this will be verry Satisfactory.” At f. 130v, in a letter from which the end (and therefore the date and writer’s name) is missing, is the resolution of the dispute: “I have half made a bargain with McManus who is to get two [or] thre[e] other men to himself.”

(12) vol. 1, ff. 54–55 (Robert Hunter, Strontian, 1731, to Sir Alexander Murray), f. 55: “Sir in Like your honour ther is one Nellie McMorphen who was house Keeper here when you left this She is now talking openly She got herself pepper’d in this family by the Laird and we hear others Say its your Baillie but agreed it betuixt you, for its non of mine but if it happen to be your’s I have procur’d one that will father it for you which is George Murray Suppose he has a wife of his own, he was married Last Tuesday but without all jesting he offers his Se[r]vice to you if ther be occation and if you can make her give it to him, Thers Some of the Servants in this family has found your Baillie in her roum at twelve acclock at night and She in bed and nothing but Darknes and a great many other presumptions I hear She is a very bad woman So it’s hard to Show who it belongs to, for on proof of it, She made her Self pass for a wedow here and yet I hear her husband is still alive and on his way from Irland to Struntian. So the farther in the deeper, I hear She has Sent a letter to you Latly which confirms the Story Most to me, if ther be Such a thing I wish it had been better managed.”

(13) vol. 6, ff. 250–51 (Edward Lothian, Edinburgh, 10 March 1760, to Charles Murray), f. 251r: “The Factor complains of our having cutt more wood in the five Years, than was used in that space: I dare say, You’ll not grudge the advantage of having a small Quantity on hand for the good of the groves; especially, when You Consider, the Trouble We have all along taken, of Selling Your Lead, which We have sold to much better Advantage than any Factor could have done, besides saving you the Commission on the Sales; Just now to force Sale, We have bought 600 Bolls Meall at 9 Shillings p[er] Boll from a person who is greatly Conserved in contracts for Farms, when at the same time, We could have gott meall above 1s6d p[er] Boll Cheaper, but We agreed to this Extravagant price, for the Benefite of Selling 40 Tons of Lead, 20shs p[er] Ton higher than any could fetch for it; moreover, as Your Factor got always the Bark, the proceeds thereof, would pay the value of the Wood.”

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