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Music from the Source: *Am Muileann Dubh* and North Atlantic Supernatural Music Legends

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In August 1987, John Shaw recorded a legend in Bayfield, Prince Edward Island, Canada from Hugh MacPhee concerning his ancestor Peter 'Toganaidh' MacPhee, a piper who had emigrated from South Uist in the late-eighteenth century:

> There was in the early days in the land settlement – they had to live on a piece of property a couple of months or something – for a year – in order to hang on to it. And this chap Peter MacPhee, he was – had a grant of land in Rock Barra a way out back in the woods and he had a log cabin on it and well there was a spring there and he used to go out in the summer and he'd spend his two months out there to hang on to the grant or whatever. And he was at a spring one day to get a pail of water and he fell asleep and there was a fairy came out of the spring and played this tune. This old chap incidentally was a piper and this fairy played the tune and after a while the fella woke up. He had a strange name. They called him Toganaidh. Now what does that mean to you in Gaelic – Toganaidh? [...] Well this little Toganaidh he went back to his log cabin and got his pipes and he played the tune. And this – that was it.[1]

MacPhee performed the supernaturally-sourced tune learned by his piping ancestor on the fiddle for Shaw, titling it 'Fairy at the Spring'. The legend presents a pattern familiar in several North Atlantic traditions: a supernatural being at a water source transmits music to a musician. The fairy emerges from a spring (*tobar*) and plays a tune; the piper carries it away and passes it on across tradition's carrying stream. The Gaelic word, *tobar*, embodies a semantic range that encompasses both the physical spring and the metaphorical source or origin. That this legend of music flowing from a

[1] John W. Shaw, *Prince Edward Island Gaelic Field Recording Project*, Institute of Island Studies, UPEI, Audio Tape 17, Cut 1: 'Fairy at the Spring', recorded in Bayfield, Prince Edward Island, 30 August 1987. Performers: Dan MacPhee (violin), Hughie MacPhee (violin), Ann MacPhee (piano). Recordings held in the Island Special Collections, Robertson Library, UPEI. The present author learned the melody of the tune on the bagpipes from Shaw's field recording of Hughie MacPhee playing it on the fiddle, and today it can be heard again among both fiddlers, including the author's good friend Ward MacDonald, who has since transcribed the tune from MacPhee's recording, and pipers at céilidhs and dances in Prince Edward Island. The tradition of supernatural music acquisition remains embedded in the cultural memory of the Prince Edward Island Gaelic community. According to MacPhee family lore, Toganaidh received not only the tune but a hereditary gift for musical retention transmitted through subsequent generations; see Ken Perlman, *Couldn't Have a Wedding Without the Fiddler: The Story of Traditional Fiddling on Prince Edward Island* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2015), 117. For an extended discussion of the Peter 'Toganaidh' MacPhee legend and supernatural music acquisition traditions and tunes in the Southern Outer Hebridean diasporic traditions of 'The North Side' (the north shore of Kings County, PEI), see Perlman, *Couldn't Have a Wedding*, 15, 116–17, 157–58; also Bowing Down Home Music Collection: Fiddle Music of PEI, Island Archives, University of Prince Edward Island, Canadian Museum of History control No. A2012–0143, https://bowingdownhome.ca/islandora/object/bdh:2162).

supernatural source should be preserved in Shaw's field recordings carries its own resonance in marking Shaw's remarkable contributions to the field, documenting, analysing, advancing, and renewing our knowledge of these traditions, from which the intergenerational knowledge transmitted and expressed in Scottish Gaelic on both sides of the Atlantic continues to flow.

Set alongside Donald Archie MacDonald's Scottish supernatural migratory legends index, the PEI legend finds parallels in the communities from which Peter MacPhee had emigrated.[2] Hugh MacPhee's telling combines elements of two related types: F101, 'Fairies Teach Piping', describing active supernatural tuition,[3] and F103, 'Fairy Song or Tune Overheard and Learned', in which Peter MacPhee is not directly instructed but rather receives the tune while asleep and reproduces it upon waking. F103 shows a notable concentration in Shetland, where MacDonald identified several variants referring to the origin of the tune 'Winyadepla' as potentially reflecting a single legend type.[4] His index also includes F12, 'Music Heard from Hill', and F18, 'Fairies Haunt Mill', the latter situating supernatural encounters at the same site frequently found in Scandinavian tradition.[5]

The circumstances of Peter MacPhee's acquisition mirror those found in the Shetland tradition that underlies MacDonald's Winyadepla variants. As noted by Katherine Campbell in a tale from Fetlar, Gilbert Laurenson goes to the Fir Vaa water-mill one winter night to grind his corn. Sitting among the straw while the mill turns, he falls into a drowsy state, 'not sleeping but, you know, nodding, when he heard music outside'. 'Peerie folk' arrive by boat, enter the mill-house, and finding him there, one says: 'Don't meddle with him, he's no a bad boady'. They produce a stringed instrument and play and dance;

[2] Donald Archie MacDonald, 'Migratory Legends of the Supernatural in Scotland: A General Survey' (*Béaloideas* 62/63, 1994–95): 54–55.

[3] The School of Scottish Studies Tale Archive holds seventeen variants of F101. Outer Hebridean oral recordings predominate, particularly from South Uist, where traditions of the Smearclait pipers (*Pìobairean Smearclait*) were collected from Donald MacIntyre, Snishival (SA1952.146.1), Roderick Bowie, Ormaclete (SA1953.036.A1), Archie MacDonald, Garryhallie (SA1953.036.B1), and Donald MacInnes, South Glendale (SA1953.274.B9). MacCrimmon traditions appear in recordings from Donald MacLean, Grimsay, North Uist (SA1977.187.B3); Patrick MacCormick, Hacklete (SA1958.026.A5; SA1968.276.B4); Donald Alasdair Johnson, Àird Mhòr (SA1970.189.A9); Peggy MacDonald, Loch Aoineart (SA1958.082.B1); Nan MacKinnon, Barra (SA1958.152.1); Donald Alick MacEachen, Benbecula (SA1963.052.A2); and Donald John Stewart, Stilligarry (SA1975.032.A1). Published sources include Kenneth MacLeod, 'MacCrimmon Traditions', *The Celtic Monthly* 3 (1895): 186; and John H. Dixon, 'William Maclean's Fairy Chanter', in *Gairloch and Guide to Loch Maree* (Edinburgh: Co-operative Press, 1886), 160. Manuscript sources include 'MacCrimmon Learning Music' (1891), Lady Evelyn Stewart Murray Manuscripts, LM MSS 186, SSSA/TA/FL101/009. Non-Hebridean variants from Perthshire include Andrew Stewart, 'The Finger Lock' (SA1955.153.A3), and Bella Higgins, 'Johnnie One-Tune' (SA1955.149.B14; SA1955.150.A22). For a full transcription and translation of Patrick MacCormick's Benbecula variant, with editorial commentary on the Smearclait traditions, see 'Fairies and Fairy Music', *Tocher* 26 (1977): 108–12.

[4] The School of Scottish Studies Tale Archive holds four variants of F103, confirming MacDonald's observation of a Shetland concentration. Two Shetland recordings preserve *trow* music traditions: George Peterson, 'The Fiddler o Gord', Papa Stour (SA1974.204.B1); and Brucie Henderson, 'Man Learns Trowie Reel', Arisdale, Yell (SA1954.113.3). See also John Spence, 'Tune Overheard and Learned from Fairies', in *Shetland Folk-lore* (Lerwick: Johnson & Greig, 1899), 151–52. A Hebridean manuscript variant appears in Mrs Crawford, 'Three Fairy Songs', Uist (1900), Maclagan Manuscripts, MML pp. 8041–42, SSSA/TA/FL103/001. For the Winyadepla tradition underlying MacDonald's Shetland variants, see Katherine Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Culture: Aspects of the Tradition* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2007), 108–110. For a full transcription of 'The Fiddler o Gord' with Alan Bruford's editorial notes on the combination of motifs (fairy hill time-lapse, fiddler at fairy wedding, tune learned from fairies), see 'Fairies and Fairy Music', *Tocher* 26 (1977): 103–5.

[5] MacDonald, 'Migratory Legends', 68–69.

Laurenson, 'a man 'at had a great ear for music' remembers the tune, and upon returning home whistles it to his fiddler son, who named it 'Winyadepla' after a nearby loch.[6] The pattern echoes across the Atlantic: a musician in a hypnagogic state at a water-associated site, supernatural beings who arrive and play music, a tune carried away and transmitted to the next generation. In both cases, the recipient is not directly instructed but overhears and retains, adhering to the passive acquisition that characterises MacDonald's F103 rather than the active tuition of F101. The Shetland legend, notably, situates its encounter at a mill. The PEI legend places it at a spring; the Cape Breton legends that this paper will explore move the site to the mill and substitute the devil for the fairy. But the underlying structure persists: a supernatural being at a water-associated site, and music that passes from the otherworld to human hands. MacDonald's identified Scottish F-types and Christiansen's Migratory Legend type 4090 'Watersprite Teaches Someone to Play' catalogue regional articulations of this legend complex.[7] ML 4090 preserves the fullest narrative structure, combining site, offering, supernatural tuition, and consequent proficiency within a single type, while MacDonald's F101, F103, and F18 distribute these elements across distinct categories, reflecting the forms in which they survived in Scottish and Shetlandic tradition. The Cape Breton legends, as this paper will observe, maintain structural features absent from recorded Scottish and Irish material but present in Christiansen's Norwegian variants, suggesting a Scottish Gaelic cognate to ML 4090 carried from the Highlands and Hebrides during the era of emigration.

ML 4090 and Its Distribution

Christiansen's description of ML 4090 in *The Migratory Legends* establishes the type's core structure: a water-sprite, the *fossegrim* or *nökk*, dwelling in a river or lake, is willing at a certain time to teach a would-be musician to play the violin in exchange for an offering of meat. A learner who attempts to cheat the sprite receives only the ability to tune but not to play; the narrative concludes with the player's later proficiency (or lack thereof). The mill appears as a significant site across Christiansen's Norwegian variants. General references note the exchange occurring 'close to the mill; somebody heard the music'. A Telemark variant records the being as 'heard playing in a river close to a mill', while another from the same region describes an 'accidental listener in mill compelled to dance to the music all through the night; exclaiming "God save us" until he was free'. A Southern Norwegian variant places the supernatural 'in the shape of a goat in a mill', while a Western Norwegian account specifies 'on Christmas eve in a mill'. Two Northern Norwegian variants also locate the encounter 'in a mill'.[8]

Equally significant is the documented substitution of the devil for the water-sprite in certain variants. Christiansen records that in Eastern Norway 'the thing was dangerous, it meant committing oneself to the devil', while in Southern Norway 'to learn to play one had to commit oneself to the

[6] K. Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Culture*, 108–10. The tale was collected from Jeemsie Laurenson of Fetlar (1899–1983); Campbell also cites a version in John Stewart and Peter Moar, 'When the Trows Danced', *Shetland Folk Book* II (1951), which dates the encounter to 1803. Campbell subsequently (127–28) cites Alan Bruford's observation: 'The fiddler asked or forced to play for a fairy wedding or other dance is a theme very popular in Shetland with its strong tradition of fiddle playing [...] if the idea [is] a mainland one it is certainly one that flourished when transplanted to the soil of Shetland'; see Alan Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk, Finns, and Picts: The Identity of the Good Neighbours in Orkney and Shetland' in *The Good People: New Fairylore essays,* ed. Peter Narváez (New York: Garland, 1991), 126.

[7] Reidar Th. Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends: A Proposed List of types with a Systematic Catalogue of the Norwegian Variants*, FFC 175 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1958), 77–80.

[8] Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, 77–80.

devil' and on 'successive Thursday nights, devil appeared'. Most explicitly, a Northern Norway variant, told about renowned violinist Ole Bull, specifies that 'the teacher in this case was the devil himself'.[9] The malleability of the supernatural being encountered at the mill, whether water-sprite, devil, or fairy, is a characteristic feature of this tradition complex across ethnolinguistic contexts.

The distribution of ML 4090 beyond Scandinavia illuminates its relationship to the Scottish and Irish material. Bo Almqvist's systematic catalogue of Irish migratory legends lists ML 4090 with no Irish attestations, only a cross-reference to the fairy type MLSIT 4091, 'Music Taught by Fairies (The Fiddle on the Wall)'.[10] In her comparative study, Ríonach uí Ógáin clarifies the distinction: the sacrifice to the supernatural being central to ML 4090 has no correspondence in Irish tradition, nor are there Irish legends in which the gift of music is bestowed by water beings, 'though this is relatively often the case in Scottish tradition', explaining that on the Scottish mainland and in the Hebrides the supernatural music teachers are specified as fairies rather than water-sprites, while in Shetland, trolls also appear in this role.[11] Katherine Campbell's survey of Shetlandic Fiddler and Trow legends reinforces this picture: 'The Shetland form of the tradition, in which music and musical skills are learned from fairies rather than watersprites, clearly has Scottish rather than Scandinavian connections' although she agrees with Bruford's observation that the theme 'flourished when transplanted to the soil of Shetland'. [12]

Like the Shetlandic variants, Scandinavian tradition maintains a pattern centering on water beings at mill sites: the Norwegian *fossegrim* or Swedish *strömkarl* dwells in waterfalls and mill-races, teaching fiddle to those who seek him out.[13] These beings bear a range of names associating them with age, water, and the mill itself: Norwegian *kvernkall*, Swedish *kvarngubbe* ('old man of the mill'), *strömgubbe* ('old man of the stream'), *forsgubbe* or *forskarlen* ('old man/man of the falls').[14] Merrill Kaplan notes that the *strömgubbe* might show gratitude for an offering of tobacco by playing a tune (similar to the exchange in some Hebridean piping legends), while narratives locate the musical *fossegrim* 'under a falls, especially by a mill, where he played so beautifully that millers forgot their work.[15] A Scottish Gaelic cognate to this transactional pattern appears in a South Uist variant of MacDonald's F101 recorded from Donald John Stewart of Stilligarry, in which a boy entering a *sìdhein* ('fairy mound') offers tobacco to a *seann bhodach bochd glas* ('a poor old grey fellow') in return for *buaidh na pìobaireachd* ('the gift of

[9] Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, 78–80. On the devil and fiddle music more broadly, see Herbert Halpert, 'The Devil and the Fiddle', *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin* 2/2 (1943): 39–43; Herbert Halpert, 'The Devil, the Fiddle, and Dancing', in *Fields of Folklore: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Goldstein*, ed. Roger D. Abrahams (Bloomington: Trickster Press, 1995), 44–54; Maiko Kawabata, 'Virtuosity, the Violin, The Devil... What Really Made Paganini "Demonic"?', *Current Musicology* 83 (2007): 85–108; Holly Everett and Peter Narváez, '"Me and the Devil": Legends of Niccolò Paganini and Robert Johnson', *Contemporary Legend* 4 (2001): 20–47.

[10] Bo Almqvist, 'Crossing the Border: A Sampler of Irish Migratory Legends about the Supernatural', *Béaloideas* 59 (1991): 276.

[11] Ríonach uí Ógáin, 'Music Learned from the Fairies', *Béaloideas* 60/61 (1992–1993): 211.

[12] K. Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Culture,* 127–128; Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk', 126.

[13] Christiansen, [ML 4090] *The Migratory Legends*, 77–80; Bengt af Klintberg, [F111–F113] *The Types of the Swedish Folk Legend*, FFC 300 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2010), 125–126; Dag Strömbäck, 'Some Notes on the Nix in Older Nordic Tradition' in *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Frances Lee Utley,* ed. J. Mandel and B. A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 252–253.

[14] Merrill Kaplan, 'Trolls in the Mill: The Supernatural Stakes of Waterpower' in *Myth, Magic, and Memory in Early Scandinavian Narrative Culture*, ed. J. Glauser and P. Hermann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 130.

[15] Merrill Kaplan, 'Supernatural Encounters in the Haunted Mill: Perception and Experience', *Journal of Folklore Research* 59/1 (2022): 16–17.

piping').[16] Strikingly, the Norwegian *kvernkall* denotes both the supernatural being and the vertical axle of the horizontal water-mill, a polysemy suggesting, as Kaplan observes, 'a metaphoric enchantment of the mill environment'.[17] The Scandinavian terminology finds a precise Gaelic cognate in *bodach a' mhuilinn* ('the old man of the mill'), likewise the term for the vertical shaft of the horizontal mills, *muilnean dubha* ('black mills'), that once turned on swift flowing bodies of water throughout Scotland's Gàidhealtachd.[18] The PEI legend discussed above situates the encounter at a spring; the Shetland legend at a water-mill; the Cape Breton legends place the supernatural musical encounter at *am muileann dubh* and substitute the devil for the fairy. In every mill-situated legend, the anthropomorphised mechanical beating heart of *bodach a' mhuilinn* carries the potential for various sensory encounters, its sound and motion generating the conditions for both material sustenance and supernatural music to pass into human hands. The transaction encoded in the Cape Breton legends of the devil in the black mill, where a tune is exchanged for a soul, embodies this dual character.

The Mill as Site

The structural correspondences outlined above, the supernatural being at a water-associated site, the transmission of music, the mill as the persistent locus of encounter, establish a formal relationship between the Cape Breton legends and the wider North Atlantic tradition complex. But formal correspondence alone does not explain why the mill persists. Shaw's study of the relationship between language, music, and local aesthetics in Gaelic tradition argues that 'traditional Gaelic culture is far more a unity than is widely perceived', with evidence for their interconnection residing not in transcription but in performance.[19] To understand the site's tenacity across ethnolinguistic boundaries accordingly requires attending to the place the horizontal water-mill occupied in the social, acoustic, and cosmological life of the communities that carried these traditions, and to the historical pressures that transformed it from a living institution into a remembered one. The horizontal water-mill and the adjacent corn-drying kiln were gathering sites where labour, performance, belief, and encounters with other beings converged. John Francis Campbell of Islay observed that 'the mill was probably the resort of idlers and the place for news, as it still is';[20] the kiln, where grain was dried before milling, served a similar function, extending collective labour into the night hours. As gathering sites for evening labour, these were also places where traditional repertoire of verbal art circulated. As Hector Maclean elaborates regarding Ann Darroch's 1859 account of the tale *An Nighinn agus an Duine Marbh* ('The Woman and the Dead Man'), learned from Margaret Conal:

> A child would not easily forget a story learned amongst a lot of rough farmers, seated at night round a blazing fire, listening to an old crone with palsied head and hands; and accordingly, I have repeatedly heard that the mill, and the kiln, were the places where my informants learned their tales.[21]

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[16] School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA1975.032.A1.
[17] Kaplan, 'Supernatural Encounters', 7.
[18] Alexander MacKay, 'The Horizontal Mill at Kirtomy, Farr, Sutherlandshire', *The Celtic Magazine* 11 (1886), 470–71.
[19] John Shaw, 'Language, Music and Local Aesthetics: Views from Gaeldom and Beyond', *Scottish Language* 11/12 (1992–1993), 37.
[20] J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands, Orally Collected*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1860), 155.
[21] J. F. Campbell, *PTWH* vol. 1, 218.

Margaret Conal, Darroch's source for many of her tales, frequented the mills and kilns, 'where she was frequently rewarded, for amusing them in this manner, by supplies of meal'.[22] The exchange is explicit: narrative performance for grain, tradition circulating through the same channels as the agricultural product.

As well as narrative, musical repertoire circulated at and about the mill. The tune *Am Muileann Dubh* carried a *port-à-beul* whose verses describe the mill site itself.[23] The lyrics first appear in print in Donald Macpherson's *An Duanaire* (1868: 118) and were recorded across Scotland and the diaspora throughout the twentieth century, from South Uist to Cape Breton and beyond.[24] The song served the same function Campbell described for tales at the kiln: entertainment during communal labour or gathering, traditional repertoire exchanged in everyday settings. As Gregor MacGregor noted:

> Only an old Highland herd intimately acquainted with the habits and habitats of grouse, goats, sheep and *crodh-laoigh*, and who has for many a long winter forenight sat by the glowing hearth, and heard the smuggling tales then so common, can appreciate the suggestiveness of the song. Every line is pregnant with meaning.[25]

The imagery of the *port-à-beul* encodes the mill's liminal quality. Wild birds nest in the human structure: from *nead na circe fraoich* ('the red grouse of the moorland'), a nearly universal verse found from MacPherson's earliest printed reference onward, to *nead a' Ghille-bhrìde* ('the oyster-catcher of the shore') in a Mull variant.[26] Domestic animals take possession of the workspace, with consistent reference to *gobhair 's crodh-laoigh* ('goats and cattle'), *gobhair agus caoraich* ('goats and sheep'), and *crodh a' breith nan laogh* ('cows calving'). A Skye version adds *feamainn agus maorach* ('seaweed and shellfish'), products of the tidal margin appearing in the grain-processing site.[27] The expected contents are sometimes absent: *Shaoil leam gun robh min-eorna / 'S a' Mhuilionn-dubh 's gun deann*

[22] J. F. Campbell, *PTWH* vol. 1, 217–218. Conal's storytelling is discussed in Carl Lindahl's contribution to this volume.

[23] The tune's documentary trail through instrumental collections spans over two centuries and reveals the same semantic instability visible in the *port-à-beul* and associated narrative tradition; see Appendix 1, p. 124. Its earliest known appearance, as 'Snuff in the Black Mill' in the James Christie music manuscript collection (Northeast Scotland, c. 1730–1760), already embeds the snuff-mill association that became a source of debate among later commentators; the oscillation between 'mill' and 'snuff-mill' is apparent across the sources listed, while the Rook (1840) and Aird (1803) appearances confirm the tune's early penetration into Lowland and English repertoire.

[24] The *port-à-beul* tradition of 'Am Muileann Dubh' is extensively documented in both print and field recordings from both Scotland and Nova Scotia; see Appendix 2, p. 124–5. The *port-à-beul* also crossed into Irish-language tradition in East Ulster. Máire Nic Aoidh of Caolasnasg, Gleann Airimh, County Antrim, sang a version referred to as a *suantraí* (lullaby) to Aoidhmín Mac Gréagóir (1884–1950), published in *An tUltach* in 1927 with a *luinneog* describing the mill as going '*ar bhogatan*', nearly identical to its Scottish Gaelic counterparts. Nic Aoidh's version includes the distinctive opening *Tá mé i gcoinne 'tol 'sa Mhuileann dubh... Shíos ag bun na h-abhainne* ('I am against going to the Black Mill... down at the foot of the river'); see Máire Nic Aoidh, 'An Muileann Dubh', in *Athchló Uladh,* ed. Gearóid Giolla Domhnaigh and Gearóid Stockman (Béal Feirste: Comhaltas Uladh, 1991), 72.

[25] Gregor MacGregor, 'Am Muileann-Dubh', *Celtic Monthly* 8 (1900): 159–60.

[26] Donald MacPherson, 'Am Muilionn Dubh', in *An Duanaire: A New Collection of Songs and Poems* (Edinburgh: MacLachlan & Stewart, 1868), 118; Capt. Dougald MacCormick (Dùghall Iain Nèill Dhùghaill, 1877–1960), Fionnphort, Muile (Mull), recorded by Calum Iain MacIlleathain, July 1953 (SA1953.117.B4; Tobar an Dualchais track 92274).

[27] Alasdair Mac Neacail, 'A' Mhuileann Dhubh', in *Oideas na Cloinne* (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair, 1900), 86.

ann ('I thought there was barley meal in the Black Mill, but not a grain to be had').[28] In their place, many things you wouldn't expect (*iomadh rud nach saoil sibh*) were found: from *snaoisean* ('snuff'), an imported luxury become commonplace, to, in some versions, the devil himself. Ferguson, recounting the tradition of the Black Mill of Tullochcurran in Strathardle, Perthshire recorded: *Tha 'n Diabhull-dubh air adhaircean / 'S a' Mhuilionn-dubh* ('The black devil with horns is in the Black Mill'), interpreting it as:

> From the uncanny noises heard about it at nights, he thought the great muckle Deil himself was there by the horns […] If Great Hornie himself was not there, there certainly were smaller hornies, as the cows and goats had taken possession of the deserted mill, in which calves and kids were born.[29]

Robert Craig MacLagan recorded a similar verse: *Tha an Donas fhein 's taod air 's a' mhuilean dubh* ('The Devil himself with a halter on is in the Black Mill').[30] The diabolic association present in the Cape Breton legends thus appears in the song tradition as well. Ferguson's account also confirms the mill's wider supernatural reputation: 'the Black Mill was always reckoned an uncanny place to go near after dark, being haunted by everything evil'.[31] Each image resolving in the chorus: *Tha 'm muileann dubh air bhogadan/thurraman… 's e togairt dol a dhannsa* ('The black mill is shaking/bouncing/whirring/humming… wanting to go dancing').

John MacInnes observed of the Gaelic conceptualisation of wilderness and domesticated space: *Tha creutairean an fhàsaich a' tighinn dhar n-ionnsaigh-ne o àm gu àm. A dh'aindeoin sin, tha a' chrìoch daingeann* ('Creatures of the wilderness come toward us from time to time. Despite that, the boundary is firm').[32] MacInnes' *creutairean an fhàsaich* encompassed both the natural and the supernatural: the deer as both game animal and fairy livestock, the seal as both marine mammal and shape-shifting ancestor. The mill and spring occupy analogous positions: sites where the *crìoch* between *baile* ('home') and *fàsach* grows permeable, where grouse nest in the rafters, goats calve among the millstones, and beings of more ambiguous ontological status, whether fairy, devil or *bodach a' mhuilinn*, emerge to transmit what humans could not produce alone. Mayanthi Fernando's coinage of 'more-than-natural' offers a useful term for this convergence, capturing 'the more-than quality of supernatural without being saddled with the latter term's baggage'.[33] The *port-à-beul*'s inventory of *iomadh rud nach saoil sibh* ('many things you wouldn't expect') catalogues precisely this convergence of natural and supernatural presence at this threshold site. A dynamic pattern of such paired imagery within the lyrics co-constitutes nature and culture, labour and play, assembling beings and materials from across boundaries, shieling, shore, and otherworld, encoding them all within the mill's liminal matrix. MacInnes' characterisation of the *fàsach* applies equally to the mill as threshold node in which

[28] Charles Ferguson, 'Sketches of the Early History, Legends, and Traditions of Stratharle and its Glens, Part IV', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 20 (1894–96): 260.
[29] Ferguson, 'Sketches', 260–261.
[30] Robert Craig MacLagan, 'Gaelic Erotica', *Kryptadia* 10 (1907): 346.
[31] Ferguson, 'Sketches', 261.
[32] John MacInnes, 'Am Fàsach ann an Dùthchas nan Gàidheal', in *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes*, ed. Michael Newton (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006), 498.
[33] Mayanthi Fernando, 'Uncanny Ecologies: More-than-Natural, More-than-Human, More-than-Secular', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 42/3 (2022): 580, n. 9.

these domains converge: *Tha cunnart is toradh annta le chéile* ('There is danger and productive yield in them both').[34]

Versions of the song's text crossed the Atlantic with Highland and Hebridean emigrants. It appears in Jonathan G. MacKinnon's Cape Breton Gaelic newspaper *Mac-Talla* in 1902[35] and in the collection published by Prince Edward Island-born Rev. Murdoch Lamont (*Murchadh mac Eòghain 'ic Caluim 'ic Mhurchaidh Bhuidhe*, 1865–1927), *An Cuimhneachan*, glossed as a collection of *Òrain Céilidh Gàidheal Cheap Breatuinn agus Eilean-an-Phrionnsa* ('Ceilidh Songs of Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island Gaels').[36] A field recording from the 1970s documented it among other *puirt-à-beul* from Angus A. Gillis (*Angaidh Aonghais Ailein*) in Broad Cove, Inverness County, Cape Breton.[37]

Beyond the legend tradition, the reel *Am Muileann Dubh* and its associated *port-à-beul* lyrics hold an iconic place in Cape Breton social dance music.[38] Calum Mac Gill-Iosa's song '*Bàl na h-Aibhne Deas*', describing a house dance in South West Margaree, lists *Nead na Circe Fraoich* among the repertoire of tunes the fiddlers enjoyed at such gatherings (1939: 45).[39] Charles Dunn noted that the tune carried a social charge in Margaree, where playing it could give offence to the local MacDougalls, who were sensitive to any reference to poultry on account of a joke once told and remembered at their expense.[40] The tune thus functioned not only as bearer of supernatural legend but as a living relational element in community social dynamics, capable of giving offence or delight depending on context. The tune's dynamism is encapsulated in Shaw's 1980 recording of the legend from Angus J. Gillis of Mabou Harbour, where the narrative concludes with the observation *port cho math 's a chaidh a dheanamh riamh* ('as good a tune as was ever made'). In Gillis' telling, legend and song are performed as a unit, the narrative providing an origin account for the tune that the community continued to play *nam b'e an deamhan a rinn e* ('even if it had been composed by the Devil himself').[41]

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[34] J. MacInnes, 'Am Fàsach', 496.

[35] 'Am Muileann Dubh', *Mac-Talla* 10/28, 11 April 1902, 215.

[36] Murchadh Mac Laomuinn, *An Cuimhneachan: Orain Céilidh Gaidheal Cheap Breatuinn agus Eilean-an-Phrionnsa* (Quincy, MA: Vanity, 1917), 5. Rev. Lamont's documentation of Scottish Gaelic song in Prince Edward Island and the wider diaspora is discussed in Tiber Falzett, '"Rachainn fhathast air m'eòlas' (I'd go yet by my experience): (Re)collecting Nineteenth-century Scottish Gaelic Songs and Singing from Prince Edward Island,' in *North American Gaels: Speech, Story, and Song in the Diaspora*, ed. Natasha Sumner and Aidan Doyle (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 339–70

[37] Angus Gillis (*Angaidh Aonghais Ailein*), 81 years old, Broad Cove, Cape Breton, recorded by Gordon W. MacLennan, 1972–74 (Canadian Museum of History, MacLennan Collection, Acq. 78-78, MAC-B-2, Side B).

[38] The reel 'Am Muileann Dubh' (variously listed as 'Black Mill', '*Moulin Dhu*', 'Mullean Dhu', 'Muhlin Dhu', etc.) remains a staple of the Cape Breton fiddle repertoire. Alan Snyder's *Cape Breton Fiddle Recording Index*, Edition 5.0, s.v. 'Black Mill' (T920), https://www.cbfiddle.com/rx/tune/t920.html, documents over forty commercial recordings of the tune, predominantly played as an A minor or B minor reel; see Appendix 3, p. 126 below, for a list of these. The tune is also documented in the Prince Edward Island fiddle tradition; see Omar Cheverie, 'Miss Drummond of Perth / Devil in the Kitchen / Black Mill / Drunken Piper', *Bowing Down Home* Music Collection, Canadian Museum of History; Peter Chaisson Sr. (Bear River), violin, with Kevin Chaisson, piano, Shaw, Tape 15, Cut 1 [PEI Gaelic Field Recording Project], 30 August 1987.]

[39] Mac Gill-Iosa, Calum, 'Bàl na h-Aibhne Deas', in *Smeorach nan Cnoc 's nan Gleann*, ed. Hector MacDougall (Glasgow: Alexander MacLaren and Sons, 1939), 45.

[40] Charles W. Dunn, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), 102.

[41] Angus J. Gillis, Mabou Harbour, Cape Breton, recorded by John Shaw, 1 December 1980 (Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection 302A3). Transcription and translation in John W. Shaw, ed. and trans. *Na Beanntaichean*

Polysemy of '*am muileann dubh*'

The term *muileann dubh* designated the horizontal water-mill in Hebridean and Highland usage. Stevenson recorded its currency in the Inner Hebrides in the early 1880s: 'In Colonsay they are called *Muileann Dubh* or Black Mills'.[42] The toponym is widely distributed across the Highlands and Hebrides: in Argyll, the Ordnance Survey Name Books record Blackmill near Taynuilt (OS1/2/23/34), Blackmill *Loch* at *A' Chruach* (OS1/2/56/89), and on Luing a "*Muileann Dubh* (Ruin)" near Black Mill Bay (OS1/2/53/171); in Inverness-shire, Blackmill in Duthil and Rothiemurchus Parish where *Allt na Criche* enters the River Feshie (OS1/17/4/52) – the site associated with the Glen Feshie origin tradition discussed below; and in Benbecula, *Loch a' Mhuilinn Duibh* (OS1/18/10/32), with Alexander Carmichael among the informants consulted by the surveyors.[43]

The persistence of these toponyms in living memory is attested in a Lochaber anecdote recorded by Calum I. Maclean from Iain MacDhòmhnaill ('Iain Beag') of Highbridge, near Spean Bridge, in 1951. A stranger arrived with a map and asked an old man born in the area about 'Allt a' Mhuilinn Duibh' at the boundary at Bracleitir; the old man denied its existence. MacDhòmhnaill, overhearing the exchange, confirmed both name and site:

> *Bha e ag oibreachadh muileann air son min a bha a' dol a sìos àite ris an abair iad Sloc an Amair. Agas tha làrach a' mhuilinn a sin gus an latha an diugh agas tha làrach a' bhothain a bh'aig a' mhuileann*.
>
> It was working a mill for meal that went down to a place they call Sloc an Amair. And the ruins of the mill are there to this day and the ruins of the bothy that was at the mill.[44]

The disjuncture between cartographic and local knowledge encoded in the exchange mirrors the interpretive plurality of the term itself.

The *muileann dubh* of the *port-à-beul* similarly resists singular definition. Commentators have variously identified it as a horizontal water-mill of the Norse type, its wheel lying flat in the stream; a snuff-mill, the small hand-held tobacco grinder carried by many Highlanders; or an illicit still, the *smùid* ('smoke') of which blackened the bothy walls and gave the operation its name.[45] The interpretive debate

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Gorma agus Sgeulachdan Eile à Ceap Breatainn / The Blue Mountains and Other Gaelic Stories from Cape Breton (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 184–187.

[42] William Stevenson, 'Notes on the Antiquities of the Islands of Colonsay and Oransay', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 15 (1880–81): 136.

[43] Additional *muileann dubh* toponyms appear in Colonsay; see John de Vere Loder, *Colonsay and Oronsay in the Isles of Argyll: Their History, Flora, Fauna and Topography* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1935), and Stevenson, 'Notes', 136–137. In Lathurna, see Dugald Gordon MacDougall, *Bràiste Lathurna (The Brooch of Lorn): A Memorial Volume of Gaelic Poems and Songs*, ed. Somerled Mac Millan (Glasgow: K. & R. Davidson, 1959), 38. In Nairnshire, the OS Name Books record Black Mill (Corn), 'a Farm Steading and corn Mill... worked by Water power' (OS1/22/6/29). Grid references for extant Blackmill place-names include NH855035 and NM730085 (Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba database; pers. comm. Dr Jacob King, 7 October 2025). OS Name Book references via ScotlandsPeople, https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/virtual-volumes/os-name-books-main.

[44] School of Scottish Studies Archives, Calum Maclean Notebook 9: 802–803.

[45] The literature reflects three principal interpretations. For the **horizontal water-mill,** see Stevenson, 'Notes', 136–37; and Ferguson, 'Sketches', 260–61. For **snuff-mill**, see D. MacKinnon, 'Muileann Dubh', *Celtic Monthly* 8 (1900): 49. Angus MacKay's MS (1826–1870) gives the title as "*Muilean Dubh an t-Snaoisean*" (The Black Snuff Mill): see Ronald Smith, 'The Black Mill', *Piping Times* 16/8 (1964): 24. Ferguson explicitly

itself is significant: it reflects both the semantic capaciousness of the image and the vicissitudes of life in the nineteenth-century Gàidhealtachd, where the horizontal mill was passing from use, smuggling was being suppressed, and the social contexts that gave the song meaning were under pressure. More radical readings push further.[46] R.C. MacLagan, noting the resemblance of *mulan* (hillock) to *muileann*, interpreted the song as 'evidently phallic', its metaphorical imagery of nesting, animals, and hidden contents lending itself to bawdy elaboration.[47] Such readings find mechanical grounding in the *' a' mhuilinn*, the vertical shaft of the horizontal mill that drives the grinding stones, a term that invites symbolic extension into the life-cycle drama of *bodach* and *cailleach*, the old man and old woman whose interplay structures so much of Gaelic seasonal ritual.[48] A proverb preserved by Finlay MacLeod's Lewis informants encodes this gendered pairing within the grain-processing cycle itself: "*Balach fireann 's e ri fàs, / Dh'itheadh e mar mheileadh brà, / Mar thioradh bodach air an àth, / Mar dh'fhuineadh cailleach ann an clàr*" ('A male boy a-growing / Eats as a quern mills, / As an old man drying grain in the kiln, / As an old woman baking on the board').[49] The proverb maps the transformation of grain onto gendered

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rejects this reading; see his 'Sketches', 260. For **illicit still**: Charles Fraser-MacIntosh notes 'the 'Moulin Dhu' always at work' in his 'Minor Highland Families, No. VI. The Frasers of Guisachan (Culbokie), style Mac-Huistean', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 18 (1891–92): 321. Andrew Mackintosh comments, 'The "Muileann Dubh", we know, is a smuggling bothy', in his 'English and Gaelic Words for Strathspeys and Reels', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 28 (1912–14), 294. Raghnall Mac Ille Dhuibh reports being told that *muileann dubh* was a code-word for an illicit still, the discharge (*smùid*) blackening the exterior stonework, and notes that *dubh* can mean 'obscure, hidden' (cf. *dubh-fhacal*, riddle); see Raghnall MacIlleDhuibh, 'Seall Seo', *The Scotsman*, 27 March 1982. MacGregor's reading suggests that *iomadh rud nach saoil sibh* ('many things you wouldn't expect') may encode a reference to illegal whisky production, and that the song tradition preserved a memory of the *muillear dubh* (black miller), the local term for a whisky smuggler; see MacGregor, 'Am Muileann-Dubh', 159–60. The *Piping Times* exchange between James E. Scott and Ronald Smith (1963–64) repeats the water-mill vs. snuff-mill debate from earlier sources without resolution; Scott dismisses the verses as 'pure nonsense' and 'mnemonic'; see 'The Black Mill' in *Piping Times* 16/1 (1963), 11; 16/8 (1964), 24; and 16/11 (1964), 21.

[46] Beyond the Gàidhealtachd, *Am Muileann Dubh* circulated as an increasingly romanticised emblem of Highland culture in the broader Scottish imagination. James Hogg places 'The Mullin Dhu' within an explicitly Jacobite repertoire performed to rally Stuart adherents; see his 'Song XIX: The Piper o' Dundee', in *the Jacobite Relics of Scotland* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood), 43–44. An itinerant fiddler in Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* offers 'Mullin Dhu' to test whether a stranger is 'a north-country gentleman', using Highland repertoire as an ethnolinguistic aesthetic marker; see Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor* in *Tales of My Landlord*, *Third Series,* vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1819), 253–254. By mid-century, the tune could circulate without explicit Highland or political marking, as in Grace Webster's 1845 novel *The Disputed Inheritance* (vol. 1, 57) where 'the Moulin Dhu' figures simply as vigorous dance music. The progression from Jacobite repertoire to ethnolinguistic shibboleth to unmarked dance tune traces the tune's absorption into a broader Scottish musical culture, even as late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century commentators debated its origins.

[47] MacLagan translates *mulan* as 'black hill' and interprets the song as 'evidently phallic', translating *air bhogadan* as 'shaking', and *a' togail, dol a dhannsa* as 'rising, going to dance'; see his 'Additions to the Games of Argyleshire (Continued)', Folklore 16/4 (1905): 457. Two years later, MacLagan's *Kryptadia* piece provides additional potentially bawdy verses: he glosses *Tha ministeir na glaodhaich* ('the minister cries out') as '"A useless wooden minister", a simile used for an erection of an impotent member', and also extends the framework to other mill imagery: 'it was said of a poor woman that "her mother left her two mills, one a water-mill, the other a windmill". "The little mill" is used as a term of endearment. In Gaelic the first mentioned legacy is designated "the black mill". There is a well-known Gaelic air so-called which lends itself easily to extemporised variations of the song.' (MacLagan, 'Gaelic Erotica', 346).

[48] Alan Gailey, *Irish Folk Drama* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1969), 97–98.

[49] Finlay MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga Leòdhais* (Stornoway: Acair, 2009), 38; and Finlay MacLeod, *The Norse Mills of Lewis* (Stornoway: Acair, 2009), 38.

labour: the *bodach* ('old man') at the kiln (*àth*), the *cailleach* ('old woman') at the baking board (*clàr*), the appetite of the growing boy measured against the productive capacity of both. Gunnell places such gendered semiotics within a wider North Atlantic framework of masked 'old woman' figures, from the straw *Cailleach* of Islay and Kintyre to Icelandic *Grýla*, Faroese *grýlur*, and Norwegian *Lussi*.[50] The mill, in this light, becomes not merely a site of labour or supernatural encounter but a nexus where the energies of nature and culture, life and death, the quotidian and the numinous converge.

The *cailleach* of Gaelic tradition is, as Ó Crualaoich observes, 'the personification, in divine female form, of the physical landscape within which human life is lived and also of the cosmic forces at work in that landscape'; the term itself signifies the last sheaf of the corn harvest in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic tradition.[51] The ritual dimension of this pairing is further reflected in *Cailleach an Dùdain* ('Carlin/Old Wife of the Mill-Dust'),[52] a dramatic performance documented from the mid-eighteenth century in which a *bodach* and *cailleach* enact a combat, death, lamentation, and limb-by-limb resurrection. The etymology is significant: *dùdan* is the dust produced when a small variety of oats is threshed, blackening the thresher's face;[53] and MacInnes equates *dùdan* with *sadach na muilne* ('mill dust'), running in parallel to the pipe tune's translated title in English.[54] The *cailleach*'s *dùdan* is thus the product of the mill's *mìn* ('meal'), a consequence of its *toradh* ('product'), her body the site where grain is transformed into sustenance. MacInnes observes that while the opening lines of the *port-à-beul*, *A Chailleach an Dùdain cum do dheireadh rium* ('Old wife of the mill-dust, keep your rear to me'), carry only 'a hint of bawdiness', he also mentions that 'one of the strains of bawdry in Gaelic is particularly associated with the words of dance-tunes; that this may be an old tradition of erotica, possibly going back to fertility rites', now surviving 'in caricature'. [55] The drama was performed at Michaelmas, the harvest festival, and later as a children's game at Bealtaine. The structural parallel to the mill's mechanics is suggestive: the *bodach* ('mill-shaft') acts upon the *cailleach* ('dust/product'), death yields to resurrection, grinding yields flour.

That seasonal, erotic, and productive registers converge within a single performance complex points beyond the Gaelic evidence. De Martino's analysis of southern Italian tarantism identifies a polysemous symbolic system operating through precisely these registers simultaneously, tracing a sequential pattern: the harvest animal that possesses the reaper of the last sheaf, the bodily animation through music's power, and the collapse upon music ceasing and revival upon music resuming, demonstrating a pattern that mirrors the death and limb-by-limb resurrection of the Hebridean drama.[56] De Martino's insistence that tarantism cannot be reduced to any single register but operates as a unified symbolic order provides

[50] Terry Gunnell, 'Masks and Mumming Traditions in the North Atlantic', in *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur, 2007), 298.
[51] Gearóid Ó Crualaoich, *The Book of the Cailleach: Stories of the Wise-Woman Healer* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2003), 10–11, 139–40; see also Calum I. Maclean, 'The Last Sheaf', *Scottish Studies* 8/2 (1964): 195–196.
[52] The *Cailleach an Dùdain* tradition warrants fuller treatment than is possible here and I am grateful to Dr Andrew Wiseman for sharing sources on this with me in our conversations over the years. Primary documentation is summarised in Appendix 4, p. 127 below.
[53] T. M. Flett, 'Addenda et Corrigenda: Some Hebridean Folk Dances', Journal of the English folk Dance and Song Society 7/3 (1954): 183.
[54] John MacInnes, 'Gaelic Song and the Dance', in *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John* MacInnes, ed. Michael Newton (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006), 253; and see "*Cailleach an Dùdain*. (The old wife of the mill dust)" in *Pipe Major William Ross's Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music,* Book 3, 46.
[55] J. MacInnes, 'Gaelic Song and the Dance', 253–254.
[56] Ernesto De Martino, *The Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism,* trans. and annot. D. L. Zinn (London: Free Association Books, 2005), 114–118 and 124–125.

theoretical warrant for treating the *bodach*/*cailleach* complex of the mill-site similarly. The regenerative logic at work is what Bakhtin identified in the grotesque body as 'pregnant death, a death that gives birth': the *bodach* kills the *cailleach*, the *cailleach* rises, the mill grinds on.[57] Willie Fraser's telling of the Cape Breton legend, as we shall see, transposes this cyclical logic into narrative: the *cailleach* dies, the tune is gained, but what was regenerative in the ritual becomes transactional in the telling. The competing legends on the tune's origins in Scotland, however, variously attribute *Am Muileann Dubh* to specific mills and historical events, and may be understood as localisations of this deeper pattern: the tune and its performance attached to sites where the energies the *cailleach* personifies (fertility, production, transformation) operate along the ambiguous boundary between human and more-than-human ontological spheres.

Competing Legends on the Tune's Origins

The tune's fame generated competing claims across the Highlands, each locality attaching *Am Muileann Dubh* to a known mill and a memorable historical event. Charles Ferguson located the original at Tullochcurran in Strathardle, where a miller-poet composed the tune when his wheel turned again after the devastating frost of 1571; the mill thereafter acquired an uncanny reputation, haunted by 'the largest and most dangerous water kelpie on the Ardle'.[58] The Rev. D. MacDougall and others placed it at the Black Mill of Invereshie in Glen Feshie, where an Argyll piper composed the tune after the 1594 defeat at Glenlivet, the retreating Campbells finding shelter and sociability at the mill.[59] Hugh MacMillan attributed it to Rothiemurchus, where Rob Roy burned Mackintosh's mill in a territorial dispute.[60] What unites these narratives is the absence of the teaching structure central to ML 4090: in each case, a human composer (miller-poet or clan piper) creates the tune in response to circumstance. Where the supernatural appears, it is rationalised: Ferguson's devil with horns becomes goats sheltering in the abandoned mill; his kelpie is encountered by a man returning drunk from celebrating the fall of Sebastopol.[61] Yet the water-horse at the mill-lade persists as a trace, linking Ferguson's Strathardle tradition to Donald MacDonald's shape-shifting *bodach a' mhuilinn* appearing in the form of a great white horse, great black dog, or *Satan* himself, as discussed below.[62] Both bear semblance to the Scandinavian *nøkk* or *näck*, the water-sprite of ML 4090, which frequently appears in equine form and is associated with mills and watercourses. Shetland tradition preserves a cognate figure in the *njuggel*, likewise haunting mills at night; the cluster of equine water-beings at mill-sites across the North Atlantic suggests a shared tradition complex within which the Cape Breton devil-at-the-mill legends may be situated as cognates rather than isolates.[63]

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[57] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 25.

[58] Ferguson, 'Sketches', 260–262.

[59] D. MacDougall, 'The Argyll Stone', *The Cairngorm Club Journal* 3/16 (1901): 301–302.

[60] Hugh MacMillan, *Rothiemurchus* (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1907), 46–47.

[61] Ferguson, 'Sketches', 261–262.

[62] Donald MacDonald, 'Bodach a' Mhuilinn', in *Bard Bharbhais | The Barvas Bard: Songs, Poems, Stories, and Sketches* (Glasgow: Alexander MacLaren & Sons, 1920), 72. These specific forms belong to a widely documented European pattern: Valk's statistical analysis of 1874 manifestations in Estonian folk religion shows horse and dog among the most frequent zoomorphic devil forms, a distribution consistent across Estonian, Lithuanian, Russian, and German traditions; see Ülo Valk, *The Black Gentleman: Manifestations of the Devil in Estonian Folk Religion.* FFC 276 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2001), 105.

[63] On shape-shifting as a defining feature of the Gaelic water-horse, see Raghnall MacIlleDhuibh, 'An t-Each Uisge', *Scottish Studies* 37 (2014): 127–128. On the Shetland njuggel (< ON nykr) and its mill-haunting

The Vicissitudes of Vernacular Practice: Autonomy, Suppression and Resistance

A sensory evocation of the soundscape of an eighteenth-century *baile* in Lewis is recalled by Geddes: 'It is told of a man of exceptional prosperity, that when he laid his head on a pillow "he could hear on the one side the clacking of his corn mill and on the other the babble of his still". What more could the good man want?'.[64] The *glagadaich* (clacking) of the rotating stones is remembered in an oral testimony from Siadar, Lewis, recalling how when the sluice was opened, '*thòisicheadh na rothan a' glagadaich agus na clachan-muilne a' cur char*' ('the paddles would begin to rattle and the millstones would begin to turn').[65] The affective quality of this soundscape is further captured in testimony from Finlay MacLeod's Lewis informants. One recalled the nocturnal mill in terms that name the phenomenological conditions for supernatural encounter:

> '*S e àite fuar a bh' innte, àite iargalta a bhith innte air an oidhche leat fhèin le fuaim nan clachan 's a' bhùirn. Bhiodh teine innte 'son teatha a dhèanamh le canastair dubh*.
>
> It was a cold place to be; an eerie place to be by yourself at night with the noise of the millstones and the water. There was a fire in it to make tea in a black tin.[66]

The Gaelic term *iargalta* ('eerie,' 'uncanny', 'forbidden') directly names the quality that precipitates otherworldly encounter: isolation, darkness, cold, and above all the rhythmic acoustic saturation of stone against stone and rushing water.

Such anecdotes, linking various types of simultaneously competing and complementary productivity, embed their sounds within these ambiguities: the audible yet unintelligible clacking of the *glagan* ('clapper') turning against the rotating stones, the murmur of the still, the trickle of droplets of *bainne* ('milk') from *a' chaora chrom* (lit. 'the crooked sheep,' i.e. the still's worm) and the splashing of the rushing stream against the *bodach*'s *sgiathan* ('wings/paddles') driving it all, serve as aural indices of autonomous production in an era of increased imbalance and uncertainty. The three practices, grinding grain, distilling spirits, playing music, processed the harvest in distinct but parallel ways, transforming raw material into sustenance, libation, and dance. Both horizontal mill and still stood apart from the rest of the township's economy, both increasingly situated in secluded locations away from everyday life.

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behaviour, see Jakob Jakobsen, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland* (London: David Nutt, 1928–32), 186; also J. A. Teit, 'Water-Beings in Shetlandic Folk-Lore, as Remembered by Shetlanders in British Columbia', *The Journal of American Folklore* 31/120 (1918): 180–201. Ülo Valk notes: 'The name näkk is borrowed from a Germanic language: either from Scandinavia (the Swedish näcken) or from Germany (the south-eastern Estonian näks, naks are related to the German word Nix, Nixe). These Germanic names are probably derived from the demonized image of St Nicholas'; see Ülo Valk, 'The Guises of Estonian Water-Spirits in Relation to the Plot and Function of Legend', in *Islanders and Water*-Dwellers, ed. P. Lysaght et al. (Dublin: DBA Publications, 1999), 338. The formal malleability of these figures (horse, man, formless mass) aligns with the substitution of devil for water-sprite documented in Christiansen's ML 4090 variants. Bruford observes that the Northern Isles water-horses (nyuggle, tangie, shoopiltie) 'unlike the water horses of the Highlands seem to appear only in horse form, not human', revealing a pattern that contrasts with the explicit shapeshifting capacity of MacDonald's *bodach a' mhuilinn* and with the devil-for-water-sprite substitutions documented in Christiansen's Norwegian variants; see Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk', 123.

[64] Arthur Geddes, *The Isle of Lewis and Harris: A Study in British Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1955), 227.

[65] F. MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga*, 39; and F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 39.

[66] F. MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga*, 38; and F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 38.

The suppression of fiddle music is documented most vividly from Cape Breton itself, where the maintained sociability of the tradition generated resistance to clerical censure well into the latter half of the nineteenth century. John Shaw records that the Rev. Kenneth MacDonald, who served the parishes of Port Hood and Mabou between 1865 and 1894, 'is remembered almost solely for his single-minded and unremitting efforts to discourage the playing of Scottish fiddle music'.[67] One parishioner after being asked if he feared anything, replied: '*Tha, tha an t-eagal orm ro' dà rud: Maighstir Coinneach agus an tàirneanach!*' ('Yes, I'm afraid of two things: Fr Kenneth and thunder!').[68] Shaw's liner notes for *The Music of Cape Breton Volume 2: Cape Breton Scottish Fiddle* link the Cape Breton anti-fiddle campaigns led by clergy to similar efforts in Scotland during the age of Clearance: 'The abundance of fiddle-players in the country areas of the West, even after the time of migration to Cape Breton, is attested to by accounts of the large heaps of fiddles and pipes that were burned in Skye in the 1800s by certain members of the clergy in their attempts to suppress the music'.[69] The same notes record the Cape Breton folk belief that not only contested but completely inverted the diabolic associations with the instrument: 'the fiddle is the only instrument that the Devil can't play because the bow and the body of the instrument form the sign of the cross'.[70] The inversion is precise: where the clergy denounced the instrument as diabolic, community tradition reclaims it as apotropaic, being powerful enough to ward off evil. Both priest and devil emerge as external authorities whose claims the community resists through continued social engagement.

The Scottish evidence appears in Alexander Carmichael's introduction to *Carmina Gadelica*, a source with documented connections to Cape Breton tradition; Carmichael himself noted that informants' earlier sources 'had emigrated to Cape Breton'.[71] What Carmichael documented was wholesale destruction:

> the good men and the good ministers who arose did away with the songs and the stories, the music and the dancing, the sports and the games, that were perverting the minds and ruining the souls of the people, leading them to folly and stumbling... They made the people break and burn their pipes and fiddles. If there was a foolish man here and there who demurred, the good ministers and the good elders themselves broke and burnt their instruments.[72]

The diabolic accusation was explicit. Carmichael recorded the denunciation of a fiddler in Eigg:

> *Tha thu shios an sin cul na comhla, a dhuine thruaigh le do chiabhan liath, a cluich do sheann fhiodhla le laimh fhuair a mach agus le teine an diabhoil a steach*.

[67] John W. Shaw, 'Observations on the Cape Breton Gàidhealtachd and its Relevance to Present-Day Celtic Studies', in *Proceedings of the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies*, ed. Gordon W. MacLennan (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 85–86 and fn 12. See also Kenneth E. Nilsen, 'The Priest in the Gaelic Folklore of Nova Scotia', *Béaloideas* 64/65 (1996–1997), 185–186; and Jodi McDavid, 'The Fiddle Burning Priest of Mabou', *Ethnologies* 30/2 (2008): 125, 133.
[68] Nilsen, 'The Priest', 185, fn. 41.
[69] John W. Shaw, liner notes to *The Music of Cape Breton, Vol. 2: Cape Breton Scottish Fiddle*, produced by John Shaw and Rosemary Hutchison. Topic Records (LP, 1978), 6.
[70] J. W. Shaw, liner notes, *The Music of Cape Breton, Vol. 2*, 6.
[71] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, 6, 284; II, 162. See also J. W. Shaw, 'Observations', 77.
[72] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, xxvi.

> Thou art down there behind the door, thou miserable man with thy grey hair, playing thine old fiddle with the cold hand without, and the devil's fire within.[73]

The instrument denounced was a violin made by a pupil of Stradivarius. The emotional cost of such campaigns is captured in the fiddler's response when his family pressed him to surrender it:

> *Cha b'e idir an rud a fhuaradh na dail a ghoirtich mo chridhe cho cruaidh ach an dealachadh rithe! an dealachadh rithe!*"
>
> It was not at all the thing that was got for it that grieved my heart so sorely, but the parting with it! the parting with it!

Carmichael adds: 'The voice of the old man faltered and the tear fell. He was never again seen to smile'.[74]

Yet the suppression was never complete. Carmichael documented clandestine practice continuing in the *cùlaist* (the recess behind the sleeping quarters in the black house), where girls danced 'for fear of their life and of their death upon them, that they may be heard or seen should the good elder happen to be passing the way [...]. But the girls have a blanket on the door and another blanket on the window to deafen the sound and to obscure the light'.[75] In Cape Breton, Donald Beaton, an accomplished fiddler and grandson of Alexander Beaton of Skye, 'refused outright to hand over his fiddle when ordered to do so by Rev. MacDonald, remarking that it was common knowledge that music was played in heaven and therefore highly unlikely that it should be sinful here on earth'.[76] The emotional register of these accounts, the fiddler's tear, the old man's faltering voice, counterbalances the defiance narratives with evidence of genuine loss. What was at stake was not merely the instrument or the tune but the social bonds that communal music-making sustained, the collective heat of the gathering that suppression sought to extinguish.[77]

Like the fiddle in Scotland's *Gàidhealtachd*, the horizontal mill was not simply passing from use due to outward migration; it was being actively suppressed. As early as 1735, instructions for a new mill at Stornoway specified 'that the Querns in aboutt Starnaway is to be broke'.[78] Where people continued to use their own mills and querns, 'those in authority not infrequently came and broke the millstones in the small mills and often took away the querns that were being used at home'.[79] Carmichael, writing in 1900, described the policy and its consequences:

> When mills were erected, the authorities destroyed the querns in order to compel the people to go to the mills and pay multure, mill dues.[80] This wholesale and inconsiderate destruction of querns everywhere entailed untold hardships on

[73] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, xxviii.
[74] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, xxviii.
[75] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, xxvi–xxvii; J. W. Shaw, Liner notes, 6.
[76] J. W. Shaw, 'Observations', 85, fn. 12.
[77] The metaphorical concepts of *te* (warm/hot) and *fuar* (cold) as structuring principles of social experience in Irish-speaking communities will be discussed further below; see Lillis Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors We Live by: Some Examples from Donegal Irish', *Western Folklore* 59/1 (2000): 38–42.
[78] F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 21.
[79] F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills,* 13.
[80] I.e., typically a portion of the grain milled.

> thousands of people living in roadless districts and in distant isles without mills, especially during storms.[81]

Such destruction accompanied the Clearances and continued through estate consolidation, from the burning of barns, kilns, and mills in Strathnaver in 1814[82] to the closure orders enforced against the small mills of Lewis in the 1860s.[83] The enforcement of thirlage, a law that bound tenants to send their grain to the landlord's mill, was widely despised.[84] In Lewis, crofters told the Napier Commission in 1883 that they had been 'compelled by the estate to send all our grain to be ground at Breasclete Mill, six miles distance', that 'the estate ordered that they be destroyed', and that '[q]uerns are still in use in some of the houses. If we did not do so we could not live'.[85] Oral tradition preserves accounts of resistance: the miller who came to break the township stones and was thrown in the river; the elderly man who, told on his deathbed that his millstones had been smashed, replied that he would rather have lost his best beast.[86]

The semantic field of *dubh* ('black') in *muileann dubh* becomes legible against this background. The term could attach to the horizontal water-mill (capable of circumventing the multure extracted by estate-controlled mills) or to the illicit still, because each occupied the same structural position in the economy of the *baile*: subsistence production outside landlord or state control. The suppression of illicit distillation followed the same trajectory as the suppression of the mills: what had been 'a legitimate home industry by which to pay the rent' was criminalised by legislation favouring large operations.[87] John Shaw noted the pattern of response with characteristic irony: 'It is heartening to observe that similar attempts to discourage fiddle music in Cape Breton some decades later met with no more enthusiasm or compliance than did the clerics' occasional exhortations and dire warnings against the distilling of moonshine'.[88] The *dubh* of the black mill is the darkness of the unlicensed, the unsanctioned, the hidden from official scrutiny: the blanket on the door, the still in the secluded ravine, the mill beyond the factor's or cleric's eye. To play the tune and dance to its rhythm is to subvert, through collective resistance, the forces that would marginalise and silence.

Although the *muileann dubh* that an eighteenth-century Lewisman could hear clacking beside his pillow had become, by the late nineteenth century, a curious ruin by the burnside or a memory preserved in oral tradition, the mill's symbolic acoustemology survived the physical auditory

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[81] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, 255.
[82] Donald MacLeod, *Gloomy Memories in the Highlands of Scotland* (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair,1892), 8, 17, cited in Hugh Cheape, *Kirtomy Mill & Kiln* (Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group, 1985), 42.
[83] Cheape, *Kirtomy*, 46, citing Donald MacIver, 'Cuid de na h-Atharraichean a Thainig air Leodhas bho 'n Bhliadhna Ochd-Ceud-Deug', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 34 (1927–28): 341.
[84] John Shaw, *Water Power in Scotland 1550–1870* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984), 124.
[85] MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 13.
[86] MacLeod, *Norse Mills,* 29. On quern destruction and thirlage enforcement: Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, 255; Cheape, *Kirtomy*, 15–18, 42, 44, 46; Hugh Cheape, 'Horizontal Grain Mills in Lewis', in *Highland Vernacular Building*, ed. Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group (Edinburgh: SVBWG, 1989), 74; J. Shaw, *Water Power*, 124. On oral traditions of resistance: MacLeod, *Norse Mills,* 29, 37–38. On the suppression of illicit distillation: Geddes, *Isle*, 227; MacLeod, *Norse Mills,* 14. On the broader transformation of the rural economy: Geddes, *Isle*, 225, 241, 251; J Shaw, *Water Power,* 127.
[87] Geddes, *Isle*, 227.
[88] J. W. Shaw, Liner notes, 6.

environment of the *baile.*[89] Indeed, metaphorically, it became enmeshed in the conceptual vocabulary by which Gaels evaluated verbal skill. A proverb recorded by MacLeod captures this aptly:

> *Chanadh na cailleachan mu fhear a bhiodh a' còmhradh gun abhsadh: "Tha e a' dol ann an siud mar glagan muilne".*
>
> The old women used to say of anyone who talked too much: 'He's going on there like a mill clapper'.[90]

To be likened to the *glagan*, the wooden piece that rattled against the rotating millstone to shake grain into the eye, was to be marked as one whose speech, however voluble, lacked substance, and in turn value. Shaw's study of Gaelic verbal taxonomies illuminates the evaluative system within which such comparisons operated, and demonstrates that 'purpose or appropriate content in speech is a prominent feature in Gaelic society and should be assigned a high position in the taxonomic hierarchy'.[91] Fr Allan McDonald's collection from South Uist and Eriskay recorded thirty-seven words describing kinds of talk, twelve of which denote useless or senseless speech, including *glagraich*, *gleigeil*, *golamadh*, *sgèadal*, and *ràfard*; the proverb *na h-abair ach beag ach abair gu math e* ('say little but say it well') encapsulates the principle.[92] Against this standard, the *glagan muilne*, voluble, mechanical, undiscernible, represents the antithesis of valued speech. The mill thus operated on multiple registers simultaneously: site of labour, gathering place, phenomenological environment, and conceptual resource. It furnished the metaphors through which the community evaluated speech, distinguished purpose from noise, and calibrated the value of human expression. It was also a site invested with supernatural associations, where the beings encountered took various forms across traditions but where the pattern of otherworldly encounter at these water-powered, liminal spaces persists.

Similarly, the association between grinding and music was not incidental but structural. Finlay MacLeod, in reference to Carmichael, observes that 'no other sound was heard more frequently coming from the fairy knoll than that of the rotary quern, often accompanied by song'.[93] Carmichael's account of a fairy woman grinding at a quern beneath a house built on a fairy mound encodes the relationship explicitly: *Thòisich a' bhleith, agus thòisich a' bhruidhinn agus an ceòl* ('The grinding began, and the talk and the music began').[94] This acoustic tripling of *bleith* ('grinding'), *bruidhinn* ('talk'), *ceòl* ('music') situates the wider process within an established pattern whereby the rhythmic percussion of grain-grinding generates the conditions for verbal art and supernatural sound alike. The horizontal mill inherited and amplified what the domestic quern had established: if grinding at the fairy knoll could be accompanied by song, grinding at the water-powered mill, with its louder, more insistent acoustic signature, provided an even more reverberant environment for the emergence and discernment of otherworldly music.

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[89] Steven Feld, 'Acoustemology', in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. D. Novak and M. Sakakeeny (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 12–21.
[90] F. MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga*, 39; and F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 39.
[91] John W. Shaw, 'The Ethnography of Speaking and Verbal Taxonomies: Some Applications to Gaelic', in *Celtic Connections: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Celtic Studies*, vol. 1, ed. R. Black et al. (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), 316.
[92] Allan McDonald, *Gaelic Words and Expressions from South Uist and Eriskay*, ed. J. L. Campbell (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958); J. W. Shaw, *Ethnography of Speaking*, 316.
[93] MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 12.
[94] Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations*, vol. 5, ed. Angus Matheson (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1954), 114, 246, cited in MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga*, 11.

Supernatural Encounter and Experience

A striking anecdote of kiln-related phenomenological conditions of verbal art performance appears in John Francis Campbell's account of a performance at Grulinn. A man named Iain Mac Ghilleathain recited a story in such a fashion that 'the voice seemed to come from the singed sheep's head, to the dismay and terror of the lad, who could recite the story, but would not'. The lad 'thought it was the devil'.[95] Here the kiln becomes a site where performance itself takes on an uncanny quality: the voice displaced, the source uncertain, the diabolic association invoked. The nocturnal mill as a site of supernatural encounter extends into Northern Isles tradition, where the same convergence of isolated labour, darkness, and otherworldly presence recurs.

Indeed, the sound of more-than-natural labour at the mill conflates the human work of the site with an otherworldly presence. In Kirkcudbright, Campbell found that familiar Gaelic narrative patterns had undergone local transformation: 'the hill has become a mill, and the fairies Brownies'.[96] The site and the beings shift in name and form, but the association persists. Donald MacDonald (Dòmhnall Chràisgean, 1861–1916), a blacksmith and bard from Galson, Lewis, set his story entitled '*Bodach a' Mhuilinn*' at Arnol Mill, presenting the mill as a site of fear, humour and supernatural danger.[97] A boy, Calum, disappears from the mill at night; his fate is attributed to the *bodach a' mhuilinn*, a being that the community believed appeared in multiple forms: *Bha cuid 'ga fhaicinn 'na each mor geal agus cuid eile 'na chù mor dubh* ('Some saw him as a great white horse and others as a great black dog').[98] When the being is encountered, it declares: *Thainig mi bho shios agus thainig mi bho shuas, agus tha cumhachd agam mi féin a nochdadh ann an iomadh seorsa cruth* ('I came from below and I came from above, and I have the power to reveal myself in many forms'). Asked its name, it replies: *'Se Sàtan is ainm dhomh* ('Satan is my name'). Although the short-story framing of local traditions of the supernatural is revealed ultimately through a prank, the mill's uncanny reputation for otherworldly encounter is reinforced through the potentialities of local belief and social practice in recent memory. The site of the *bodach a' mhuilinn*'s operation, the *taigh-làir* ('under-house') where the water-wheel turned in darkness beneath the grinding floor, was understood as the mill's generative core. A Lewis description articulated this with striking directness: *'S e an taigh-làir* 'secret' *na muilne. 'S e bha ga dèanamh* ('The underhouse was the "secret" of the mill. It was what made it).[99] The hidden space where the anthropomorphised shaft struggled against the water's force, where grain was transformed into meal, was explicitly identified as the apparatus's mystery.

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[95] Quoted in George Henderson, 'Sgeulachd Cois' O'Cein', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 25 (1901–1903): 187–188.

[96] J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* II, 55.

[97] MacDonald, 'Bodach', 71–74. Donald MacDonald was himself no stranger to supernatural encounter: his sister Mary Murray recalled that he composed his first song, '*Òran na Lice*', after being visited by a ghost while apprenticed to a smith in Beauly (SA1967.029.A8, recorded by Morag MacLeod, 1967; Tobar an Dualchais, track 38929). The biographical detail lends irony to his rationalist comedy.

[98] On the cross-cultural distribution of the dog and cat as the most frequent zoomorphic devil manifestations in European folk religion, see Valk, *The Black Gentleman*, 105, 109–116. Linda-May Ballard documents comparable zoomorphic devil traditions on Rathlin Island, Co. Antrim, where the devil appears as 'a big black dog with red eyes' and in multiple variants as a large black cat. On Rathlin, the devil is interchangeably termed the *gruagach*, a word more usually denoting a fairy or hobgoblin figure, illustrating the same formal interchangeability between devil and fairy that characterises the Cape Breton and Lewis mill traditions. See Linda-May Ballard, 'Fairies and the Supernatural on *Reachraí'*, in *the Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, ed. P. Narváez (New York: Garland, 1991): 76–82.

[99] F. MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga*, 37 and *Norse Mills*, 37.

Alan Bruford documented a legend type unique to Orkney and Shetland (F16C) in which a man working alone in a water-mill at night hears trows entering to warm themselves at the kiln fire and hides under a pile of straw; when it stirs, one trow remarks to the other in rhyme that straw cannot walk.[100] Here again, the mill is the site where human and supernatural presence converge during the solitary nocturnal labour of grinding, the same phenomenological conditions documented in the Lewis testimony of the mill as 'an eerie place to be by yourself at night with the noise of the millstones and the water'.[101] The beings encountered at mills and kilns thus show considerable formal variation (*bodach*, fairies, Brownies, water-horse, black dog, goat, devil) but their association with these sites remains constant across the Gaelic, Scandinavian, and broader North Atlantic tradition areas. The mill's role as a site of supernatural encounter belongs to a wider pattern in European folk tradition whereby the devil appears not in wild or mythical landscapes but in the spaces of human labour. Ulrika Wolf-Knuts documents that when the devil 'meets a human being in a non-mythical location, the meeting usually takes place in a human environment, e.g. in a farmer's house, at the end of the table, in the cellar, at a dance hall, in the hay-loft of a barn... in a smithy, a church, in a churchyard'.[102] The mill, the kiln, and the smithy share a common profile: enclosed working spaces where fire or water drives transformation of raw material, where solitary or nocturnal labour creates the conditions for encounter. That the Cape Breton legends and their Scandinavian cognates locate the devil at the mill rather than in the wilderness is thus consistent with the broader pattern Wolf-Knuts identifies in Finnish-Swedish tradition, where the supernatural intrudes upon the site of productive work rather than upon the uninhabited margin.

The Cape Breton Evidence

1. Willie Fraser (2007): The Devil Completes the Tune

The version closest to the ML 4090 teaching structure was recorded from the renowned dancer, singer, and raconteur Willie Fraser (*Uilleam mac Shaimein*, 1915–2015) of Deepdale, Inverness County.[103] In addition to Fraser, the session included Anna MacKinnon (née MacDonald), Hector B. MacIsaac (1919–2011), and Alex Francis MacKay (1922–2012), all interviewed by Jim Watson (1949–2018) and John

[100] Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk', 125.
[101] F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 38.
[102] Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, 'The Devil between Nature and Culture', *Ethnologia Europaea* 22 (1992): 111.
[103] Fraser was recorded at Glenora Distillery, Glenville, 14 August 2007, as part of the *Mar bu Nòs bho Shean* project of Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum. The recording session included John Shaw, the late Jim Watson (1949–2018), Shamus Y. MacDonald, and the present author. A transcription of Fraser's telling is deposited in the School of Scottish Studies Tale Archive (SSSA/TA/TR001) without any comparisons. I am grateful to the late Cathy Scott for her kindness and assistance with any questions I would bring to her in the Tale Archive. During doctoral research at Edinburgh under John Shaw's supervision, I brought this transcription to Cathy in order to search for Scottish cognates, of which none were catalogued. I initially framed the legend within the Faustian bargain tradition familiar from Robert Johnson lore; see Everett and Narváez, '"Me and the Devil"'. Wolf-Knuts' observation of cognate Finnish-Swedish material clarifies the distinction: 'Dr Faustus lost his soul because he wanted more knowledge and understanding of the world. This grandiose wish is not explicit in Finland-Swedish folklore. The wishes are much more connected with concrete, everyday rural life'; see Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, 'What can we do today with old records of folk belief? On the Example of Devil Lore', *Folklore* 131 (2020): 128. The Cape Breton transaction fits this pattern: the boy wants to finish learning a tune in an everyday context of playing the fiddle at home. The ML 4090 classification proposed here emerged from that search and from my own retelling of Willie's version to students and colleagues over the years.

Shaw.[104] That afternoon, while we recorded in one of the distillery's outbuildings, fiddler John MacDougall (1924–2008) was performing across the way in the main hall with Robbie Fraser. I spoke briefly with MacDougall during a break. MacDougall, a fixture at Glenora every Saturday and Sunday, was then in the final year of his life: 'The dead want to get the music back', he had told the *Globe and Mail* the previous year: 'It's from the people who lived here before [...] they could make [the songs] but they couldn't write them'.[105] The convergence was unwitting but apt: in one room, Willie Fraser describing how the semblance of a young dancer visited him in a dream (*bruadal*) as a child, declaring *Tha thu 'dol a bhith nad dhannsair* ('You are going to be a dancer'), and imparted over twenty steps to him that no living person had seen before;[106] and across the way, MacDougall playing tunes no living person had composed. Of the first-language Gaelic speakers who were recorded during that day's session, only Anna survives.

In Fraser's telling, a fifteen-year-old boy is sent at night with horse and wagon to fetch the priest to administer last rites for a dying woman. He is learning the fiddle and knows only part of the tune:

> *Bha seo bho chionn bhliadhnaichean agus thog e rith' air each 's* wagon *'s bha an fhidheall aige 's bha e 'g ionnsachadh na fidhl'—an fhidheall agus bha e 'sireadh* turn *air: [...] "Nead na circe fraoich"—o,*
>
> > *Nead na circe fraoich a's a' mhuileann dubh, 's a' mhuileann dubh,*
> > *Nead na circe fraoich a's a' mhuileann dubh air samhradh.*
>
> *O bha siod air an fhidheall agus cha robh an còrr aige.*
>
> He had the fiddle and he was learning the fiddle and trying to get a turn [of *"Nead na circe fraoich a's a' mhuileann dubh"*] on it... Oh, that was on the fiddle and he didn't have the rest.]

[104] The Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum's *Mar bu Nòs bho Shean* project, developed in consultation with John Shaw (University of Edinburgh) and Seósamh Watson (University College Dublin), documented Cape Breton Gaelic tradition bearers discussing modes of oral, aural, and visual transmission of cultural knowledge and art forms.

[105] Karen Mazurkewich, '33,300 Songs and Still Writing', *Globe and Mail,* 15 July 2006.

[106] Willie Fraser (1915–2015) described learning his distinctive dancing style through a series of dreams during the recording session that day. As a boy of six or seven, a young man appeared in his bedroom, *air a dreasadh suas 's a chuile sìon eireachdail* ('all dressed up and everything fine-looking'), and declared: *Tha thu 'dol a bhith nad dhannsair... Tha mi 'dol a shealltainn dhut ceithir no còig do steapanan* ('You are going to be a dancer... I am going to show you four or five steps'). The next morning, Fraser's father asked how he had slept: *Glé mhath, bha bruadal agam* ('Very well, I had a dream'). His father took up the fiddle and Fraser performed the steps he had learned from the dream. The figure returned a fortnight later with more. Transcribed by the present author from the *Mar bu Nòs bho Shean* recording, Glenora Distillery, 14 August 2007. Years later, while performing at Ceòlas in South Uist, Fraser was told by an elderly woman that she hadn't seen such steps since her father had passed away some seventy years before, leading Fraser to wonder if it was that person who had come to him in his dreams; see 'Willie Fraser' in Electric Canadian, https://www.electriccanadian.com/canada/breton13.htm. In a 1986 interview, Fraser recounted an English version of the dream encounter: 'I had a dream then. A fellow come to me right in the bedroom all dressed up and he'd show me a step. When he finished a step, a big hatch would open and he'd fall right down.... That went on for the longest time until I learned maybe a dozen steps from my dreams. After that I picked up steps from other good dancers'; see Inverness County Dance Project, 'Interview and filming with Willie Fraser', 31 July 1986, Item 86-46 LEB/SAY-Ac-22, Beaton Institute Digital Archives, https://beatoninstitute.com/leb-say-ac-22). On the recording Fraser performs *Am Muileann Dubh* among other *puirt-à-beul* (1:25–6:00).

The boy heads off into the darkness, playing and singing what he knows. The horse stops at a 'large dark black mill' beside the road and the boy hears music coming from within:

> *Stad an t-each dìreach mar siod 's thug e sùil 's bha* building *mòr ann a' sin – muileann dubh, muileann mòr, muileann dorch' ri taobh a' rathaid mhòir. 'S chuala 'staigh 's a' mhuileann – bha 'n donas a-staigh 's a' mhuileann:*
>
> > *Tha crodh 's cearcan fraoich' a's a' mhuileann dubh 's a' mhuileann dubh.*
> > *Tha crodh 's cearcan fraoich 's a' mhuileann air samhradh.*
> > *Tha iomadh rud nach saoil sibh 's a' mhuileann dubh, 's a' mhuileann dubh.*
> > *Tha iomadh rud nach saoil sibh 's a' mhuileann dubh air samhradh.*
>
> *"'S e sin an deireadh dhen a' phort agam."*
>
> The horse stopped right there, and he looked, and there was a big building there – a black mill, a big mill, a dark mill at the side of the main road. An inside the mill he heard – the devil was inside the mill:
>
> > There are cattle and red grouse in the black mill, the black mill,
> > There are cattle and red grouse in the black mill in summer.
> > There are many things you wouldn't expect in the black mill, the black mill,
> > There are many things you wouldn't expect in the black mill in summer.
>
> And that's the end of my tune.

The boy continues on to fetch the priest, but they arrive back to the home too late. The old woman has died. The legend concludes with the boy's retort: *Tha mise coma dhen diabhal càite an deach a' chailleach fhad 's a fhuair mi am port!* ('I don't give a devil where the old lady went as long as I got the tune!').

Fraser's version preserves the core ML 4090 structure: a would-be musician with incomplete knowledge receives completion of a tune from a supernatural being at a water-associated site. The devil functions as teacher, providing what the boy could not learn on his own. The transaction carries a cost, a soul is lost, but the boy's final words claim the tune while dismissing the framework within which its acquisition might constitute a loss. The phrase *'S e sin an deireadh dhen a' phort agam* ('That's the end of my tune') frames the exchange explicitly: the lad discerns the otherworldly tune and claims it as his own.

The figure of the dying *cailleach* in Fraser's telling connects the Cape Breton legend to the *Cailleach an Dùdain* tradition discussed earlier. Where that ritual drama enacts death and resurrection: the *bodach* kills the *cailleach*, then revives her limb by limb; Fraser's narrative literalises the exchange: "*an t-sean tè seo a' caochladh, air leab' a' bhàis*" ('this old woman dying, on her deathbed'), whose fate is traded for the completed tune. The boy's closing remarks are the first to name the transaction that the telling has left unstated. In the ritual, the *cailleach* rises; in the legend, she does not. The mill remains the site of transformation, but what was cyclical has become transactional; what was regenerative has become sacrificial. The Cape Breton material thus preserves the supernatural and acoustic dimensions of a polysemous complex whose ritualized registers of (re)productivity and pleasure, still visible in the Scottish evidence, have been transposed into diabolic narrative.

Yet the legend does not end in loss. It ends in laughter. Fraser concluded his telling with collective laughter, alongside the others gathered, as he launched into jigging the tune itself,

performing legend and *port-à-beul* as a unified act. This laughter answers the devil's claim. Where Angus Gillis' version records the devil's *gàire mór, cridheil* ('great, hearty laugh') mocking the priest's failure, Fraser's telling transfers the laughter to the human side.[107] The boy's transgressive wit enacts precisely the carnivalesque inversion that Bakhtin identified as the 'people's second life': a view from below that refuses the seriousness of official culture, that asserts the body and the collective against hierarchical authority.[108] The laughter is ambivalent: it includes death, acknowledges loss, yet regenerates through the very act of laughing. To play the tune is to refuse the terms on which both supernatural and clerical authority would constrain cultural practice.

2. Comparative Variants: Beaton (1983) and Gillis (1980)

Two earlier recordings preserve related versions from Inverness County. John Allan Beaton (*Iain Ailean mac Iain 'ic Raghnaill*) of Broad Cove Marsh told his version to Seósamh Watson in July 1983;[109] Angus J. Gillis of Mabou Harbour (1907–1984) told his to John Shaw on 1 December 1980.[110]

In Beaton's telling, a priest and his companion, both *uamhasach measail air ceòl* ('terribly fond of music'), pass a mill at night on their way to attend a dying man and hear *port cho* slick *'s a dh'fhairich 'ad riamh* ('as nice a tune as they had ever heard'). But the tune has neither beginning nor ending: *cha robh am port a' tighinn gu ceann no crìoch*. The priest identifies the source as the Devil and they flee, arriving too late to reach the dying man. Yet *dh'ionnsaich 'ad am port an oidhche sin* ('they learned the tune that night'). The tune carries a local toponym, *Muileann Dubh a' Logadair*, whose referent Beaton himself could not identify with certainty.

Gillis's version, the most complete in narrative detail, sets the legend in penal-era Scotland. A priest who is himself *na fhìdhleir 's 'na leth sheòrs' do phìobaire* ('a fiddler as well as being something of a piper') passes a mill at night and hears *Nead na Circe Fraoich* played *cho sunndach 's cho math* ('so cheerful and well played'). When it ends, he hears a *gàire mór, cridheil* ('a great, hearty laugh') and the mocking cry, *Chaill thu an t-anam!* ('You have lost the soul!'). He arrives too late, 'crosses' the tune (i.e. declares its association with the devil), and declares *nach robh còir aig feadhainn a bhith cluith' a' phuirt gu bràcha tuilleadh* ('that people should never play it again'). But Gillis concludes:

> *Ach tha e air a chluith' dh'ionnsaigh a' lath' an diugh* [...] *port cho math 's a chaidh a dheanamh riamh. Bhiodh iad 'ga ghabhail nam b'e an deamhan a rinn e, nach biodh?*
>
> But it's played down until this very day... as good a tune as was ever made. And people would play it even if it had been composed by the Devil himself, wouldn't they?

Where Fraser's devil completes a tune, Beaton's traps with one: the endless melody, without *ceann* or *crìoch*, functions as the devil's snare, holding the listeners in place while the soul slips away, a pattern that echoes the Telemark variant in Christiansen's catalogue where an accidental listener in a mill is compelled to dance all night until invoking God's name.[111] Acquisition is passive rather than active, aligning Beaton's version more closely with MacDonald's F103 than with ML 4090's teaching structure. Gillis foregrounds the aftermath: clerical prohibition and community defiance. The priest's crossing of the tune represents the same assertion of ecclesiastical authority over cultural practice

[107] Shaw, *Na Beanntaichean Gorma*, 184, 185.
[108] Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 9, 11–12.
[109] Seosamh Watson, 'An Muileann Dubh: Story and Tune', *An Rubha* 9/1 (2005–2006): 14–15.
[110] J. W. Shaw, *Na Beanntaichean Gorma*, 184–187 as well as the field recording mentioned on p. 213, n. 26.
[111] Christiansen, *Migratory Legends,* 78.

documented in the suppression material above, and the community's response enacts the principle MacInnes identifies: *Na doir géill do gheas is géillidh geas dhut* ('Do not submit to superstition and superstition will submit to you'), observing 'its injunction is only an alternative to more complex rules for keeping the unpredictable elements of the imagination, and therefore the human universe, in equilibrium'.[112] Gillis' rhetorical question invites the listener into complicity, affirming that the community's judgement supersedes both threats to salvation and clerical interdiction.

Yet the substitution of devil for water-sprite in the Cape Breton tellings is nominal rather than functional. In none of the three versions does the devil operate as Christian moralist. He does not punish sin or enforce doctrine; he plays a tune, completes a tune, laughs. The transaction is framed as amoral: musical skill exchanged for a soul, with no reference to the victim's moral conduct. Valk's study of Estonian folk religion documents the broader process by which such substitutions occur: 'the Devil gained the dominant position in Estonian folk belief by taking over the roles and functions of other mythological creatures', a pattern of absorption in which the name changes while the narrative function persists.[113] His analysis of the analogous relationship between the Estonian *näkk* (water-sprite) and the devil illuminates the distinction at work in the Cape Breton material. As he observes, 'the *näkk* shares the same guises as the devil, but the frequency of occurrence of the various forms differs';[114] the two figures can wear similar shapes while retaining distinct narrative functions. The distinction is sharpest in the pragmatics of encounter:

> The devil can be avoided by living a virtuous Christian life [...] but the *näkk* does not have the function of supporting morals [...]. It cannot be avoided by following the Ten Commandments and Christian rules of behaviour; the only solution is to exercise extreme caution near bodies of water.[115]

The Cape Breton devil in the mill behaves as the water-sprite does: he cannot be avoided through piety, only through caution at the site itself. The boy in Fraser's telling does not sin; he is stopped in an hour of need seeking both the *cailleach*'s salvation and the tune. The priest in Gillis's telling is himself a musician who stops to listen. Neither transgresses morally; both encounter a being whose power operates outside the moral framework presented in the legend's framing. That cosmology required no physical mill to sustain it. It traveled in the tune and those who played it and danced to it. This is not indifference to the price but refusal to let the cost go unrecognised.

Conclusion

The mill in the Cape Breton legends is an imagined site, a setting embedded and remembered in the tune and its associated narratives rather than a feature of the local landscape. Yet the tune continued to circulate, and with it the charge that the mill tradition had encoded. The *port-à-beul* lyrics describe the mill's motion: '*'s tha 'm muileann dubh air bhogadan / thurraman... 's e togairt dol a dhannsa*' ('the black mill is shaking / bouncing / wanting to go dancing'). The mill is anthropomorphised, imbued with desire; it wants to dance. In Cape Breton, where the tune was (and is) played at virtually every gathering, the mill's desire finds fulfilment not in the turning of stones but in the movement of

[112] John MacInnes, 'Looking at Legends of the Supernatural', in *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes,* ed. Michael Newton (Edinburgh: Birlinn), 476.
[113] Valk, *The Black Gentleman*, 21.
[114] Valk, 'The Guises of Estonian Water-Spirits', 339.
[115] Valk, 'The Guises of Estonian Water-Spirits', 346.

bodies on the dance floor. The *turraman* of the mill becomes the rhythmic driving of the reel; the collective physical exertion of the dancers generates the heat that the mill's friction once produced.

Lillis Ó Laoire's study of dance and entertainment in Donegal Irish-speaking communities offers a framework for understanding this transfer. Ó Laoire analyses the metaphorical concepts of *te* ('warm, hot') and *fuar* ('cold') as they structure social experience. A successful dance, an *oíche mhór* ('great night'), is one in which participants achieve collective heat, keeping people *te dá chéile* ('warm to each other'), a phrase denoting the warmth of kinship and community solidarity.[116] Conversely, a failed dance is *fuar*: John Ó Duibheannaigh's account of a dispirited gathering captures the failure: 'they rose to dance and they did a cold little set (*cúrsa beag fuar*)... it wasn't with any *croí* ('heart') or *aigneadh* ('spirit') that they were there'.[117] The dance also creates continuity with the absent: 'through the enactment of particular dances, songs, and other forms, associated with other community members, no longer alive, or emigrated, these same high spirits might elicit feelings of *cumha*, of longing for those departed'.[118] Ó Laoire draws an explicit parallel to the merry wake, citing Ó Crualaoich's argument that the wake 'articulated in traditional symbolic language both a commentary on and a resistance to social forces threatening the continuance of old ways and old mentalities'.[119] The tune *Am Muileann Dubh*, with its legends of diabolic origin and clerical prohibition, was played at these gatherings despite its associations. The community's continued performance enacted what Ó Laoire calls a 'flexible, actively constituted *dúchas*': not a frozen inheritance but a living capacity to negotiate the forces that threaten communal survival.[120]

Shaw's own summary of the legend captures its dual nature as 'a musical/tune legend as well as being a religious legend':

> A priest, hurrying to give extreme unction to a dying man passes the house where he hears remarkable music coming forth. He stops for a few moments to listen until the tune is finished, and then, as he continues on his way, he hears a great laugh echoing and the words *Chaill thu an t-anam* (You have just lost the soul). As a result of the negligence and the eternal consequences, the particular tune, a reel known as 'The Black Mill', is considered to be 'crossed' (associated with the devil), but that does not prevent it from being one of the most popular traditional Scottish reels down until the present.[121]

Wolf-Knuts' analysis of devil lore in Finnish-Swedish tradition identifies a similar dual function that illuminates this pattern:

> […] to dare to tell humorous stories about the Devil creates a feeling of freedom in the narrator, freedom from all the restrictions of society, whereas the serious stories help people to be conscious of their sins and to stick to the rules of society. Thus, Devil lore is both revolutionary and conservative, but the borderline between these two opposites

[116] Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors', 42.
[117] Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors', 38–39.
[118] Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors', 42.
[119] Gearóid Ó Crualaoich, *'The Merry Wake',* in *Irish Popular Culture 1650–1850,* ed. James S. Donnelly Jr., and Kerby A. Miller (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998), 193, cited in Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors', 42.
[120] Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors', 45.
[121] John W. Shaw, '(E)Migrating Legends and Sea Change', *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 37, 51.

> is not one to be found between pious literature and folklore. Rather, the borderline is to be found within folklore.[122]

Wolf-Knuts' duality characterises the Cape Breton legend complex as a whole, its revolutionary and conservative registers both present in each telling, but the three versions differ in how they position authority in relation to musical desire rather than distributing those functions between them. In Beaton's telling, the priest names the Devil, flees, arrives too late, and learns the tune that night. In Gillis', the priest crosses the tune, yet Gillis sets this prohibition within a penal-era frame in which the priest himself was forced to operate clandestinely, and the community plays on regardless. In Fraser's version, the boy is waylaid on his errand not by his own choice but by the horse, which refuses to budge in front of the dark mill until the devil provides the rest of the tune; hence they are delayed, the *cailleach* dies, and the tune survives. The borderline runs within the tradition itself, and in every case the devil occupies not the position of moral agent but of the being at the water site capable of bestowing the gift of music to those who discern it through their own performance.

Dan Rory MacDonald, the prolific composer of Cape Breton fiddle music in the twentieth century, described his own compositional process in strikingly consonant terms: 'Well it comes to you like a dream you know, you can think up anything in the middle of the night or whatever time of day it is by whistling, and you go and you put that together'.[123] The tune arrives; the musician discerns and assembles what has come. John Shaw's account of Dan Rory's funeral in 1976 captures the tradition's continued operation within community life. When a eulogist consoled the congregation that there would now be a fiddle playing alongside the harps in heaven, an old man near the back of the church, of Lochaber descent and related to one of Mabou's outstanding fiddling families, turned to his companion and said: *Ma fhuair Dòmhnall Ruairidh astaigh dha na Flathanas, c'àite an diabhal a bheil Maighstir Coinneach?* ('If Dan Rory got into Heaven, where the devil is Father Kenneth?').[124] The old man's question at the back of the church requires the same answer as Gillis's: the listener is invited to laugh, and in laughing to affirm the community's judgement over the assertions of external powers. Gillis' own conclusion returns to the tune itself: *port cho math 's a chaidh a dheanamh riamh*. As good a tune as was ever made. The judgement is not defiance alone but discernment: the tune's value warrants the cost. *Bhiodh iad 'ga ghabhail nam b'e an deamhan a rinn e, nach biodh?* The question re-enacts the choice each time it is asked. Every performance of the tune at every gathering renews the transaction that the legend narrates as singular. The *cailleach* does not rise in Fraser's telling, but the tune does. The people dance on.

'*S tha 'm muileann dubh air thurraman... 's tha togairt dol a dhannsa.*

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[122] Wolf-Knuts, 'What can we do', 119.
[123] In Ron MacInnes' 1972 CBC documentary *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*.
[124] J. W. Shaw, 'Observations', 86.

spent hours listening to field recordings, transcribing, and examining every word in detail. Even in his final years, Jim continued to offer care, encouragement, and support as I sought to develop projects and find my footing in the field, his mentorship shaping the skills that would later serve me in my doctoral research at Edinburgh. Finally, to my doctoral supervisor and friend John Shaw, whose scholarship has illuminated the traditions from which this legend flows, my debt is greater than I can express. I am pleased to offer this paper in memory of Jim Watson and in honour of John Shaw, in gratitude for many years of support and friendship.

APPENDICES

1. Sources for 'Am Muileann Dubh' in musical repertoire (without text)

Date	Title	Source
c. 1730–1760	'Snuff in the Black Mill'	James Christie music manuscript collection, Northeast Scotland.
1757	'Oyster Wives Rant'	Robert Bremner, *A Collection of Scots Reels or Country Dances*, 80.
1803	'Mullindough, or the Black Laddie'	Aird's *6th and Last Volume of Scotch, English, Irish and Foreign Airs*, No. 3.
1840	'The Black Laddie'	John Rook, manuscript, 'A Collection of English, Scotch, Irish and Welsh Tunes'.
1844	'Muilean Dubh an t-Snaoisean'	Angus MacKay, *The Piper's Assistant*, No. 81.
1848	'Am Muilen Dubh'	William Gunn, *The Caledonian Repository of Music Adapted for the Bagpipes*, 16.
1869	'The Black Mill, Reel'	William Ross, *Collection of Pipe Music*, No. 166.
1876–1900	'Oyster Wives Rant'	David Glen, *Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music,* Book 5, No. 41, 21.
1876–1900	'The Black Snuff Mill, Reel'	David Glen, *Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music,* Book 6, No. 6.
1884	'Oyster Wives Rant' 'Muileann Dubh'	James Stewart-Robertson, *Athole Collection of the Dance Music of Scotland*.
1899	'The Black Snuff Mill'	James Bett, *A Collection of Pipe Music*, No. 21.
1940	'The Birds are Building Nests in the Little Mill'	Malcolm MacInnes, *120 Bagpipe Tunes, Gleanings, and Styles*, 67.

2. Sources for 'Am Muileann Dubh' in the *port-à-beul* tradition

Date	Print Sources
1868	Donald MacPherson, *An Duanaire A New Collection of Gaelic Songs and Poems*, 118.
1881	Henry Whyte ('Fionn'), 'Ceilidh. Litir do dh-Iain Bàn Òg,' *The Celtic Garland*, 210–218 [refs. pp. 215–217].
1894–96	Charles Ferguson, 'Sketches of the Early History, Legends, and Traditions of Strathardle and its Glens. Part IV', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 20: 260–262.
1900	Alastair MacAoidh, 'Muileann Dubh', *Celtic Monthly* 8: 28.
1900	D. MacKinnon, 'Muileann Dubh', *Celtic Monthly* 8: 49.
1900	Gregor MacGregor, 'Am Muileann-Dubh', *Celtic Monthly* 8: 159–160.

1900 Alasdair Mac Neacail, ‘A’ Mhuileann Dhubh’, in *Oideas na Cloinne*, 86.

1902 ‘Am Muileann Dubh’, *Mac-Talla* 10/28, 11 April 1902: 215.

1905 Robert Craig MacLagan, ‘Additions to the Games of Argyleshire (Continued)’, *Folklore* 16/4: 457.

1907 T. D. MacDonald, ‘Am Muileann Dubh’, *Puirt mo Sheanmhar*, 7–8.

1907 Robert Craig MacLagan, ‘Gaelic Erotica’, *Kryptadia* 10 (1907): 346.

1910 ‘Origin of a Spirited Strathspey’, *Kingussie and Upper Speyside (Badenoch): A Descriptive Guide,* 65–66.

1912–14 Andrew Mackintosh, ‘English and Gaelic Words for Strathspeys and Reels’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 28: 294–295.

[1912] M. N. Munro, ed., ‘Am Muileann Dubh (For Unison Singing Competition)’, *Coisir a’ Mhòid: The Mod Collection of Gaelic Part Songs 1896–1912*, 21.

1917 Murchadh Mac Laomuinn, *An Cuimhneachan: Orain Céilidh Gaidheal Cheap Breatuinn agus Eilean-an-Phrionnsa*.

1921 Lachlann Mac Bheathain, ‘An Saoghal Eile ann an Rìogachd Fìobh’, *An Ròsarnach* III, 35.

1927 Maire Nic Aoidh, ‘Tá mé i gcoinne ’tol sa Mhuileann dubh’, *An tUltach* IV/6–7, June 1927, ‘Criomáin Aondroma III’.

1939 Calum Mac Gill-Iosa, ‘Bàl na h-Aibhne Deas’, in *Smeorach nan Cnoc ’s nan Gleann*, ed. Hector MacDougall, 44–45.

1953 Charles W. Dunn, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia,*102.

Date **Field Recordings**

1950 Duncan MacDonald (Donnchadh mac Dhòmhnaill ’ic Dhonnchaidh, 1882–1954), Peighinn nan Aoireann, Uibhist a Deas (South Uist), recorded by John Lorne Campbell, 21 July 1950 (CW0089B.366; Tobar an Dualchais track 49305).

1951 Peigi MacRath (Peigi Anndra, 1874–1969), Ceann a Tuath Ghlinn Dail, Uibhist a Deas (South Uist), recorded by Margaret Fay Shaw, 22 March 1951 (CW0160C.814; Tobar an Dualchais track 34892).

1953 Capt. Dougald MacCormick (Dùghall Iain Nèill Dhùghaill, 1877–1960), Fionnphort, Muile (Mull), recorded by Calum Iain MacIlleathain, July 1953 (SA1953.117.B4; Tobar an Dualchais track 92274).

1959 Nan MacKinnon (Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh, 1902–1982), Bhatarsaigh (Vatersay), recorded by James Ross, 26 July 1959 (SA1959.065.B8; Tobar an Dualchais track 106505).

1961 Norman Kennedy (1933–), Aberdeen, December 1961 (SA1961.121; Tobar an Dualchais track 91289).

1969 Donald Sinclair (Dòmhnall Chaluim Bàin, 1885–1975), Cùiltean Haoidhnis, Tiriodh (Tiree), recorded by Eric R. Cregeen (SA1969.158.A1a-A2; Tobar an Dualchais track 102735).

1972–74 Angus Gillis (Angaidh Aonghais Ailein), 81 years old, Broad Cove, Cape Breton, recorded by Gordon W. MacLennan, 1972–74 (Canadian Museum of History, MacLennan Collection, Acq. 78–78, MAC-B-2, Side B).

1977 Mrs Jean Conway, Canberra, recorded by Emily Lyle, 23 March 1977 (SA1977.045.B2b; Tobar an Dualchais track 70781).

1980 Angus J. Gillis, Mabou Harbour, Cape Breton, recorded by John Shaw, 1 December 1980 (Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection 302A3).

1984 Seumas Campbell (Seumas Chaluim Sheumais, 1902–2000), Ròdhag, An t-Eilean Sgitheanach (Skye), recorded by Mòrag NicLeòid, 25 February 1984 (SA1984.002.A3b; Tobar an Dualchais track 74535).

3. Commercial recordings of 'Am Muileann Dubh' by Cape Breton fiddlers

Performer	**Album title(s)**
Willie Kennedy	*Cape Breton Violin*
Joe Cormier	*Scottish Violin Music from Cape Breton Island* (also *The North Atlantic Strings)*
Little Jac MacDonald	*The Bard of Scottish Fiddling*
Dan Joe MacInnis	*The Cape Breton Fiddle of Dan Joe MacInnis*
Dan Hughie MacEachern	*The Land of My Love* (two settings, A minor and G minor)
Wendy MacIsaac	*The "Reel" Thing*, *Timeline*, and *Off the Floor*
Natalie MacMaster	*Live* and *Live in Cape Breton*
Howie MacDonald	*Cape Breton Fiddle Music Not Calm* and *Live! West Mabou Hall*
Donald MacLellan	*The Dusky Meadow*
Morgan MacQuarrie	*Loch Ban*
Sandy MacIntyre	*Steeped in Tradition*
Glenn Graham	*Drive*
Jerry Holland	*Jerry Holland and Friends*
Mac Morin	*Mac Morin*
Barry Shears	*A Cape Breton Piper*
Joe Peter MacLean	*Back of Boisdale*
Karen Beaton	*How Sweet the Sound*
J. J. Chaisson	*In the "Genes"*
Michael Anthony MacLean	*Good Boy M. A.!* (two settings)
Jason Roach	*Jason Roach*
Mike Hall	*A Legacy not to be Forgotten* (two settings)
Melody and Derrick Cameron	*Looking Forward and Looking Back*
Marc Boudreau	*Live at the Doryman Pub*
Compilation albums	*Glendale '77* *Festival of Scottish Fiddling 1973* *Highland Village Ceilidh* *The Rover's Return* *The Cape Breton Fiddle* *MacKinnon's Brook* *Cape Breton Live Radio, Take 02*

4. Sources for the tradition of '*Cailleach an Dùdain*'

Date	Details
1740	Discussion of the MacFarlane MS, c. 1740.
	'Cailleach an Dordon', in T. M. Flett, 'Addenda et Corrigenda: Some Hebridean Folk Dances', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* 7/3 (1954): 183.
1804	'A mainland solo character dance'.
	Alexander Campbell, *The Grampians Desolate: A Poem in Six Books.* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Author, 1804), 261–262.
1829–31	Recording of a Hogmanay performance.
	Norman MacLeod, *Caraid nan Gaidheal,* ed. Archibald Clerk (Glasgow: William MacKenzie, 1867 [1829–31]), 397–98.
1890s	A full account of the Hebridean paired combat-revival drama.
	Fr Allan McDonald, 'Strange Things', manuscript c. 1890s, Canna House MS CH2/1/1/12/128/1, §86.
1900	Description of a tradition at St. Michael's festival with two women as 'famous dancers' at Clachan-a-ghluip, North Uist, in 1871.
	Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1900), 208–209.
n.d.	A variant *port-à-beul* text: '*An toir thu do nighean domh, Chailleach an dùdain*?'
	Alexander Carmichael, unpublished notebook CW120/344, f 100v. Carmichael Watson Collection, University of Edinburgh.
1911	Reproduction of Carmichael's account with song text, '*Cailleach an dùdain, dùdain, dùdain, / Cailleach an dùdain, cum do dheireadh rium'*.
	Edward Dwelly, *The Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary* (Herne Bay: E. Dwelly, 1911), 148.
1933	Major Norman Macleod, a native of North Harris, recalling a childhood performance of the tradition under the name 'Black Witch's Dance', including mock death, lamentation, and revival. 'Black Magic in Uist: Weird Rites in Lonely Cottage, Strange Beliefs', *People's Journal*, 20 May 1933, 9.
1956	An incomplete version from Angus John MacLellan of Benbecula in 1953.
	J. F. and T. M. Flett, 'Dramatic Jigs in Scotland', *Folklore* 67 (1956): 92–93.
1966	Kate MacDonald, Garryheillie, South Uist, providing the '*cum do dheireadh rium*' lyrics alongside *canntaireachd* of the tune.
	School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA1966.096.A3; Tobar an Dualchais track 107096
1982	Donald Allan MacQueen, Iochdar, South Uist, recalling a memory of the tune's being used as a dance: '*O cò fear a bhiodh a' dèanamh ruidhle Cailleach an Dùdain*?' ('Which one would do the Cailleach an Dùdain reel')
	School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA1982.141; Tobar an Dualchais track 128919

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