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Nackian Narratives:  
Storytelling and Ideology within Scotland's Traveller  
Communities



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* EDINBURGH

Robert Fell

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the storytelling traditions of one of Scotland's most iconic yet underrepresented ethnic minorities, known to officialdom and the wider population as 'Travellers'. The originality of the thesis comes from the deployment of interdisciplinary methodologies that are rarely utilised within the field of ethnology. Usually, ethnological scholarship consists of descriptions and taxonomies, with little or no attention being paid to the analysis and interpretation of the material itself (Dundes 1980: vii). This lack of interpretation is especially conspicuous when it comes to the traditions of Scotland's Traveller communities. Here, concepts drawn from folkloristics, narratology, onomastics and literary criticism are brought to bear on the Travellers' rich oral storytelling traditions to present plausible explanations of their meanings. Niles asserts that Traveller storytelling has a masterful ability to 'communicate values and beliefs' (1999: 165) and Braid identifies one of its functions as the negotiation of difference with outsiders (2002: 46). Expanding on these insights, I view the diverse storytelling traditions within a framework that foregrounds social discourse and lived experience. To do this, I draw upon a large corpus of archival material that is currently underutilised in the literature on Traveller communities. Contemporary fieldwork results are also incorporated, enriching my archival analyses and giving voice to the most recent generations of Scotland's Travellers. I demonstrate the sophistication of their storytelling traditions, arguing that careful analysis of the stories is crucial to our understanding of the Travellers' unique cultural identities and worldviews. I show that Traveller storytelling traditions function as complex expressions of the communities' ideological constitution. I reveal how the stories examined display a distinctive aesthetic that gives Traveller versions of well-known international tales nuanced, culturally significant meanings. These meanings function to ventriloquise group identities and problematise dominant sedentarist ideologies. Tensions between conflicting ideological imperatives are brought into sharp focus, demonstrating how valuable understandings of complex social relationships are woven into Travellers' cultural expressions. I contend that '*Nackian* narrative' – a term linked to Travellers' self-definition outside of official designations – be acknowledged as a distinctive folk idiom within the wider Scottish and European folkloric traditions. What Clark refers to as 'invisible lives' (2001: 16) are thereby made conspicuous through the stories and oral histories illuminated by this thesis.

## Lay Summary

This project is designed to take a close look at the ways that spoken storytelling can provide researchers with information about how people view the world. Its core principle is that the stories we share with each other as a society are important indicators of how we understand the world around us. In the broadest sense, this project views storytelling practices as complex expressions of cultural identity. Culture is viewed here as learned behaviours that conform to accepted societal characteristics; a society's shared values and beliefs are thereby expressed by their culture. Identity is viewed as a deeply-rooted, yet adaptable, sense of belonging within a community. 'Cultural identity', then, is understood as the embodiment of certain values and beliefs that belong to specific communities of individuals. Cultural identity can be expressed in many ways, from birth-place to language, cooking to comic books, and it is therefore not necessarily one single 'thing'. However, close examination of cultural expressions gives us insights into the nature of the communities who share them.

With these understandings of cultural identity in mind, this project considers the shared values and beliefs of one of Scotland's ethnic minority communities. Scotland's Gypsy / Travellers – to give their official National Records of Scotland designation – are not a single community. Instead, they are made up of different groups known by many names over the past thousand years or so. As early as the twelfth century, a group known as 'Tinklers' are mentioned in Scotland's legal system. This is an occupational term referring to a person's skill in metalwork. Although nowadays condemned as a racial slur, the term 'Tinkler' or 'Tinker' came to represent a distinct group of individuals that were valued members of Scotland's pre-industrial economy. Gypsy / Traveller communities also have been known in Gaelic as *Ceàrdan*. This is a term meaning skilled metalworkers and again relates to historical occupations and valued skillsets. Some individuals from contemporary communities define themselves as 'Nacken' [also 'Nawken', 'Nyakim' and 'Nachin']. This term has obscure origins, but it represents a more self-defining ethnic identity and one that is not based on their former or current working lives. Despite the different labels used to identify them, these diverse communities share cultural characteristics that were, historically at least, based on nomadic lifestyles and working practices. Today, most of Scotland's Gypsy / Travellers, Nacken and *Ceàrdan* do not lead nomadic lifestyles, but have nevertheless retained a distinctive cultural identity that reflects the historical development of their communities. Their group status as an ethnic minority was officially recognised in Scotland

in 2008. This occurred after a legal precedent was set during an industrial tribunal brought in Aberdeen. The unanimous judgment of the tribunal – chaired by Judge Hosie – resulted in protection for the communities under the Race Relations Act (1976, amended 2000).

Unfortunately, the communities have faced many centuries of persecution and misunderstanding from mainstream Scottish society. The mass media, for instance, continue to make ill-informed stereotypical representations that fuel the misunderstandings that this project addresses. I argue that these experiences – both in the past and in the present day – condition the cultural identities and related expressions of the communities. I go on to show that these cultural expressions represent distinctive ways of looking at the world and that detailed analysis can offer meaningful insights into the relationships between marginalised communities and wider Scottish society.

Previous research has demonstrated that these communities greatly value their shared storytelling traditions. It is here that the central focus of this project rests. I demonstrate how the examination of storytelling practices can help us gain a clearer understanding of the values and beliefs of this underrepresented sector of Scottish society. To do this, I use a wide range of sources to place the stories in their cultural, social and political contexts. I then consider the stories' characters and plots and what their actions and deeds mean within these contexts. My examinations reveal that storytellers from these communities use their stories to communicate alternative understandings of the world and to navigate their relationships with mainstream Scottish society. I show that the stories advocate a more conscientious relationship with the natural environment and challenge ideas about the ways that society itself is organised. The richness and the variety of these expressions was recognised during the early years of the School of Scottish Studies in the 1950s and beyond, a legacy that this project wholeheartedly endeavours to continue. Overall, this project reveals that the storytelling traditions of Gypsy / Travellers set them apart and continue to teach us much about one of Scotland's underrepresented cultural identity groups.

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*This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my Grandma Fell*

1932 – 2020

## Foreword

At the inception of this project in 2017, a three-year plan was devised that aimed to build a detailed conceptual framework for the study of traditional narrative within Scotland's Traveller communities. The framework – provided below in Chapters 1 and 2 – was composed as planned during my first year of research, with my analyses of archived materials in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 taking shape during my second year. During these first two years, I established collaborators in the field, working to build rapport and trust with individuals from the communities interested in helping me with my project. My plan was to deliberately reserve my fieldwork activities until the beginning of my third and final year. The rationale for this decision was that I would be better placed – based on my detailed conceptual framework and archival analyses – to engage more effectively with members of the communities. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on my planned fieldwork has been significant. During the initial few months of the pandemic, in mid-2020, my supervision team and I were hopeful that my fieldwork could go ahead later in the year. Alas, as 2020 ended, the situation worsened, and we began to seek alternatives as my funding period came to an end. I was able to conduct some fieldwork over the phone but the natural connections that normal fieldwork engenders were significantly impacted. The overall result is that my final analytical chapter (Chapter 6) – where I intended to engage with a range of contemporary Traveller storytellers – does draw on contemporary primary source material but as an adapted strategy rather than a planned one.

## Abbreviations

**ACSTP** - Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People

**AHD** - Authorised Heritage Discourse

**ATU** - Aarne-Thompson-Uther Tale-Type Taxonomy

**DSL** - The Dictionary of the Scots Language

**GRTHM** - Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month

**ICH** - Intangible Cultural Heritage

**MECOPP** - Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project

**ML** - Migratory Legend

**MWGGT** - Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers (Scottish Government)

**NRS** - National Records of Scotland

**OED** - The Oxford English Dictionary

**SSS** - School of Scottish Studies

**STERG** - Scottish Traveller Education Review Group

**TAD** – Tobar an Dualchais

**TAD ID** - Tobar an Dualchais Person Identification

**TMC** - The Man in the Cassock

**TSAS** - The Statistical Accounts of Scotland

**UNESCO** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

## Note on Interviews and Interviewees

As I noted in my foreword above, one aim of this thesis was to engage with members of Scotland's contemporary Traveller communities while addressing my research questions. Although my archived-centred approach yields a wealth of primary sources from the twentieth century, the importance of contemporary individuals' stories and experiences were not lost during early conceptualisations of this thesis. Despite the unprecedented circumstances mentioned above, I was committed to finding out how members of contemporary Traveller communities view and use their storytelling traditions. The interviews that form the basis of my final analytical chapter below capture such insights. The semi-structured interviews follow the methodology and critical underpinnings that I outline in Chapter 2 below: put simply, I ask my interviewees about their lived experiences and how storytelling informs and sustains their view of the world around them, resulting in a rich resource that I use to perform qualitative analyses and contextualised close readings. I include here brief biographical notes of the individuals that were kind enough to share their culture and experiences with me:

**Jess Smith** – Jess was raised in a large family of Scottish Travellers and has gathered a rich repertoire of stories since childhood. Jess is the author of several autobiographical books and continues to share her tales in live performances.

**Davie Donaldson** – Davie is an advocate and social justice campaigner. Davie speaks regularly around the country and in the media on the discrimination faced by Travellers, increasing inclusivity of policy and practice towards the communities.

**Shamus McPhee** – Shamus is an artist, activist and founding member of the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Law Reform Coalition. Shamus' art practice draws upon his experience of growing up amid social exclusion and negotiates an acute sense of cultural differentiation.

## **Introduction: The View from Tullybelton**

This thesis focuses on one of Scotland's most marginalised and underrepresented ethnic minority communities, Travellers. In the present context, the term 'Travellers' describes a series of interlinked social and familial groups that have existed in Scotland as distinct from mainstream society since at least the twelfth century (Kenrick and Clark 1999: 51). After spending many years engaging with Scotland's diverse groups of Travellers, Henderson remarked that it is vain to speak with any certainty about the ultimate origins of these people. However, Henderson suggests that they are likely to be descended from an ancient caste of itinerant metalworkers whose status in earlier modes of society was probably very high (2004: 229). Neat casts the origin of the Travellers in the Highlands further back in time speculating that 'they are the descendants of the Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers' (1996: 223) who were forced out of Northern Europe as the Neolithic agriculturalists began to dominate the landscape. It is not my purpose here to attempt to uncover the origins of the Travellers, or to validate their ethnic status in terms of their longevity in Scotland's history. As A. and F. Rehfish have pointed out, 'literally gallons of ink have been utilised developing theories as to the origin of these people' (1975: 272) without any definitive success.

It must be noted from the outset that although, from a political perspective, Scotland's Traveller communities are defined as one homogeneous entity, they are comprised of diverse groups spread throughout Scotland. As of 2011, Travellers have been officially recognised by the Scottish Government in the form of a separate ethnic category. The 2011 census carried out by the National Records of Scotland (NRS) included a separate response category to allow people to specifically identify themselves as 'White – Gypsy / Traveller' (NRS 2014: 2). According to the Scottish Government, the 2011 census results reported around 4,000 individuals as belonging to the 'White – Gypsy / Traveller' category ('Analysis of the 2011

Census' 2015: 5). The same governmental report also states that it 'should be noted that some organisations working with Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland estimate that the population figure is much higher' (ibid.: 6). In Chapter 1, I describe how this conflation between Gypsies and Travellers came about and how it continues to cause misunderstandings. For instance, the disparity between population estimates cited above may well be down to the fact that the category itself is a misnomer. Tammi has pointed out recently that 'Gypsy/Traveller is an official term – negotiated with members of the community in Scotland and used by governments and other policy makers – which aims to recognise, and encompass, the diversity of Scotland's nomadic tribes' (2020: 63). However, Tammi points out that 'it is important to note that the term is a contested one both within and outwith the UK and consequently is not accepted by all families' (ibid.). I go into some detail concerning political definitions of the communities, but at this early stage of my thesis, it is vital to register the way the term 'Traveller' is being deployed. I use the term advisedly to identify individuals and communities so that it is clear to the reader that I am referring to a person from within the heterogeneous ethnic group on which this thesis focuses. Similarly, phrases such as 'Traveller storytelling', 'Traveller tradition-bearer', 'Traveller culture' and 'Traveller worldview' are used to differentiate the concepts under discussion from their mainstream counterparts. This is because Scotland's diverse Traveller communities – when viewed as an ethnic collective and in their proper context – have a distinct sense of their own cultural identities that stand in contradistinction to mainstream Scottish society.

Towards and during my conclusion, I show how this contested nomenclature manifests in stories and how contemporary Travellers choose to define themselves. The title of this thesis, *Nackian Narratives*, was chosen to reflect the self-defining prerogative of the individuals involved because my collaborators in the field place significant store in self-defining as 'Nacken' or 'Nawken'. I expand upon the term Nacken (or Nawken) below to trace its use in

the literature surrounding Travellers. Perhaps more significantly, Scotland's nomadic or semi-nomadic ethnic groups have, throughout the centuries, continually been defined from the outside. Their otherness has acquired many different epithets, leading to a legacy of misunderstanding that persists to this day. Moreover, the inclusion of the suffix *-ian* serves to differentiate their cultural expressions from comparable folkloric expressions from wider Scottish and European traditions. I show that 'Nackian narrative' is not only a meaningful way to describe the characteristics of the stories under examination, but a step towards elevating the underrepresented voices of the storytellers from within the communities. Discussing Irish Travellers, Ní Fhloinn makes an analogous suggestion: the analysis of folklore presents 'another dimension to the already established profile of the Traveller as the quintessential Other in Irish society, and should hopefully serve to enhance our understanding of that ambivalent status' (2015: 156). Further contemporary debate around Traveller representation comes from Ó hAodha:

It can be argued that the institutionalisation of representation, image or stereotype in relation to marginalised and "outsider" minorities such as Travellers has become so engrained within the Western cultural heritage that it has become reified and irrefutably "fixed" within the public imaginary.

(2011: 4)

Although Ní Fhloinn and Ó hAodha focus on Irish Travellers, their insights are pertinent here because my own discussions examine conditions where representations of Scotland's Travellers are based on the same institutionalised perspectives. 'The Irish Other is a conception which should be celebrated', concludes Ó hAodha, 'and engaged with on a reciprocal level' (ibid.: 202). A respectful dialogue with members of the communities, both from those living and through archived recordings, is a key impetus of the present thesis. What becomes clear is that, despite the Travellers comprising many diverse families and social groups, there is a clear sense they share certain traditions and folklore that reflect the

image of a collective cultural identity. As Niles has pointed out, ‘in any folk culture, the individual and the community are connected inseparably, and yet certain individuals stand out for their mastery of particularly expressive forms’ (1999: 176). Consequentially, what lies at the heart of this thesis are the *individual* Travellers and *their own* expressions regarding their distinctive cultural identities. I expand upon this concept, and Niles’ insights, in more detail in section 1.3. In summary, the present thesis examines Traveller storytelling traditions to offer fresh insights into the Travellers’ individually *and* collectively unique culture and heritage. Put another way, I demonstrate how individual artistic expressions ventriloquise the ideological makeup of the communities under discussion, showcasing their distinctive *Nackian* narratives. To do this, I draw upon a wide variety of secondary sources from Travellers’ lived experiences to contextualise the stories and testimonies that form my primary sources. By viewing storytelling at both the individual and the community levels, I show how analysis of storytelling traditions can enhance our understanding of the Travellers as communities with rich, inherently valuable artistic traditions.

The storytelling traditions of the Travellers have been attracting the attention of collectors and scholars alike for generations. For instance, Campbell included several Traveller tales in his collection *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, first published in 1860-62. These tales include a long story from ‘Old Macdonald, travelling tinker [Traveller]’, that Campbell tells us represented ‘an incantation more vividly [sic] to me than anything I have ever read or heard’ (1860-62 vol. I: xcv). It must be noted here that in present day Scotland, the term ‘Tinker’ is widely considered pejorative, and an outright racist slur by many Travellers. However, the term is deployed advisedly here, strictly within the context of an objective discussion of its historical usage. At the beginning of the twentieth century, McCormick questions why Scotland’s Travellers have been treated with such contempt over the centuries, applauding them as a ‘most intensely interesting class’ (1907: 4). Elsewhere, Henderson

recognises the prowess of Traveller storytellers when referring to the School of Scottish Studies (SSS) fieldwork activities, which began in the early 1950s (2004: 159). More recently, Neat highlights the Travellers' uniqueness when he asks 'why the psychological and cultural characteristics of these "outsiders" [Travellers] have provided a strange new fulcrum to Scottish national tradition' (1996: ix). The present section offers introductory contextual information on Travellers in modern Scotland by utilising sociological studies, material from the SSS Archives and conversations with contemporary Travellers.

Travellers throughout Scotland have expressed having a shared sense of cultural identity that is borne out through a long history of persecution and misunderstanding from the majority of the Scottish population (Clark 2006: 53, 55). The unique cultural identity of Scotland's Travellers will become a key concept throughout this thesis – and one that can be interpreted from many different perspectives – so it is important to define how the term is being deployed from the outset. For the purpose of this thesis, the Travellers' cultural identities are understood as their membership of a discrete ethnic group that exists in contradistinction to a larger social system. My definition of an 'ethnic group' follows Fenton, where the group members share a putative idea of descent or ancestry and culture (2010: 12). From a legal perspective, the concept of ethnicity was given definitive consideration in the 1983 *Mandla vs Dowell Lee* case heard in The House of Lords. During this case, Lord Fraser of Tullybelton recognised an ethnic group as a distinct community by virtue of certain characteristics, namely:

The conditions which appear to me to be essential are these: (1) a long shared history, of which the group is conscious as distinguishing it from other groups, and the memory of which it keeps alive (2) a cultural tradition of its own, including family and social customs and manners, often but not necessarily associated with religious observance. In addition to those two essential characteristics the following characteristics are, in my opinion, relevant: (3) either a common geographical origin, or descent from a small number of common ancestors (4) a common language, not necessarily peculiar to the group (5) a common literature peculiar to the group (6) a

common religion different from that of neighbouring groups or from the general community surrounding it (7) being a minority or being an oppressed or a dominant group within a larger community.

(1983: 1 All ER)

Scotland's Travellers certainly satisfy Lord Fraser's essential characteristics and many of the relevant characteristics that follow. Moreover, the Travellers' cultural identity as an ethnic group has been shaped and influenced by the ever-changing social, political and economic landscape in which they have found themselves over the centuries. It cannot be said that other individuals or communities within Scotland did not experience the same ever-changing landscape, but what can be said is that Scotland's Travellers' choice of lifestyle and their values mean that they have experienced these changes differently. The view from Lord Fraser of Tullybelton is a key underpinning of this thesis; his judgement represents the official recognition of the ethnic distinctiveness of Traveller communities. Moreover, the legality of the Scottish Travellers' ethnic status was cemented in Scotland during an industrial tribunal in 2008, brought by Mr Ken MacLennan against his employer, the *Gypsy Traveller Education and Information Project*. Drawing on Lord Fraser's ethnic 'characteristics', cited above, Judge Hosie ruled that Mr MacLennan had been dismissed based on his 'stance on behalf of Gypsy Travellers' (University of Strathclyde, Research Excellence Framework 2014: online).

Both Lord Fraser's and Judge Hosie's judgements fall short of capturing what this distinctiveness resembles in the communities themselves. Writing in *Scottish Affairs*, Clark observes that over the centuries the travelling community 'developed a clear sense of [their] distinct social and cultural identity, an identity that was, and still is, held together by overt prejudice and discrimination from the settled community' (2006: 53). However, despite Clark's observations of prejudice and discrimination towards Travellers, it is clear that

Travellers do not view themselves as social pariahs. On the contrary, Travellers are aware of their distinctiveness from the ‘settled’ population and are somewhat party to their peripheral status in Scottish society. What I present in this thesis are detailed examinations of Traveller storytelling that bring into sharp focus how this distinctiveness manifests itself. I reveal that Traveller storytelling is far from ideologically neutral and that close attention to the details illuminate the ‘characteristics’ referred to by Lord Fraser. As an early example, when questioned during an interview on her views of non-Travellers’ perceptions of Travellers, Betsy Whyte explains that she ‘didnae really feel that I wisnae good enough, I didnae really feel that inside o’ me, but I knew that they thought that so I was having nothing tae dae wi’ them’ (TAD 64239).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, John Stewart explains that Travellers’ ‘way of thinking, our deep concern inside, our jealousies and oor hatreds, our loves and our likes are far different from yours’ (TAD 56424). Stewart also expresses a sense of inherent self-esteem when he remarks that ‘if you’re Traveller brained, and you had the education, you’re jumps ahead of the country folk [mainstream population]’ (TAD 65889). Through her work with contemporary Traveller children, Marcus has shown that this sense of otherness persists within the most recent generation of Travellers in Scotland (2015: 60-61). Marcus suggests that young Travellers’ reluctance to associate in any meaningful way with members of the mainstream population exacerbates misunderstandings between the two groups (ibid.). What these examples demonstrate is that Travellers, both past and present, overtly distinguish themselves from the ‘settled’ or ‘mainstream’ population of Scotland. Clark notes that there are many more examples of Travellers expressing their distinctive values and worldviews

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<sup>1</sup> All references beginning ‘TAD’ refer to the track ID on *Tobar an Dualchais* (TAD), a digital archive which contains material from the School of Scottish Studies, The Canna Collection and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal. The recorded material can be accessed via the TAD website by searching the numerical track ID using the ‘Search’ function - <https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/>. Appendix II and Appendix III below contain a corpus of material from TAD and a list of the individual records cited and/or analysed during this thesis, respectively.

held within the SSS Archives (2006: 19). I draw on these examples in the forthcoming chapters to enrich my close readings of the stories themselves.

As a further opening example of how the resources held within the SSS Archives help inform this thesis, Traveller Stanley Robertson laments the decline of Travellers' shared cultural identity. 'There has been many changes in the traditions of the Travelling people', says Robertson, 'due to that fact that the scaldie [non-Traveller] influence has come upon them [...] they're ashamed of their heritages' (TAD 67492). What is at stake here, then, is not only political differentiation based on ethnicity, but a tangible sense that Travellers' unique cultural identities are being undermined and demonised. The cultural legitimacy of Travellers is something that is expressed by members of the communities themselves. Douglas writes that 'the Traveller, settled or not, still has a distrust of outsiders, a fear that in the course of daily life in the modern world he has to hide' (1985: 265). Young Traveller activist Davie Donaldson affirms that this anxiety persists to this day, explaining that contemporary Travellers are 'often forced to hide our ethnicity for fear of prejudice' (2017: online). During her interviews with contemporary Travellers, Marcus reported similar fears of identifying as a Traveller in modern Scotland; when questioned about coping with racism and harassment, one interviewee said that she tries to 'avoid everything [...] and hide in the shadows' (2016: 147). A separate interviewee from Marcus' study recalls, 'I can remember I wouldnae say I was a Traveller because I was terrified and my mum used to always put it in my head that... don't speak about it because you're making it worse for yourself *just act normal*' (2016: 158, my italics).

Elsewhere, discussing her experience of racism, Traveller Twitter-user 'Roadside Mum' explains that she does not always 'out herself' as a Traveller when she encounters racist attitudes towards Travellers; Roadside Mum goes on to lament the centuries of misunderstanding regarding Travellers, tweeting that 'we hide. We carry on with a foot in 2

worlds. There is home culture [and] what you are in the other world' (@RoadsideMum, 13 January 2020). In Chapter 6, I show how these anxieties manifest themselves in contemporary examples of storytelling from Traveller communities. More evidence of this prejudice comes from an article published by Davie Donaldson entitled 'The government is at "war with our lifestyle", claim Scotland's Travellers' (2017). In his article, Donaldson remarks that modern Travellers 'are struggling to retain our traditional lifestyle while often forced to hide our ethnicity for fear of prejudice' (2017: online). It is apparent that Scotland's Travellers are still subject to discrimination in modern Scotland. One Traveller interviewed by Donaldson believes that 'Travellers are unfairly characterised by the media' (ibid.), and such representations in the media may go some way to explaining the ongoing misunderstanding of Travellers and their culture. Donaldson and his interviewee are not alone. Clark observes that Travellers' voices rarely appear in print media in Scotland, and that this conspicuous underrepresentation in the press reinforces pre-existing misunderstandings of Traveller life and culture (2018: 113). Not only this, but the representations of Travellers are often negative stereotypes. The negative and stereotypical portrayals of Travellers in the media are often the only exposure that the mainstream population give to Travellers (The Equality and Human Rights Commission 2013: 4).

It is apparent that stereotypical, negative depictions of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma persist in the mainstream media well into the twenty-first century (Amnesty International *Caught in the Headlines* 2012: 1-12; Okely 2014: 65-85; *Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers* (MWGGT): Scottish Government, online; *Article 12 in Scotland* 2018: 11; Clark 2018: 113). These misunderstandings are also apparent in the political establishment: Donaldson cites derogatory comments from political figures such as the Conservative MP, Gary Streeter, who claimed that 'most of them [Travellers] are as ethnic as I am' (2017: online) and Conservative MP Douglas Ross' desire for 'tougher enforcement against

Gypsy/Travellers' (ibid.). Coming to the same conclusion as Clark above, Donaldson explains that 'this rhetoric can encourage discrimination' (ibid.). In terms of social inclusion, these comments from Clark and Donaldson, not to mention the MPs, highlight the urgency for a more informed engagement with Travellers in modern Scotland. The Scottish Parliament's *Equalities and Human Rights Committee's* meeting agenda on 7 December 2017 consisted of marking 'Human Rights Day 2017 by taking evidence on human rights and the Gypsy Traveller Community in Scotland' (2017: online). Within the same agenda, Chris Oswald – head of the Policy, Equalities and Human Rights Commission – stated that limited gains have been forthcoming in terms of the Equality Act (2010) and compelled the *Committee* to focus on Travellers' 'ability to participate economically, socially and civically, [as] a far more compelling approach' (ibid.). In the political sphere, then, the tide appears to be turning on the palpable underrepresentation of Scotland's Traveller communities.

From an academic perspective, the SSS Archives at the University of Edinburgh house copious narratives from Travellers throughout Scotland. This source of data is important as a diachronic record of narratives but, thus far, has been underutilised and Traveller voices are underrepresented in current ethnological scholarship. This thesis utilises the SSS Archives to analyse and interpret narratives from across the Travellers' traditions. Through the analysis of this integral part of Travellers' culture, I address Donaldson's, Clark's and others' perceptions of prejudice and discrimination to offer fresh perspectives on this misunderstood and underrepresented sector of Scottish society. This thesis also incorporates results from my own fieldwork, where information and stories from contemporary Travellers reaffirm my detailed contextual framework. The theoretical and methodological approaches to both sources of data will be explained in more detail during my opening two chapters. The title of this thesis, *Nackian Narratives*, is drawn from the self-defining term I introduced above. This effort towards self-determination has been expressed by the communities for

generations. For instance, in his preface to Simson's 1865 study *A History of the Gipsies: With Specimens of the Gipsy Language*, the editor, James Simson, explains that 'tinkler is the name generally applied to the Scottish Gipsies [sic]. The wandering, tented class prefer it to the term Gipsy' (1865: 7). Within the body of the text proper, Simson identifies a group who 'call themselves *Nawkens* [...] a word to which they attach the meaning of a *wanderer*, or *traveller* – one who can do any sort of work for himself that may be required in the world' (1865: 340). It is in Simson that we first encounter the self-defining term 'Nawken' in the literature surrounding Scotland's Traveller communities. Stanley Robertson – a prominent Traveller storyteller I engage with throughout this thesis – uses the term 'Nyakim', to which he attaches the meaning 'Old Traveller' (1989: 7). More recently, Kenrick and Clark note that 'in their own language of Cant they call themselves *Nachins* (or *Nawkens*)' (1999: 52). Clark and Greenfields also use the term, commenting that Scotland's Traveller communities are sometimes referred to as 'Nawkins' or 'Nachins' (2006: 16). Traveller Jeannie Robertson also uses a variation of the term 'Nacken': 'the only word that ever I heard them called wis *Nachins*' (TAD 10285). In subsequent chapters, I demonstrate that the stories that form my primary source material have a definable aesthetic that reflects the distinctiveness of the Travellers' cultural identities. The thesis title therefore recognises and empowers both the storytellers, as members of marginalised communities, and the stories that they tell. The central purpose of this appellation is to reject the imposition of misleading naming conventions and advocate a more self-determining conceptualisation of the communities involved. As Willie Reid puts it:

as a Gypsy/Traveller myself I am made painfully aware that we have always been defined by outsiders. Countless names and descriptions have been foisted upon us. The language used to describe Gypsy/Travellers is constantly changing and has more to do with government policy than ethnic identity [...] Society has an incurable urge to label us so that they can painfully squeeze us into a corner. (1997: 32)

# Chapter 1

## Context and Research Questions

Our history is all around you,  
You just need to know where to look.

[...]

Our history spreads out across the country.  
In every town you will find it,  
If you just know where to look  
For we are still here.

– Maggie McPhee, ‘Our History is All Around’

(*Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month 2021*: online)

Given Travellers’ cultural distinctiveness from within wider Scottish society, this thesis has two interrelated research questions. Firstly, how do traditional narratives – when transmitted orally through generations of storytellers and listeners alike – condition and represent the distinctive values and worldviews of Travellers and their communities? Secondly, what does the Travellers’ traditional culture *actually* resemble? I show that although much has been said about Travellers’ distinctive ‘culture’, little attention has been paid to the details. My research questions therefore operate in tandem to complement one another; the first analyses how narratives function within the communities, and the second provides detailed descriptions of what the narratives themselves contain. I argue that the stories Travellers share embody a set of unique cultural identities that are based on sophisticated negotiations of Traveller values and worldviews. The overarching premise of this thesis is that Travellers’ stories function as ciphers and my central purpose rests in decoding these ciphers. As Reith points out, ‘perhaps

the most striking way in which Traveller traditions are used [...] is for their implicit symbolic and metaphoric undercurrents' (2008a: 80). Braid goes further, asserting that 'Travellers are creative human beings fully engaged in the modern world and perfectly capable of participating in a dialogue on issues of cultural identity' (1997: 44). Using a variety of diagnostic techniques and interdisciplinary methodologies, my analyses engage with these undercurrents and dialogues to uncover meanings encoded within the Travellers' storytelling traditions. In terms of my research questions, I demonstrate that Travellers' worldviews are predominantly defined by oral traditions that aim to vitiate mainstream ideological positions. Throughout this thesis, the term 'worldview' will be understood, following Dégh, as:

The sum total of subjective interpretations of perceived and experienced reality of individuals [...] It contains beliefs, opinions, philosophies, conducts, behavioural patterns, social relationships, and practices of humans, related to life on this earth and beyond in the supernatural realm.

(1995: 132)

With these diverse attributes in mind, 'worldview' is a useful term to describe the breadth of experiences on which I focus here because it allows for the subjectivity of the speaker. Subjectivity is an important consideration in this thesis, not only for the storytellers being examined but for my own position as interpreter. Some notion of sublime objectivity is neither an aim nor a desire; instead, I present highly contextualised and detailed close readings of Traveller storytelling to reveal plausible explanations of their meanings. Reith's insight into the function of Traveller worldview is also useful to note at this point. The received content of oral traditions, says Reith, engender 'worldviews that provide the foundations for confident creativity and individualism' (2008a: 79). Not only are Scottish Travellers' worldviews distinctive, but their articulation within oral narrative also provides individuals from diverse Traveller communities with a sense of confidence in their own cultural legitimacy. Subjectivity is therefore inherent in these expressions because they are

based on personal experience. At the same time, they represent the subjective experience of the communities in which the stories circulate.

The sophisticated stories are designed so that the listeners can, Reith continues, ‘understand and embody the characters, dramatic proportions and locations of traditional texts’ (ibid.). I argue that their function, via intergenerational transmission, is an undisguised desire to communicate specific values and beliefs so that cultural legitimacy is sustained. In terms of these values and beliefs, the epigraph I included at the top of this chapter, from Maggie McPhee, casts my analytical net wider than just intergenerational transmission from within the communities themselves; as McPhee suggests, ‘our history is all around you, you just need to know where to look’ (*Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month 2021*: online). The sense that the Travellers’ histories can also be found ‘spread out across the country’ is something that I capture during this chapter and in my subsequent analytical chapters. Drawing on a wide variety of sources, I propound that storytelling and ideology are intrinsically linked within Travellers’ oral traditions. This thesis is organised so that the opening two chapters provide contextual details from rarely-utilised documentary evidence, alongside testimonies from within the Traveller communities themselves. Although much has been written about Travellers and their status in Scottish society (Rehfish 1975: 272), my own approach differs because the material I draw upon takes the position of the members of the communities, linking this position to theoretical understandings of storytelling and tradition. This approach is important because the analyses and interpretations of the latter four chapters are predicated on close attention to the lived experiences of the storytellers and their communities.

McFadyen has recently pointed out that the ‘dominant paradigms in the study of folklore and expressive arts are linguistic in nature and tend to be dismissive of the dimensions of experience’ (2012: 22). ‘What has mattered in research has not been process, action or

embodied experience', McFadyen asserts, 'but rather the object, product, or artefact that is fixed' (ibid.). This statement is also true in the present research context, where there is a distinct lack of scholarship linking Traveller storytelling to critical techniques that foreground the experience of the tellers. I therefore expend a significant portion of this thesis laying out fresh critical approaches to oral narrative and tradition. Consequentially, this thesis addresses two lacunae: first, the context and critical underpinnings chapters present new ways of thinking about how we can critically analyse traditional narratives. In terms of the contextualisation, Geertz describes this approach as 'thick description', a concept that underpins my own thesis. Geertz explains that with thick description, the 'aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics' (1973: 28). Such 'complex specifics' therefore pepper this thesis to support the broad assertions and conclusions of my analyses and interpretations. In the second lacuna, applying contemporary critical techniques to Traveller storytelling, I render a clearer picture of what Traveller 'culture' does in fact resemble. By looking at a multitude of examples in some detail in later chapters, I show how these techniques can open traditional narratives up to new avenues of research. In this opening chapter, I draw together accounts and testimonies from both Travellers and non-Travellers to shed new light on the roots of the 'otherness' associated with Travellers, both in the past and in the present day. I include examples from a variety of historical and contemporary sources, presenting the reader with a nuanced picture of the Travellers' documented history in Scotland. I go on to engage with the contemporary debate around tradition and how 'traditional' materials are used within communities as a dynamic resource.

## 1.1 The Other, the ‘Tinker’, and the Traveller

The groups referred to by policy makers today as ‘Gypsy / Travellers’ have been known by a variety of appellations in the past. The most common of these historical names for the Travellers in Scotland was ‘tinker’, which many modern Travellers now view as ‘racist, derogatory and unacceptable’ (Donaldson 2018: online). The wider pan-European perspective of Travellers as ‘Other’ is useful to consider before going into detail about the connotations of the term ‘Tinker’. The works of Grellmann (1787), Hoyland (1816), Simson (1865) and Macritchie (1894) are evidence of a fascination with the Other in elite European society during the late-eighteenth century, and throughout the nineteenth century. The editor’s introduction to Simson’s volume from 1865 captures this fascination precisely; ‘the discovery and history of barbarous races of men, besides affording exquisite gratification to the general mind of civilised society, have always been looked upon as important’ (James Simson 1865: 27). Grellmann’s earlier account, *Historischer Versuch über die Zigeuner* [*Dissertation on the Gypsies*] (1787), began an association in the literature between native itinerant groups and immigrants from the Orient by consolidating various stereotypes. Grellmann’s negative, stereotypical images of heathen wanderers who ‘like locusts, have overrun most European countries’ (1787: 2) homogenised all itinerant peoples who shared similar nomadic lifestyles. Hoyland’s *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits & Present State of The Gypsies* (1816) cites Grellmann often, and the stereotypical imagery of the latter’s dissertation is replicated. The first Gypsies in Europe ‘appeared ragged and miserable’, says Hoyland, and ‘in like manner their descendants have continued for hundreds of years, and still remain’ (1816: 37).

However, Hoyland’s sub-title betrays a fascination with the ‘miserable’ wanderers when he explains that his survey aims ‘to promote the amelioration of their [Gypsies] condition’

(1816, title page). Hoyland's terminology reveals a paternalistic and patronising attitude, traits which can also be found in Grellmann's work. In his introduction, Grellmann speaks of the need to 'humanise a people [Gypsies] who, for centuries, have wandered in error and neglect' (1787: ix). Simson's *History of the Gypsies: With Specimens of the Gypsy Language* published in 1865 continues in a similar vein to Grellmann and Hoyland. The derivation is clear from the outset when, in Simson's opening chapter, he states that he is 'indebted for my information on the early history of the continental Gypsies [sic], chiefly to the works of Grellmann [and] Hoyland' (1865: 69). Burke assigns this fascination to the post-Enlightenment Orientalism that was gripping the European intelligentsia, intimated by Grellmann's dissertation noted above (2009: 30). The 'Oriental Other' was initially conceptualised in the form of groups of Gypsies immigrating west across the continent. During the nineteenth century in Scotland, the term 'Gypsy' became synonymous with any group practising a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle. For instance, Simson speaks of 'our Scottish Gypsies' (1865: 340), referring to the communities we know today as Travellers.

As noted in my introduction above, Simson's editor, James Simson, explains that 'tinkler [Tinker] is the name generally applied to the Scottish Gypsies [sic]. The wandering, tented class prefer it to the term Gipsy' (1865: 7). The term 'Tinkler' itself is recorded in Scotland's twelfth-century Farandman laws, where the groups had legal protection under which to ply their trade as itinerant metalworkers (Kenrick and Clark 1999: 51). In terms of etymology, according to *The Dictionary of the Scots Language* (DSL), the word 'tinker' (variously spelled tynklare, tynclare, tynekler, tinklair, tinclar, tinkard etc.) first appears in Scotland as a surname around 1175 (DSL: online). The DSL definition is simple, 'a worker in metal, a craftsman who makes or repairs metal artefacts, a tinker' (ibid.), although the DSL notes that the origin of the word is uncertain. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) offers a similar definition, including the element of itinerancy, also noting that the origin of

the word 'tinker' is uncertain (OED: online). As an appellation for Travellers, the term Tinker persisted into the nineteenth century, where its use became pejorative in the extreme. It is Macritchie's *Scottish Gypsies Under the Stewarts* (1894) that finally recognises Scottish Travellers as a distinct and separate group from Gypsies. 'The word "tinker" or "tinkler", although often applied to genuine Gypsies', says Macritchie, 'cannot be regarded as actually synonymous with "Gypsy"' (1894: 13). Following on from Macritchie's contention, McCormick suggests that 'there were in Scotland, prior to the wave of Romani-speaking Gypsies of 1505, so called Gypsies, or, to put it more specifically, Tinklers' (1907: 393). In her recent discussion of the cultural history of nomadic groups in northern Europe, Burke notes that Grellmann's dissertation inspired the 'Scottish intelligentsia to take notice of indigenous nomadic groups' (2009: 50), and this much is true, based on the writers presented above. Burke goes on to suggest that these nomadic groups were 'subsequently stripped of their locally generated Hiberno-Scottish identity and reconstituted as wanderers of Oriental descent' (ibid.). However, there were people writing in Scotland before Macritchie and McCormick who recognised the difference between native nomadic Scots and the immigrant Gypsies.

In his contribution to *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland* (TSAS), The Reverend John Baird explains that in his parish of Yetholm, he is 'far from regarding the "muggers and tinkers" of Kirk Yetholm as the pure unmingled gipsy race' (1845: 166). Baird goes on to explain that the term 'muggers' refers to the group we know today as Travellers (ibid.). Further evidence of 'muggers' being used as an appellation for Travellers in Southern Scotland can be found in The Reverend Alexander Cuthbertson's account of Edrom, in Berwickshire (1845: 278). We know Baird was familiar with both Grellmann's and Hoyland's work, however, as he cites both authors in his account of his parish (1845: 166). Although intermarriage between immigrant Gypsies and native Scots Travellers took place,

it must be noted that they began as different, identifiable groups (Henderson 2004: 174). This view is implicit in Baird's account of his parish when he notes that the Gypsies in Scotland were 'much less distinguishable as a peculiar race than they appear to have been formerly' (1845: 166). The point is that Travellers in Scotland have been recognised as a distinctive group since at least the twelfth century, but their status, and indeed *acceptance*, within society has been determined by the ideological dispositions of the dominant social group.

The confusion around their origins, coupled with their alternative lifestyles and associations with other itinerant groups, makes representations of Travellers in historical records bleak reading. In TSAS for Auchterderran in Fife, The Reverend Andrew Murray includes a description of 'a few persons, called *tinkers* and *horners*, half-resident, and half-itinerant, who are feared and suspected by the community' (1791: 458). Elsewhere in TSAS, Reverend Alexander Dobie tells us that the parish of Eaglesham 'is oppressed with gangs of gypsies, commonly called tinkers, or randy-beggars' (1792: 124). More evidence of the demonisation of Travellers comes from the parish of Kinnettles, where The Reverend David Ferney informs TSAS that there are 'bands of sturdy beggars, male and female, or, as they are usually called, tinkers; whose insolence, idleness, and dishonesty, are an affront to the police of our country' (1793: 201). The Reverend Duncan M'Ara reports that Fortingall is also plagued by 'swarms of tinkers' (1792: 455).

The animosity displayed by the clergy towards Travellers continues into the nineteenth century in the same pejorative tone. The Reverend William Duff of Grange complains that the parish 'has long been infested by cairds, tinkers, and sturdy beggars' (1845: 219). In Monteith, The Reverend Alexander Gray records that 'vagrants, tinkers, and gipsies from various quarters were numerous; but, by the vigilance of the local police, they have been suppressed' (1845: 1281). In Knockando, The Reverend George Gordon explains that the

parish of is ‘much infested by sturdy beggars, and tinkers, especially during the summer season, who drain away a great deal of what might otherwise be given to the home-poor’ (1845: 81). Writing in *The Friend; a Religious and Literary Journal (1827-1906)*, the anonymous author of an article entitled ‘Savages in Scotland’ explains that the ‘tinkers of Caithness [...] herd like cattle [...] and the entire social condition of the tinker tribe is of the most degraded character’ (1869: 102). The evidence presented here corroborates the conclusion that Travellers in Scotland have existed, and survived, in a hostile environment for many centuries (Rehfishch 1975: 283). However, it must be noted that these disparaging accounts are the opinions of an elite class – embodied by the clergy and the published intelligentsia – and that they are only one side of the story.

It can be taken for granted that the men composing these narratives would not have consulted what were deemed undesirable members of their communities – the Travellers themselves – when collating the information included in their accounts of their parishes. It is not difficult to imagine the Travellers’ *persona non grata* status in the communities mentioned above. The question presents itself: how did Traveller communities throughout Scotland attract this kind of hostility? One clue comes from an article titled the ‘State of Crime in Scotland’ published in *The Scotsman* in 1838. According to the author, ‘wandering tinkers have earned so bad a reputation in Scotland, that their name is now almost synonymous with thief’ (1838: 2, online). *The Scotsman*’s anonymous author goes on to suggest that this is unsurprising, given that ‘one reason of persons quitting one place of abode after another, being that they have committed offences and fallen under suspicion’ (ibid.). This statement is indicative of sedentarist ideological imperatives that stand in opposition to the lifestyles favoured by itinerant communities. This ideological differentiation, and how it is negotiated within Traveller storytelling traditions, becomes a central thread as this thesis progresses.

Meantime, a broadside from Berwickshire printed in 1719 is a revealing account of ‘The Last Speech and Dying Words of James Thomson Tincklar [sic]’ (Thomson 1719: SCRAN online). During an act of repentance before being executed for murder, Thomson explains that he was born of honest parents, but was raised by ‘one John Bell a Tincklar, who learned me to Pike [rob] and Steal [...] and all manner of debauchery’ (ibid.). Thomson goes on to explain that when he had grown up, he married a wife who ‘was one of the same gang’ (ibid.), and that his wife coerced him into criminality throughout his life. Thomson warns the readers to take notice of whom they marry, ‘for my wife has been the occasion that I suffer here this day’ (ibid.). In other words, the blame for the murder is transferred to Thomson’s wife and his upbringing by the unwholesome gang of ‘Tincklars’. Discussing broadsides such as these in post-Reformation Scotland, Brock points out that it is difficult to ascribe any of the printed material to the accused (2016: 188). Brock suggests that these broadsides were ‘often formulaic’, with the printed material being ‘attuned to public tastes [and] expectations’ (ibid.). From this perspective, Thomson’s criminality is consciously and deliberately attributed, in the mainstream media, to his being corrupted by ‘Tincklars’. Thomson is therefore represented as not inherently wicked, it is only the malign influence of undesirables in the community that drove him to murder. These depictions from the mass media betray a fundamental misunderstanding of Travellers’ - and the anachronistic ‘tinkers’ - chosen lifestyle, with nomadism being directly aligned with criminal behaviour. The Travellers’ lifestyles in the past simply did not fit with the sedentarist ideology of mainstream Scottish society.

Since well before the fourteenth century, itinerant communities throughout Europe had had significant roles to play in the formal economies of feudal societies (MacLaughlin 1995: 10). The conceptualisation of Travellers as skilled workers, valued members of communities and people to be trusted, appears to have been corroded and then obliterated during the

period of Scotland's rapid industrialisation. Industrial production of day-to-day domestic items meant that Travellers and Gypsies throughout Europe were excluded from the nation-building of the individual countries and viewed, at best, as the intriguing residue of a pre-modern past (ibid.). Despite this, evidence of the Travellers' renown in Scotland comes from Duncan Campbell. In his *Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander* (1910), Campbell believes that Scotland's Travellers antedate immigrant Gypsy groups and laments their decline. 'It seems to me', writes Campbell, 'that the tinkers had been a feature of the Highlands long before any "Lord of Little Egypt" [Gypsy] with his followers came to Scotland and imposed on James V. and his Parliament' (1910: 24). Campbell aligns the native Scots, and probably Gaelic-speaking, Travellers with an earlier mercantile order:

In my young days tinkers mended pots and pans, and made spoons out of the horns of rams and cattle. In the time of my grandfather, and even later, they still retained their old repute for being capable silversmiths to whom people brought silver and gold to be melted down and to be converted into brooches, rings, and clasps for girdles, or to decorate hilts of swords and daggers. The "Ceard [Artisan] Ross", whose grandson, Donald Ross, I knew in Balquhidder, was famous over a large district for the highly finished articles with old Celtic designs which he turned out, specimens of which were to be found in many households as long as the old social order lasted. The tinkers of my early days mended old ornaments but made few or no new ones. With the end of plaid, girdle, and buckled-shoe fashion among the Highland men and women came the end of the demand for the neatly finished and artistically designed ornaments the tinkers had been making for untold generations, and when the demand ceased, the art was soon lost.

(ibid.: 24-25)

Campbell's reminiscences not only capture a sense of nostalgia for a perhaps simpler past, but also hints towards a shift in the relationship between Travellers and wider society.

Where once Travellers' ancestors were viewed as artists, it appears fashions changed and the market for such goods disappeared. This view of Travellers as the descendants of a group of

skilled, itinerant artisans is shared by Henderson who suggests that they ‘were part – and an important part – of tribal society [...] travelling their own territories centuries before the arrival of the Romany gypsies [sic] in North-West Europe’ (2004: 174). Campbell’s account can be read as the Travellers’ fate in microcosm; these once renowned and valued artists, free to roam wide territories, fell to mending domestic items. Eventually, as we have seen from historical accounts such as TSAS, Scotland’s Travellers are ostracised to the point that they are considered parasitical.

Even earlier evidence suggests that the maligned ‘tinkers’ were once a valued and trusted sub-section of Scotland’s social milieu. One example of Travellers’ inclusion in earlier Scottish society comes from *The Records of Elgin: 1234-1800*. In March 1658, *The Records* tell us that ‘John Cowie, tincler [tinker], burges [citizen]’ has been tasked with the upkeep of the town clock during his lifetime (Cramond 1902: 307).<sup>2</sup> Relative to the distrust and enmity expressed by the authors of TSAS quoted above, this position of trust and responsibility given to a mere ‘tinker’ represents a significant departure. It must be noted here that we cannot be certain that the individual named John Cowie mentioned above was a Traveller; yet neither can it be categorically discounted. It is plausible that Cowie transitioned to a sedentary lifestyle, and that his appointment to the town clock was based on his skills and experience, regardless of his lifestyle to that date. Other evidence suggests that the relationship between Travellers and the settled population was never simply a binary one. For example, one entry in the *Historical Notices of Scottish Affairs (1683-1688)* from 1684 details an act ‘forbidding any tinkers to go through the town [Edinburgh], but only one to serve the whole town, with his servants’ (Fountainhall 1848: 541). It seems that Travellers were certainly deemed useful in terms of the services they could render, but unpalatable in large numbers.

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<sup>2</sup> The translations of ‘tincler’ and ‘burges’ are from *The Dictionary of the Scots Language* <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/>

Despite the conflicting accounts of Travellers outlined above, the communities being discussed in these sources were valued members of Scottish society. What these early examples also highlight is a tangible shift in attitudes towards Travellers as Scotland moved towards industrialisation. As one historian asserts, during the industrial revolution ‘[the Scottish Highlands’] entire economic structure was dislocated [and] much of the old economy of the region and most of its inhabitants, were rendered redundant’ (Richards 1993: 216, 220). Devine agrees, remarking that during the 1760s and 1770s, ‘traditional society was destroyed in this period and a new order based on quite different values, principles and relationships emerged to take its place’ (1994: 32). Travellers in the Scottish Highlands certainly must have been affected given the nature of their trades as metallurgists and hawkers of artisanal domestic items. No doubt this redundancy continued into the nineteenth century and beyond, as the Travellers’ functions in the everyday economy became less and less tenable (Taylor 2014: 115). Writing in 1836, one columnist for the *Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* captures the fate of the Travellers in the public’s consciousness neatly; ‘the change in circumstances of social life has lessened, if not destroyed, the value of their services’, the columnist explains, ‘while their vagabond propensities render them a pest to the country’ (‘The Tinkers of Scotland’ 1836: 502). From this perspective, it appears that the change in attitudes towards Travellers was initially linked to the rapid industrialisation that Scotland experienced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This was not a fate peculiar to Scotland’s Travellers. MacLaughlin notes that Ireland’s Travellers were similarly maligned as outcasts in the post-Enlightenment atmosphere of ‘social Darwinism’ (1995: 23). Across European philosophy, the concept of ‘stages of civilisation’ – stages based on successively more regimented modes of subsistence – of humankind placed nomadic groups such as the Travellers in the ‘barbarous’ category (Meek 1976: 5; MacLaughlin 1995: 23). In this way, the transition to

urban, sedentary and industrialised societies coupled with the racialisation of nomadic groups during this period has had a major and long-lasting effect on our understanding of nomadic communities in Europe.

As was noted above, reports in the mass media and the observations of privileged members of society are informative, in the sense that they highlight a resounding ideological differentiation. On the other end of this ideological spectrum, we have what an author in *The Scotsman* referred to as the ‘much-neglected’ individuals and communities presently under discussion, the Travellers themselves. The SSS Archives contain a wealth of testimony from Travellers describing their experiences of living in Scotland. One such Traveller, Stanley Robertson, describes himself as ‘a thoroughbred Traveller, on all sides, and I enjoy being part of that great and wonderful culture’ (TAD 85439). Despite this, Robertson describes his childhood experience as being tainted by a ‘great, strong prejudice against us’, exclaiming that he does not ‘understand what makes people grow up with prejudice’ (ibid.). Robertson recalls that when he was a boy, he would have stones thrown at him, be called names and be excluded from regular activities at school. Rationalising this prejudice, Robertson sees the Second World War as a fulcrum over which attitudes towards Travellers changed. Robertson explains that ‘during the war, the people all united, and the Travelling people became part of the society’ (ibid.). After the war ended, however, Robertson feels that people ‘looked for something to hold their aggressions against [...], so the Travelling people were one of the small groups that got picked upon’ (ibid.).

A similar sentiment regarding her early childhood and schooling is expressed by Betsy Whyte. Whyte explains that despite the teachers at her first school treating her very well, ‘if any damage was done to the school, a window broken, or anything like that... “they damn tinks”’ (TAD 82053) would get the blame. Like Robertson’s conception of the Travellers as universal scapegoats, Whyte describes how, if there was any trouble, people would ‘take

anybody's word against the Travellers', no matter what was done' (ibid.). However, outside of the educational system, Whyte portrays an idyllic lifestyle where 'everybody went to the fields [...] from the youngest to the oldest' (ibid.). Whyte fondly remembers how the children would 'play about in the fields, the mothers would go and feed their bairns when they wanted to. [At] dinnertime they would make a big fire and cook something, and boil tea, tea, all the time' (ibid.). Moreover, the Travellers undertook what Whyte calls 'piecework', which is a system of payment where the labourers are paid for the amount of work done, rather than how long it takes them to do it. In this way, Whyte explains, a measure of freedom was achieved; because the work was not compulsory, as with perhaps a salaried position, the Travellers could say 'if it was summertime and a lovely day, you could say, "come on boys, we'll all go to the burn, leave it for the day"', it was just a matter of being able tae be free, I think' (ibid.). At the same time, this piecework system also suits the farmer, as Whyte explains, 'when you were working in piecework, you never wanted to go [leave employment], but when it was compulsory tae be there, ye jist didnae want to be there' (ibid.). From this perspective, Travellers as seasonal workers would have been an integral part of the agricultural economy during the early twentieth century, and even more so further into the past.

Whyte also gives an informative account of how Travellers in the Perthshire region of Scotland would make a living during the months between December and April. During these winter months, when little or no agricultural work was to be had, Whyte recounts how Travellers would trade various domestic items with their settled neighbours, and exchange labour with gamekeepers for raw materials, such as various animal horns (ibid.). Similar to Whyte's description of the harvest months spent in the fields with families, there is no sense of antagonism between Travellers and the settled population. On the contrary, Whyte tells us that 'where we lived, there was no vans [mobile shops] or nae shops, or anything' (ibid.).

This meant that their settled neighbours ‘were glad to see a Traveller comin’, even to get news sometimes’ (ibid.). This sort of evidence of the relationship between Travellers and the settled population paints a somewhat ambiguous picture. On one hand, Travellers are scapegoats for society’s ills, whereas on the other they are valued seasonal workers and useful in many ways on account of their itinerancy.

Further evidence of this type of social and economic engagement with the settled population can be found in the SSS Archives. Discussing his life in Glenlivet, Moray, during the first half of the twentieth century, Adam Lamb acknowledges that he knew Travellers as ‘cyards [cairds]’, and notes that the community had ‘no animosity or onything like [that towards the] tinkers’ (TAD 3135). Lamb’s experiences with Travellers are quite the opposite of animosity, explaining that ‘they [Travellers] would get any amount o meal or tatties or onything that they wanted’ (ibid.). Notably, he comments that he makes a differentiation between Gypsies and Travellers; there were people ‘with oily skin that disnae belong to this country, but then again, you’d see many of them that hudnae that look at aw’ (ibid.). From Lamb’s perspective, there existed a certain difference in appearance that marked Travellers out, thereby differentiating them from ‘the real Gypsy’ (ibid.). Despite his racist perspective, Lamb’s testimony suggests that positive relationships existed between Travellers and the settled population during his lifetime. Elsewhere, during an interview in 1971, Agnes MacKenzie recalls that Travellers would come to Tìree every summer (TAD 51886). At one point, she responds emphatically that, in her experience, the Traveller families that came to Tìree were ‘honest, very honest’ (ibid.), and goes on to provide information about one Traveller family’s habits at other times of the year. ‘The MacAllisters’ headquarters were Tobermory [Isle of Mull]’, MacKenzie explains, ‘they have a house there [...] the children went to school there’ (ibid.). Again, MacKenzie’s testimony is indicative of a relationship with Travelling families that was far from antagonistic or unproductive.

Racial differences aside, it is clear from Lamb's and MacKenzie's testimonies that the itinerant groups that they were familiar with were not considered antagonistic. Further evidence of understanding and appreciation of Travellers' alternative lifestyles comes from Annie Forbes. Describing her life in and around Caithness – again in the early twentieth century – Forbes recalls that 'we had a lot of tinkers in these days' (TAD 24874). During an interview, Forbes lists some of the Traveller 'clans' that she remembers, and their various occupations. Forbes chuckles whilst recalling the violent disputes between the different Traveller families, then admits that despite this infighting 'they were fairly decent' (ibid.). More evidence comes from Hector Kennedy, who recalls 'getting great entertainment from the old [Traveller] folk' (TAD 50181) on the Isle of Tiree. Kennedy tells how the settled population would exchange pipe tunes with Travellers, and that Travellers would be present during ceilidhs (ibid.). Social interaction, then, was not outwith these relationships between Travellers and the settled population. Unlike the feared and despised individuals that populate TSAS, perceptions of Travellers from the settled population reveal a more understanding and respectful relationship. Furthermore, as Bhreatnach has pointed out in the case of Irish Travellers, constructing an accurate account of Travellers' experiences using 'historical' sources is problematic (2007: 34). Bhreatnach recognises that the bias and stereotypical accounts created by elite members of society do little to uncover the true nature of Travellers' experiences in the past.

Moreover, Bhreatnach argues that 'believing that Traveller culture only has historical validity if it is ancient is a disturbing beginning for a scholarly or political argument' (ibid.). At the same time, we cannot allow Bhreatnach's position on the historicity of Travelling communities to negate the reverence that the Scottish Travellers hold for their ancestry and their historical experiences. Although we cannot, at present, construct a conclusive 'origin story' for the Travellers in Scotland, their own conceptualisations of their history are an

important part of the discourse. My contextualisation here also serves to validate the conclusions I draw from my interpretations of a variety of narratives. The historical period I have covered in this section – from the late-eighteenth century to the twentieth-century testimony in TAD – are significant: the evidence presented becomes ever more pertinent in my analytical chapters because the relationships highlighted are demonstrably negotiated within Traveller storytelling. In Chapter 6, I bring the reader up to date with the more modern interactions Traveller communities have had, and continue to have, with the central government and policy-makers. Contemporary policy-makers in Scotland such as the *Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers* (MWGGT), for instance, have begun to understand that the Travellers' deeply-rooted culture cannot simply be dispelled and replaced by a more 'settled' lifestyle. I provide further details of the MWGGT's activities as I move towards my conclusion.

## **1.2 Storytelling and Ideology**

I provided some detail and explanation in the preceding sections because a central argument of the present thesis is that ideological differentiation lies at the heart of the Travellers' storytelling traditions. It is therefore important to furnish the reader with 'thick descriptions' of how the communities have been viewed from outwith the communities and by officialdom. When it comes to storytelling, my primary source material, traditional narratives have been cited as a core constituent of Traveller identity. For instance, Niles posits that Travellers' narratives function by 'articulating the wisdom that has long been accepted in their community' (1999: 193). Elsewhere, Braid notes that Traveller storytelling functions to 'contrast Traveller and settled beliefs [...] as a way of negotiating identity and difference with outsiders [and] will continue to change in response to the changing world and changing

opportunities' (2002: 46, 292). Traveller storyteller Stanley Robertson explains of one of his stories that he 'remembers ma grandda' telling it when I wis a bairn, and then I've also heard it reiterated again by ma mither' (TAD 38131). Robertson states elsewhere in the SSS Archive that 'I could take ony ay my family weans [children], and they could tell ye a story, from the oldest to youngest [...] you should preserve cultures' (TAD 65165). What Niles, Braid and Robertson allude to are threads of meaning and cultural identity embedded within the Travellers' narrative traditions. In the forthcoming analytical chapters, I expand on Braid's conceptualisation of negotiating difference with outsiders, draw out some of the 'wisdom' recognised by Niles and show what Robertson means when he refers to culture in a Traveller context. What all these conceptualisations of traditional narrative have in common is that they speak to certain ideological information being transmitted within the stories.

The principle that social and cultural zeitgeists, or anxieties, manifest themselves in storytelling was observed by Thompson (1946: 13) and appears somewhat obvious to modern conceptualisations of what stories are for. Geertz also argues that artistic expressions, such as traditional narratives, can be viewed as part of a cultural system that can have a social function, and represent localised 'patterns of feeling' (2000: 95). These localised patterns of feeling can be understood as reflections of a consensus, or worldview, within specific communities – and as a recognisable and distinctive ideology. The term ideology is being deployed here, following Williams' broad definition, as denoting a 'system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group' (1994: 175). Gerring points out ideology's semantic promiscuity when it comes to definitions and regards it as a 'highly flexible conceptual tool' (1997: 957) within the social sciences. Gerring goes on to list a series of definitions, from systems of belief that justify the exercise of power, to Geertz's 'matrices for the creation of collective conscience' (cited in *ibid.*: 958). In my own definition, worldview and ideology are not interchangeable per se, but both terms are understood as denoting

definable characteristics within a group of social actors; where worldviews are subjective interpretations of experienced reality (cf. Dégh, cited above), ideologies are the ideas that are formulated and enacted by these interpretations. As was noted above, Travellers' worldviews are closely connected to their narrative traditions. In section 1.3, I go on to demonstrate how narrative traditions can be understood as an inherited resource that functions to inform and sustain the worldview of individuals within Traveller communities. The ideological makeup of the tellers is demonstrable in the themes, plots and characters that are represented explicitly in their stories. It is in the stories that ideology is enacted. After the discussions that make up my analytical chapters, I draw these discussions together in my conclusion to show how the term ideology is an effective way to engage with the underlying complexities of the stories.

To get at ideologies in this way, it is useful to set out how narrative as a mode of communication is being used. The ordering of connected events into written or spoken accounts, narrative, is a foundational part of human societies (Barthes 1975: 237). If narrative is ever-present, narratology, as a science or theory of narrative, can help to facilitate the analysis of narrative as 'expressive culture', culture being understood here as any practice that consists of learned behaviour that conforms to communally accepted societal norm (Bascom 1953: 284). The form and nature of the society in which a person learns these behaviours is an important aspect of this definition of culture. For instance, the culture of the Travellers that concerns me in this thesis is multi-layered; Traveller culture is at once Scottish, international in terms of the diverse tale-types we find, and at its core, distinctly *Traveller*. For my purposes, the phrase 'expressive culture' is used to describe intentional performances of traditional narratives that are intended to communicate values and beliefs, the ideologies described above. Narratology is a useful tool in examining such narratives and can be defined simply as an empirical approach to the contents, themes and structure of

stories. Narratology, as a discipline, amounts to the organisation of these elements to make narratives accessible for research into their inner workings and meanings (Bal 2009: 3-4). Moreover, the organisation of narratives in this way is designed to facilitate interpretations; these interpretations are then used to highlight how the narrative is functioning in specific contexts. These interpretations involve the interdisciplinary study of narrative which ‘negotiates and incorporates the insights of many other critical discourses that involve narrative forms’ (Onega and Landa 1996: 1). These other critical discourses will be discussed in Chapter 2, where I outline my critical underpinnings.

The current section will demonstrate how certain applications of narratological theory will be useful when addressing my research questions, which focus on the study of narratives and how they operate in Traveller communities. Through the lens of narratology, this will be achieved by considering what narratives *do* in societies and communities. For Frank, socio-narratology ‘expands the study of literary narratives – narratology – to consider the fullest range of storytelling, from folklore to everyday conversation’ (2010: 12). The inclusion of the prefix ‘socio’ in narratological discourse refers to the relationships that individuals, and groups of individuals, have with one another. In this sense, socio-narratology helps to get at worldview and ideology because the social element of narratological discourse is concerned with the societal conditions in which the narrative is produced and communicated. There are three key tenets of socio-narratology that will be used to inform the critical vocabulary of my thesis, these are: narratological competence, social location and dialogical analysis.

Narratological competence is what Herman describes as ‘people’s ability to understand communicative performances and types of artifacts [*sic*] as stories’ (cited in Frank 2010: 12-13). In socio-narratology, narratological competence refers to an individual’s access to a collective social or cultural resource. The individual with access to this resource can manipulate and disseminate it using narrative-based communication. In socio-narratology,

stories become one of the foundations around which collective social and cultural resources are based. Through narrative-based communication with one another, human societies compile narrative resources based on shared experiences, expectations and circumstances. This is what Frank refers to as an individual's 'social location' within their milieu: an individual's access to the cultural resource mentioned above depends on 'what stories are told where they live and work, which stories do they take seriously or not, and especially what stories they exchange as tokens of membership' (2010: 13). Within this conceptualisation, stories become a major constituent in the way that societies and communities organise themselves.

In the context of Traveller communities, as noted above, stories form an integral part of their experience of the world and formative experiences are transmitted intergenerationally using the stories. From this perspective, Frank's conception of a symbiotic relationship between stories and the social is informative. Frank argues that 'stories and humans work together, in symbiotic dependency, creating the social' (ibid.: 15). Put simply, the retelling of old stories by new individuals feeds back into the narrative resource to enrich and influence the next generation, thereby creating and sustaining social relationships. I go on to demonstrate that socio-narratology, viewed from the above perspectives, aligns well with the concept of 'tradition-as-resource' and the roles of the different types of tradition-bearers who consume this resource. The cultural expressions under scrutiny are shown to function simultaneously to inform, sustain and redefine Geertz's 'patterns of feeling', where such expressions reflect the cultural constitution, or ideology, of the community. Frank goes on to suggest a means by which we can analyse narratives based on the above tenets of socio-narratology. This practice involves considering the narrative under scrutiny as an analysis of the relationship between several participants; the storyteller, the listener and the narrative itself (ibid.: 16). This practice is thereby dialogical as it aims to offer interpretations of

narratives based on a variety of points of view. These points of view include contextual details, such as the Travellers' subaltern status in society, the subjectivity of the researcher, and comparisons with other versions of the narratives in question. As opposed to a structural approach that analyses the morphology of a story, dialogical analysis elucidates what the characters and their actions represent within the stories considering the identity of the storyteller (*ibid.*: 86). Moreover, a dialogical analysis explicitly acknowledges that any interpretation of a narrative enters a discourse with both past and future interpretations. Using dialogical analysis, interpretations ultimately aim to engage with Traveller narratives by creating new connections between the stories and the storytellers as a community. That is not to suggest that any research will influence the tradition directly, only that analysis and interpretation will provide a dialogue for the research to gain a clearer understanding of the traditions, storytellers and communities in question.

When it comes to the social element of narratives, one useful approach has been suggested by McGuire. Similar to Frank seeking what a story does in society, McGuire asks 'what is the potential of narrative to influence social-political attitudes?' (1990: 219). In approaching this question, McGuire envisions various forms of narrative as performing a rhetorical function. This rhetorical function can be viewed as a narrative's ability to persuade and inform. It is inevitable that different narratives function to inform and persuade in different ways; an historical narrative may draw comparisons with previous events, to expose how things might be in the present or in the future. A literary narrative may have a didactic function for children or serve purely as entertainment for adults. The relevance of this rhetorical element for the present work involves the ability of a narrative to make an argument for a certain set of values or beliefs. McGuire concludes that narratives can 'expand or add to a stock of knowledge, or they may interpret new information for incorporation into a body of knowledge' (1990: 234). This body of knowledge resonates with the concept of a collective

cultural resource mentioned above. Moreover, McGuire goes on to suggest that a sociological study of narrative has the potential to reveal how narratives are collected and distributed within specific social groups (1990: 224). This critical approach is useful because it anticipates the critical underpinnings I describe in detail in Chapter 2. Meantime, the ‘distributors’, who McGuire alludes to, can also be described as ‘tradition-bearers’, and ‘the body of knowledge’ as a cultural resource. The following section builds on the preceding understandings of the function of narrative to offer a nuanced critical approach to ‘folk narrative’.

### **1.3 Tradition-as-Resource: The Roles of the Tradition-Bearers**

In terms of the ideological interest of the present thesis, the term ‘folk narrative’ and its connotations are pertinent to my discussions. The social status of the storytellers and their communities is significant because their status directly affects the stories that they share, as described above. Before elucidating what is meant by folk narrative, it is useful to consider the individuals and communities that make up the ‘folk’, and how the ‘lore’ of the folk comes to be represented in their narratives. What constituted notions of ‘the folk’ during the nineteenth century can be neatly summarised with a quotation; for Lang, the folk consist ‘of the people, of the classes which have been least altered by education, which have shared least in progress’ (1885: 11; cf. Dundes 1980: 3). Essentially, European intellectuals such as Lang were referring to the peasantry, individuals and communities that were deemed uncivilised on account of their lack of exposure to formal scholastic education. Moreover, the folk were conceived of in terms of binaries such as rural/urban, illiterate/literate and pre-modern/modern. The point is that ‘the folk’ were not considered as independent, autonomous social groups. For the ethnocentric European intellectuals of the nineteenth century, the folk

had to exist in opposition to the dominant socio-cultural class. The folk, therefore, represented the opposite of civilised society, and conversely embodied traits that were considered vestigial to the ‘modern’, civilised, educated world.

These ethnocentric evolutionary views were reflected in America by authors such as Lee J. Vance who suggested that study of the folk ‘reveals the evolution of modern culture from the beliefs and usages of savages and simple-minded folk’ (cited in Bronner 1998: 74). In the modern sense of the term, Dundes defines the folk as any group of individuals that share a common factor, with common factors ranging from occupation to religious or spiritual beliefs (1980: 6-7). Additionally, the folk in the group will share specific traditions, customs and beliefs – ‘cultural markers’ – that are linked to their sense of identity and their ideological makeup. As we heard from Clark above, Travellers in Scotland have ‘developed a clear sense of [their] distinct social and cultural identity’ (2006: 16) and this distinctiveness aligns Traveller communities with Dundes’ definition of a ‘folk group’. Despite the ethnocentric nature of what constitutes ‘the folk’ discussed above, it is useful to consider what is *not* folk-related as we formulate our definition. The way that cultural markers are transmitted becomes a key characteristic in our understanding of what constitutes the compound and oft-used term ‘folklore’. Issues around the uses of tradition are addressed in detail below, where I show that folklore is what gives form to tradition (Bronner 1998: 480). Moreover, the cultural practices that the nineteenth century intelligentsia viewed as remnants of the past will be reconceptualised as functioning resources that are characterised by creativity and adaptation (Bronner 2017: 11).

The compound term ‘folklore’ itself was first introduced by Thoms in his famous letter to *The Athenaeum* in 1846; Thoms urged the editor of *The Athenaeum* to encourage its readers to gather the ‘manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs etc. [...] which are scattered over the memories of its thousands of readers, and preserve them in its pages’

(1846: 863). For Thoms, then, ‘the lore of the folk’ includes a wide variety of expressions that today are collectively referred to as ‘intangible cultural heritage’ (ICH). Although the focus of the present thesis is ICH, the subject area of folklore is broader than just the intangible elements of our cultural expressions. For instance, games, dances and folk drama can also be studied under the folkloric lens (Dundes 2007: 55, 156; Martin 2013: 616). Elsewhere, Mechling argues a case for the study of ‘solo folklore’; for instance, tossing salt over one’s shoulder after a spillage whilst cooking alone can, arguably, be viewed as a folkloric expression (2006: 436). Sadly, there is an air of desperation in Thoms’ original letter when he talks of ‘how much [folklore] may yet be rescued by timely exertion’ (ibid.). This anxiety around the preservation of ICH was still being experienced by Henderson a hundred years later when he championed the ‘urgent work of recording, preserving and safeguarding the native traditions of the people’ (2004: 46). However, Thoms’ letter highlights a crucial element of folklore (or ICH) that resists the need for a ‘rescue ethnology’ approach, particularly considering the research questions being addressed here.

Referring to Jacob Grimm’s *Deutsche Mythologie* first published in 1835, Thoms observes that Grimm’s work amounts to ‘a mass of minute facts, many of which, when separately considered, appear trifling and insignificant’ (1846: 863). Crucially, though, Thoms realises that ‘when taken in connexion with the system into which his [Grimm’s] mastermind has woven them, [they] assume a value that he who first recorded them never dreamed of attributing to them’ (ibid.). Anticipating the English anthropologist Tylor’s observation that ‘in anthropology nothing is insignificant’ (1881: 265), Thoms recognises that seemingly inconsequential folkloric utterances can be immensely valuable if given the correct treatment. The correct treatment is to place the items of folklore in context, and to make our observations and interpretations from there. As Jacobs realised as early as the 1890s, ‘survivals are folklore, but folklore need not be all survivals’ (1893: 237). Jacobs’ realisation

that folklore is an ongoing process of retention and invention is pertinent to my argument throughout this thesis. Specifically, I argue that items of folklore are not to be viewed as calcified objects being dumbly handed down through generations. Instead, such expressions are living, malleable artefacts that are constantly adapting in negotiation with cultural change. In my final analytical chapter, I show how this adaptation manifests within the Travellers' storytelling traditions, investing the stories with meanings that reflect the social location of the tellers. Jacobs' early conceptualisations of folk traditions being an ongoing process have percolated through the centuries and continue to underpin contemporary ethnological scholarship. Moreover, as Martin has pointed out, 'the extra information imparted by observation is classically ethnological; we want to collect and understand not just the surface form, but the impulse which generates it', and most importantly for my purposes here, 'the *context in which it is performed and used*, and how it fits into the wider tradition of comparable forms' (2013: 624, my italics).

Folklore (or ICH) – viewed within the context of wider Scottish and European society – forms my primary source material when tackling the research questions that this thesis addresses. To briefly recapitulate, I am concerned with what the Travellers' storytelling traditions resemble and how they condition and represent their unique values and beliefs. Given the central role of ICH in this thesis, and to describe my point of departure, it is important to state the overarching principles that this thesis relies on. Firstly, a useful definition of ICH and its functions has been offered by Darvill:

Living traditions that might be manifest through oral histories and expressions, language, music, song, dance, theatre, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and craftsmanship. The depository of this heritage is the human mind, the human body being the instrument for its enactment or embodiment. Intangible cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly being re-created in response to environmental

conditions and interactions with nature and history, and provides communities with a sense of identity and continuity.

(2008: 212)

Darvill's definition is clearly based on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) 2003 'Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage', deploying similar vocabulary and tenets (2018: 5, online). However, UNESCO go on to broaden the scope of ICH and elevate its potential beyond Darvill's definition. For UNESCO, ICH must also be protected to 'promote the peace-building potential of safeguarding efforts that involve intercultural dialogue and respect for cultural diversity' (ibid.: 75, online). From this perspective, sharing and engaging with the ICH of communities places the ethnologist in an inclusive, reciprocal dialogue with the individuals and groups that they study. As I show in Chapter 2, this approach is demonstrably pertinent when we consider the rich variety of ICH among Scotland's Travellers. Adopting such approaches can assuage misunderstandings, and the associated conflicts, between the settled population and the Travellers.

Furthermore, ICH – particularly that of ethnic minorities – represents an inimitable resource for developing better understandings of the communities who share it. An example of what this means in practice comes from the Hezhen Yimakan storytelling traditions that were included in UNESCO's 2011 *List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding* (2011b: 6.COM 8.6, online). The Yimakan storytellers belong to the Hezhen ethnic minority who dwell primarily in Jiamusi City and Shuangyashan City in the Heilongjiang Province of north-eastern China. The Chinese Government made their case for safeguarding to UNESCO on the grounds that Yimakan 'oral heritage embodies a search for liberty and love, preserves traditional knowledge procedures for conducting Shamanistic rituals, and even teaches its communities about daily chores' (Nomination File No. 00530

2011: 3, online). Their nomination form goes on to commit 1.84 million Yuan (approximately £200,000) over four years to support safeguarding measures such as subsidising ‘scholars, experts, and local communities [...] to focus on Hezhen studies for publishing their fieldwork documentations and academic research, and to disseminate and publicise knowledge about the Yimakan’ (ibid.: 10-11).

Based on the evidence submitted, UNESCO’s ICH committee ultimately decide that the ‘Yimakan contributes to the identity and cohesion of the Hezhen people, constituting a vector of their history and values’, elaborating that this form of storytelling provides ‘a sense of continuity; it serves as collective memory, and functions both for education and for entertainment’ (2011b: 6.COM 8.6, online). UNESCO thereby inscribe the Yimakan on their urgent safeguarding list, a list which aspires to encourage mutual respect among communities, foster social cohesion and ultimately allow development. For my purposes, the above example from China demonstrates the potential reach of ethnological scholarship in the twenty-first century; by aligning my overarching principles with UNESCO’s inclusive ethos around engagement with ICH, this thesis will effectively *collaborate* with Travellers and their storytelling traditions. Kockel and McFadyen have argued recently that, in terms of methodology, ‘instead of rigid epistemologies, ethnologists should creatively combine empathetic ethnography with critically-aware theory’ (2019: 197). The concept of rigid epistemologies echoes Smith’s earlier conceptualisation of authorised heritage discourses (AHDs). For Smith, such discourse is reliant on the ‘claims of technical and aesthetic experts’ and ‘privileges monumentality and grand scale [...] it is a self-referential discourse’ (2006: 11). The problem that Smith recognised with such discourses is that they tend to exclude non-expert perspectives on the nature of ‘heritage’ itself. The result is that AHDs continually validate the experiences and worldviews of dominant narratives about nation, culture and ethnicity (ibid.: 299). In order to resist such constrictive discourses, we must be willing to

step outside of AHDs and allow people's cultural expressions to speak from themselves.

What is being advocated here is a methodological approach with a stereoscopic lens: on one hand, we must resist imposing any meaning or purpose on the Travellers' stories that is based on hegemonic epistemologies; at the same time, we must approach our source material with a critical awareness of theoretical frameworks that become relevant to the cultural expressions that we are working with.

Moreover, we must also recognise that these two perspectives are not incompatible, allowing for the creative combination of both approaches during our analysis and interpretations. For instance, cultural materialism may help us to understand the impact that economic and technological factors have had on certain narratives; on the other hand, such a perspective would partially neglect, if not wholly, the latent psychological aspects of the same narrative. This form of interpretation, then, utilises both emic and etic discourses as I approach my primary source material. In the folkloristic context, Dundes offers a concise summary of how the etic-emic terms are understood: the etic approach is classificatory, with the analyst creating constructs that are not inherent in the material and where the data *in its context* is not considered; in contrast, the emic approach *does* consider the context and aims to describe the pattern of a culture with respect to how various constituents are related to the whole (1964: 56). Consequently, an emic approach *reveals* patterns, whereas an etic approach *creates* them. However, as Kockel and McFadyen go on to warn, 'what matters most is that we seek to ground our theorising in the lived *emic* experience of the people we are studying, rather than in some fashionable *etic* discourse' (2019: 197, italics in original). My own analyses strike a balance between insider perspectives (emic) and outsider perspectives (etic), deploying an integrative methodology that facilitates a clearer understanding of the narratives under examination. The advantages of this methodological approach are understood and advocated by storytellers within the Traveller tradition. For instance, the renowned Traveller

storyteller Stanley Robertson recalls his great aunt, Maggie Stewart, teaching him similar principles during his upbringing; ‘ye will learn mair in ten seconds inside a thing’, Maggie explained, ‘than ye wid looking and observing frae the outside’ (cited in Reith 2008a: 83). The synergy of these two perspectives maximises the stability of the methodology in the sense that ‘emic and etic approaches are partly able to counteract one another's theoretical weaknesses in describing culture’ (Morris et al 1999: 789). My analytical chapters demonstrate how etic systems – such as the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) tale taxonomy or Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* – can be complemented by emic techniques that reconceptualise the narratives to deliver original insights into their meanings.

At this point, it is appropriate to expand on conceptualisations ‘the folk’ and ICH to include the narrative element. Masoni explains that folk narrative is ‘storytelling in everyday life, a form of communication whose manifestations are prompted by life events and situations’ (2013: 430). This conceptualisation of folk narrative aligns well with socio-narratology, as discussed above; both terms focus on the lived lives of the storytellers, and as Frank puts it they consider the ‘fullest range of storytelling, from folklore to everyday conversation’ (2010: 12). Moreover, the adaptability of folk narrative becomes its defining feature – as opposed to a static text – and it is this dynamic faculty that is of interest here. Masoni suggests that folk narrative must be differentiated from static texts, such as printed literature, as folk narratives exist in many versions that do not necessarily conform to one authorised version (2013: 431). This dynamism or adaptability is an essential function of folk narrative; to allow the narratives to reflect the lived lives and identities of the storytellers, they must be able to change. In terms of the function of folk narratives in general, Masoni concludes that ‘telling and adapting stories allow individuals and communities to redefine their identity in light of social changes’ (ibid.: 469). Despite the practicality of Masoni’s conclusion, we find that the Travellers’ identities as expressed within narratives are largely

*resistant* to social changes and that adaptations within their storytelling traditions function in different ways. Moreover, as Kockel pointed out while discussing the function of such traditions, ‘they are never exactly the same and yet they remain recognisable over time. Change is primarily generated from within’ (2008: 12). It is these functions and how they change that is of interest here, functions that this thesis identifies and interprets.

Another relevant term for this thesis presents itself here, *identity*. In light of my research question that asks how shared values and beliefs are transmitted through generations of Travellers, how an individual’s identity is formed within these communities becomes pertinent. Honko has suggested that within identity research, ‘the main stream is towards analysing the identity of the individual, not necessarily in isolation from groups but as the final result of different group experiences, [and] shared values’ (1988: 14). This is an important insight from Honko which suggests that we can tap into the overarching values and beliefs of the group by looking closely at the identities of individuals from within the group. However, Honko perceives problems with this approach, in that the resulting analysis may reveal more about the individual than the ‘identity strategies of a collective body’ (ibid.). ‘Identity strategies’ is an intriguing term that may help to mitigate Honko’s reservations around drawing conclusions about group identity that are based on expressions of individual identity (ibid.: 15).

For instance, considering Travellers as a group in the broadest sense, a clear indication of one identity strategy is their fundamental differentiation between themselves and the settled population. The settled or ‘mainstream’ Scottish population, as outsiders to the group, are variously referred to by Travellers as ‘scaldies’ (J. Robertson TAD 10285; S. Robertson TAD 42990), ‘hantle’ (J. Robertson TAD 10285; Whyte TAD 39610; Stewart TAD 56424; S. Robertson TAD 38124), ‘flatties’ (Whyte TAD 76669) and ‘bucks’ (J. Robertson TAD 10285). From this perspective, Traveller communities have specific nomenclatures for

anyone *other* than Travellers and can therefore be said to operate an identity strategy. Clark also recognises such strategies in Traveller families, asserting that ‘at heart there is a profound sense of “self” and importance attached to being part of a community that knows itself, and *flatties* (non-Travellers), very well’ (2018: 108). On the surface, this strategy may be viewed as isolationist; however, as I show, there is compelling evidence to suggest that this isolationism was enforced, and then enacted by the Travellers themselves to ensure their survival through centuries of hostility. A short excerpt from an interview with Stanley Robertson will serve as an example of this isolationist strategy in practice. Robertson tells us that his father ‘couldnae speak tae the Aberdeen scaldie folk, he just had nothing in common with them, and he remained aloof fae them’ (TAD 42990). Robertson goes on to suggest that ‘with him [his father] being like that, every one of the family became like that, ken? We’ve a’ got this same way wi’ us [...] I’m very much aloof, I dinnae mix wi’ scaldies’ (ibid.).

Moreover, the transmission of shared values and beliefs can also be seen as an identity strategy, and one that explicitly manifests itself in the Travellers’ storytelling traditions. Stories, then, are an indispensable medium through which to examine the distinctive cultural identities of Scotland’s Travellers. Niles goes as far as to suggest that ‘oral narrative is and for a long time has been the chief basis of culture itself’ (1999: 2). He bases this assertion on the concept that culture – here defined as manifestations of human intellect, regarded collectively – is dependent on people telling stories to each other (ibid.). Furthermore, by being able to articulate values and beliefs in a realm outside of reality, human beings have the ability to inhabit mental worlds. This realm exists in the stories that we tell; it is a secondary universe that is a ‘mix of familiar and unfamiliar, permutations of wish, dread, and dream, and other kinds of existence that can make us more aware of the circumstances and conditions of the actual world we inhabit’ (Wolf 2012: 17). It is through the study of these

artificial mental worlds – created through narratives – that gives us the ability to enhance our understanding of the communities that create and inhabit them.

If the above conceptions of folklore, narrative, and ICH reveal dynamic and ever-adapting forms of cultural expression, where does the ‘tradition’ come in? Indeed, what is the definition of ‘tradition’ in the folkloristic context? For some, the notion of tradition connotes some object, practice or ritual that is static in essence, yet mobile through time. At the end of the nineteenth century, Hartland described tradition as an ‘entire circle of thought [...] delivered by word of mouth and by example from generation to generation through unremembered ages’ (1891: 34). Bronner has pointed out that ‘most linguistic and philosophical considerations of tradition begin with a singular source citing the Latin root *tradere*, “to hand over or deliver,” and adapting it to the popular idea that tradition is “handed down” from generation to generation’ (2016: 193). There is an implication of stasis in this conceptualisation of tradition in that the thing being handed down – the *traditum* – is valuable and should remain intact and unchanged. Hobsbawm’s argument that tradition is defined by invariance – because its reference to the past imposes the repetition of inflexible practices – reflects this static element during transmission (1983: 2). Elsewhere and unhelpfully, Ben-Amos asserts that ‘*tradition* does not defy definition, but simply does not need one. Its meaning appears lucid beyond clarification, perspicuous beyond explanation’ (1984: 97, italics in original). It is tempting to follow Ben-Amos and assume that tradition does not require a definition. However, Bronner believes that we can no longer take definitions of tradition for granted in twenty-first century folkloristics (2000: 100). From the perspective of stasis and repetition, the conception of folk narrative described above appears incongruous with the ‘traditional’, as it resists mere repetition and relies on variation to remain relevant in ever-changing social and cultural environments. For the purposes of my argument, therefore,

a more concrete definition of tradition is required to describe its relationship with folk narrative.

Cashman, Mould, and Shukla have highlighted the ‘problematic notion that any alteration in the [traditional] object during or after the transfer amounts to tradition-breaking apostasy’ (2011: 3). However, the authors go on to suggest that ‘tradition is both a resource used by the individual and a process enacted by the individual’ (ibid.: 4). For my purposes, I propose that tradition be viewed as a process by which contemporary individuals voluntarily acquire, modify and sustain an inherited pool of cultural resources. It is useful here to consider Glassie’s conception of an individual’s use of tradition as volitional and temporal; the very action of an individual accessing an inherited resource means that they are formulating the future based on the past (1995: 409). Similarly, Shils views intergenerational transmission of tradition as filiation, which entails not only the passing on of values and beliefs, but also the reception that these values and beliefs receive in subsequent generations (1971: 127). For filiation to function, the receivers must have a strong conviction in the veracity of the information that is being transmitted. Perhaps the reason Travelling communities have such a strong oral tradition is based on this very concept; that of strong and extended familial bonds, and a high esteem for their ancestors. For example, the celebrated Traveller storyteller Duncan Williamson tells us of his ancestors: ‘I can go back 250 year, to my mother’s grandfather. I can tell you where he was born, I can show the spot where he was born, I know his date of birth’ (TAD 65494). A more specific example of how filiation works in practice comes from what Braid refers to as an interpretive frame (2002: 155). During a recording session, Duncan Williamson tells a story about a clever fox and an easily flattered crow that inspires his son Jimmy Williamson to sing a song; Jimmy’s chorus is composed of the lines ‘Daddy is a storyteller / Daddy is a singer of songs / and each one has a message / that he wants to pass along’ (ibid.). For Braid, these two performances function to create an

interpretive frame between father and son; because Jimmy's memories of his father's story are meaningful to him, Braid concludes that 'Jimmy has invested creative energy in composing this song and has chosen to perform it for his father [...] thereby publicly acknowledging the meaning of this connection to his father' (ibid.: 155-156). In Chapter 4, I present a contemporary example of such interpretative frames during my discussions of the Travellers' Burker tradition.

The inherently adaptable folk narrative becomes the ideal conduit through which individuals can voice the contents of their traditional inherited resources. Or, as Bronner so succinctly puts it, '[folklore] presents tradition as meaningful, purposeful activity that is an instrument of knowing and navigating through social life' (2012: 92). Even more precisely, McKean proposes that Travellers use 'tradition to mediate their relationship with mainstream society' (2015: 208). Furthermore, folkloric expressions can be seen not only to reflect the contents of the resource, but to actively modify and contribute to it. This condition of constant flux and renewal may explain Hobsbawm's pejorative conception of 'invented' traditions (1983: 1), while simultaneously undermining the idea that tradition must be static. Honko captures this concept well, stating that 'tradition [...] would denote the cultural potential or resource, not the actual culture of the group' (1988: 10). The relationship between what is deemed 'traditional' and the above conceptualisation of folk narrative is key; as Ben-Amos concludes, '*tradition* has survived criticism and remained a symbol of and for folklore' (1984: 124). Hartland also recognised that variation and folk narrative are intrinsically linked. Similar to Masoni's dynamic folk narrative, Hartland acknowledges that 'involuntary changes are only such as are natural and unavoidable if the story is to continue its existence in the midst of the ever-shifting social organism of humanity' (1891: 21). This dynamism and how it operates in practice is examined in more detail where I consider the roles of passive and active tradition-bearers.

For Bauman, ‘tradition [can be] conceived of as a superorganic temporal continuum; the folk are “tradition bearers”, that is, they carry the folklore traditions on through time and space’ (1971: 33). Cashman also perceives a profound link between the individual ‘tradition-bearer’ and tradition: ‘we cannot appreciate either the individual or tradition without fully grasping their interdependence’ (2011: 319). As an example of how the above conceptions of narrative and tradition can be applied in practice, a useful account has been published by Niles. During his study of oral narrative, Niles spent time in Scotland conducting fieldwork with Travellers (1999: 173-193). He recognised that stories and songs have a significant importance to Travellers and that their uses have specific functions. That is not to say that these perceived functions are unique to Scotland’s Travellers, only that these functions are specifically applicable to oral traditions, as opposed to narratives that are printed. Niles notes that ‘these forms of expression make sense to them [Travellers] and communicate their values and beliefs’ (1999: 165). In terms of the functions of oral narratives in Traveller communities, he sees instances of storytelling and song as focal points that serve as platforms for the verbal negotiation of these values and beliefs. These functions resonate well with conceptions of folk narrative in general, as discussed above. Storytelling and song for Travellers, says Niles, ‘serve as parts of a general intellectual modelling system that helps the members of a group respond appropriately and wisely to the stress of unforeseen events’ (ibid.: 171). These unforeseen events become the lived lives of the storytellers, but they can also be extended to wider social and economic changes that have influenced the inherited resource over several generations.

For instance, in one cautionary tale that Andrew Stewart tells us was ‘handed down from tinker tae tinker, and I jist heard it the same way as I’m tellin’ it here’ (TAD 13847), a poor Traveller becomes wealthy after a supernatural helper tells him where gold sovereigns are buried. The Traveller ultimately squanders his wealth drinking, and being overly generous,

giving his money away to ‘Tom, Dick and Harry’ (ibid.) whilst ‘spending more than what he was earning’ (ibid.). The moral of the story is clear; wealth can appear unexpectedly and disappear likewise. To make the best use of unforeseen, fortuitous events, a person must exercise prudence and discretion. This sort of didacticism is by no means unique to the Travellers. What is unique, however, is that the protagonist is named ‘MacPhee’; some Travellers harbour superstitions concerning the MacPhee Travellers, with the northern branch of the family being considered unlucky, or unpopular (TAD 38906; TAD 10279; TAD 35360; Henderson 2004: 230). From this perspective, Stewart’s injudicious protagonist, MacPhee, embodies everything that a Traveller should not be. Ironically, the northern MacPhees have been described by Traveller Lizzie Higgins as ‘the first travellin’ lot in Scotland, the real folk, authentic Travellers’ (TAD 38906; cf. Henderson 2004: 230) and are associated with rescuing clansmen from the redcoats after the Jacobite rebellion (ibid.). Higgins goes on to suggest that all the other Travelling families in Scotland today are descended from intermarriage between the MacPhees and members of the hunted clan folk (ibid.). The ambivalent nature of the MacPhees – altruistic progenitors on one hand, foolish drunkards on the other – is just one example of how social change and straightforward didacticism can intermingle in Travellers’ narratives. I return to examine Stewart’s narrative about Geordie MacPhee in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The above discussions support my contention that traditional material is deliberately acquired, modified and then sustained as a collective resource. To demonstrate Niles’ insights more clearly, it is useful to consider the distinction he makes between active and passive tradition-bearers. A passive tradition-bearer can be described as a member of the community who is aware of certain oral traditions, can name individual stories and songs, but who does not actively change the material. The passive tradition-bearer will not generally perform to specifically organised groups of peers or strangers but may be able to recite elements of the

material and will almost certainly be aware of the repertoire of active tradition-bearers. Niles does point out that there is no clear divide between the passive and the active tradition-bearer, although it is rare that the former will make a performance (1999: 177). The active tradition-bearer is the individual who does the deliberate acquisition and cultivation of the oral material; an extension to this activity comes in the form of the strong tradition-bearer.

Strong tradition-bearers, Niles explains, are ‘unusually competent in their knowledge of a body of oral lore [and] have an exceptional desire for performance’ (ibid.: 178). The idea of competence in oral lore is reminiscent of Franks’ conception of narratological competence which was described as an individual having access to collective social resources in the form of stories. The strong tradition-bearer is an individual who not only has access to this resource of stories, but also has the power to directly influence the content of the resource. To achieve this, Niles posits that the strong tradition-bearer would be in possession of five key traits: ‘(1) *engagement*, (2) *retentiveness*, (3) *acquisitiveness*, (4) a high degree of *critical consciousness*, and (5) [...] *showmanship*’ (ibid.: 180, italics in original). As discussed above, an individual’s volition in acquiring the raw materials that constitute an oral traditional resource is key. This done, the strong tradition-bearer sustains the resource through their retentiveness and can modify the material through a critical engagement with it. This critical engagement with narratives could be viewed as the differentiating factor between the strong and the active tradition-bearer, although there are no definite lines in this hierarchical structure of tradition-bearers.

As noted above, folk narrative and variation are intrinsically linked. Niles recognises that in oral performance, the ‘deep structure is subject to surface variation that, over the course of time, can affect the deep structure itself, as societies adapt to pervasive changes in the social or natural environment’ (ibid.: 121). The ‘deep structure’ in this context is the main theme of the story, or the ‘tale-type’. A tale-type is a traditional narrative that can be understood

independently of any other story (Thomson 1946: 415). Within these narratives exists specific incidents, characters or items known as motifs. These motifs can be used in combination and altered to change the complexion of the story. What Niles is suggesting is that over time, in response to social or environmental changes, these combinations and alterations can accumulate to change the very essence of the story, or its type. Tale-type taxonomy, as an exercise designed to enable cross-cultural comparisons, is contested within modern folkloristics. For Hasse, tale-type taxonomies ‘simultaneously make it simple to strip tales of their cultural specificity’ and reduce them to ‘universal types referred to by alphanumeric codes and brief descriptive labels’ (2010: 27). Hasse sees the taxonomy of tale-types as an act of ‘translation’, where the cultural identity of individual narratives is removed (ibid.: 28). The result is that culturally specific ‘variations’ of tale-types become secondary considerations and the ‘universal’ type is essentially more significant (ibid.). What such contestations promote is that variation is inherent in folk narrative, even at the structural level. In this sense, local variations should not be relegated to mere translations of more significant universal stories but understood as culturally specific expressions of identity.

The relevance of folk narrative as expression of identity is where the passive tradition-bearers come in. The narratives cannot exist in isolation or be the sole product of an individual. As we heard from Masoni above, folk narratives must be differentiated from static texts such as printed novels because they are rarely, if indeed ever, the work of one identifiable individual. Moreover – whilst discussing the Traveller storyteller Duncan Williamson – Niles observes that ‘active tradition-bearers can only flourish as members of a community of like-minded individuals’ (1999: 128). The like-minded individuals are the passive members of such communities, and the folk narratives function as nexuses ‘of understandings that constitute their knowledge of the past and of the world around them, their social structure, and their moral action’ (ibid.: 129). However, dissimilar to like-minded

consumers of comic books or Nordic noir, here, the passive tradition-bearer can relate to the stories on an intellectual level *as well as* on the level of community cohesion. For example, the Traveller Betsy Whyte has explained that ‘Jack Tales’ represent a morality lesson, teaching that ‘if you kept yourself good, and being kind and nice a’ the time as far as was possible, then in the end things will turn out good fir ye’ (TAD 82457). Elsewhere, Stanley Robertson tells us that ‘the men gave ye a very practical training wi’ their stories’ (TAD 50189). While it is true that such lessons could be drawn from Superman’s benevolence, or detailed accounts of Danish police procedures, the difference for my purposes lies in the communal nature of the expressions themselves. From both a didactic and practical perspective, active and passive tradition-bearers will help to address my research question around conditioning worldviews; the former in articulating the material in the traditional resource through narrative performance, with the latter giving insights into what the story *does* in the community.

## **Summary**

This chapter has made clear that there is a stark division between perceptions of Travellers by the members of the communities in which they are involved, and by the authorities which govern these communities. The ideologies of the dominant social group have long been recognised as a central factor in the marginalisation of Scotland’s Travellers. Put simply, understood as an ideological position, the previous generations of Travellers’ unique brand of multifunctional itinerancy is problematic in a modern, capitalist society. Ironically, the Travellers’ ingenuity and willingness to fill ‘gaps in the market’ is often overlooked (McNaughtan 1985: 171). Land ownership legislation, trespassing laws, education acts and patronising attempts to provide ‘welfare’ to Travelling communities, have all served to

marginalise an inherently resourceful people. As I have shown, the paternalistic attitudes of the central government towards Travellers during the twentieth century did little or nothing to accommodate Travellers' lifestyles after the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of Scotland.

A further purpose in this chapter was to present recent approaches to the study of traditional narrative and to build a critical vocabulary that will be employed whilst addressing my research questions. I argued that Travellers have a very real sense of their own distinctiveness from other members of Scottish society, both in the past and in the present. Moreover, I have shown how Travellers' distinctiveness has acquired a negative aspect over the preceding centuries, having its genesis in the Enlightenment period's conceptualisations of 'otherness'. Using more contemporary evidence, I demonstrated that this deep-rooted sense of negativity toward Travellers has bred a reluctance to identify oneself as a Traveller in modern Scotland. With this palpable sense of alienation in mind – and to address the underrepresentation of Travellers – this thesis advocates closer engagement with Travellers' narrative traditions to better understand their meaning and functions. I suggested that the term 'tradition' is not to be taken for granted, where my own conceptualisation of tradition represents a concrete appreciation of its dynamism. Or, as Foley puts it, tradition is defined as 'a dynamic, multivalent body of meaning that preserves much that a group has invented and transmitted' (1992: 227). I concur with Foley and further propound that socio-economic factors have a significant impact on the complexion, and therefore meaning, of certain stories. The details of these complexions contribute to the inherited body of collective knowledge, or tradition-as-resource.

## Chapter 2

### Critical Underpinnings

‘Whatever lives has meaning, whatever has meaning lives’.

(Geertz 1973:135)

In this chapter, I present relevant critical approaches to my primary source material, oral narrative, to augment the insights from the previous chapter. Firstly, a theoretical approach to oral narratives that facilitates a qualitative, interpretative methodology will be advocated. The purpose here is to highlight critical approaches that address the main issues which arise during the analysis and interpretation of oral narrative as folkloric texts. This approach involves treating oral narratives as ‘texts’ that can be dissected and analysed using techniques more frequently associated with other disciplines, such as literary criticism. Meaning and function are integral components of my primary research question, so my critical approach anticipates the need to have access to these elements of stories. Secondly, I show how this textual approach to oral narrative can open Travellers’ stories to interpretations that help address both my research questions. Within a qualitative framework based on the oral testimonies and narratives of Travellers, my analytical strategy amounts to: (1) regarding oral narratives as complex, multidimensional expressions of identity and worldview; then (2) a deployment of contextualised close reading techniques to analyse these expressions as ‘oral texts’; and finally (3) the delivery of interpretations of these texts, as Holbek puts it, to produce ‘plausible statements about their meaning’ (1987: 188). My point of departure here is Geertz’s conceptualisation of meaning in certain areas of social intercourse as having an absolute significance; that is, stories as social intercourse have the ability to embody and then

transmit the deepest of meanings and resolve ‘the ambiguities of mundane existence’ (1973: 135). Communicating plausible statements around these types of fundamental meanings represents the central objective of this thesis – that is, what do the Travellers’ stories mean?

## 2.1 The Oral Text - Criticism and Interpretation

Because analysis and interpretation are key methodological components, it is crucial that the primary source material be made as transparent and accessible as possible. To achieve this, I approach oral storytelling in the same way that a literary critic would approach printed literature. Niles advocates this approach, citing the ‘often irrelevant oppositions of orality versus literacy’ (1999: 200) when trying to understand the narrative expressions of any given culture or society. By dissolving differentiations between oral and printed media, oral narratives become open to the same formal textual analysis that amounts to close readings of any given text. These close readings are then used in tandem with contextual factors – such as the cultural identity of the narrator, and/or any metanarrative provided by them – to infer meanings from the narrative. Additionally, close readings can be augmented through the consideration of other contextual factors. These include, but are not limited to: intertextuality, both with printed literature and other recognised narratives, such as *Märchen* [fairy tales] and international tales; local legends; biographical and autobiographical details; and historical incidents that are woven into the narrative and are verifiable by independent corroborative evidence.

This critical approach to oral narrative has been effectively summarised by Bauman, who is:

Centrally concerned with understanding oral literature *as* literature, that is, as verbal art. This enterprise sets itself against some old and deeply entrenched concepts of the nature

and qualities of oral literature. These notions, strongly colored by ethnocentric and elitist biases that privilege the classics of Western written literature over oral and vernacular literature and by nineteenth-century conceptions of "folk" society, have established an image of oral literature as simple, formless, lacking in artistic quality and complexity, the collective expression of unsophisticated peasants and primitives constrained by tradition and the weight of social norms against individual creativity of expression.

(1986: 7)

I concur with Bauman and reject these old and deeply entrenched concepts, viewing oral narratives as sophisticated artistic expressions. The storytelling traditions at the heart of the present research are thereby opened for analysis and interpretation as art forms. As opposed to a dismissive and somewhat pejorative conceptualisation of oral narratives as the products of an unimaginative subaltern class, oral narrative is viewed as a window onto the creative core of its narrators. More importantly, oral narrative is not limited to 'poetic' or 'epic' narrative alone; other forms of oral narrative are also viewed as being steeped in meaning and produced artfully. In terms of 'vernacular literature' – and more particularly 'the weight of social norms' allegedly restricting the narrator's creativity – Bauman anticipates the extension of 'verbal art' to more quotidian oral narratives. Oral narratives created and communicated in the vernacular abound in the SSS Archives, many of which form my primary source material (collected in Appendix II). Furthermore, the narrators' social awareness is often a central theme and should not be viewed as detrimental to creative expression. On the contrary, social awareness is oftentimes at the very core of the creative impulse and gives rise to the narrative expressions themselves.

For example, Traveller Duncan Williamson tells a story about a group of 'old Tinker [Traveller] folk' (TAD 36850) that are turned away from a hotel by its owner, as he finds them 'filthy, dirty folk [who] bring disgrace here to me' (ibid.). An American tourist, who is

staying at the hotel, witnesses the refusal and pleads with the hotelier that the Travellers 'are still human beings' (ibid.). As demonstrated above in the evidence in TSAS – where Travellers were often regarded as parasitical – this type of social exclusion based on preconceptions around cleanliness has been affecting Travellers' lives for centuries.

Williamson's story, recorded in 1976, is not only an example of his social awareness as a Traveller, but is also an indication that negative attitudes towards Travellers have persisted since TSAS were published. In contemporary Scotland, Cemlyn and Clark suggest that these negative attitudes stem from service providers, and the general public, viewing Travellers as social 'drop-outs' that actively renounce the norms of a sedentary lifestyle (2005: 148). The negatively charged 'otherness' of Travellers from the perspective of the settled population that we have witnessed from the outset of this thesis presents itself once more. Moreover, the theme of social exclusion is prevalent in the stories we hear from Travellers. This shows not only that Travellers are acutely aware of their social exclusion, but that its implications are manifested and negotiated within their narratives. At the conclusion of Williamson's story featuring the American tourist, the Travellers that were turned away from the hotel ultimately win the day. The American tourist pays £5000 to rent every room in the hotel, then travels around the country 'and every old Tinker he sees [...] he tells them "come to my hotel", he says, "and enjoy yersel"' (TAD 36850).

Of course, when multitudes of Travellers begin to arrive at the hotel, the owner is incensed and offers the American £10,000 to 'get rid' of the Travellers. The American accepts the money, then we are told that he 'went round every old Tinker that was in the place, he give them a good pay, he give them a good feast and a good drink, now he says "on yer way"' (ibid.). Williamson's story negotiates the lived experience of the social exclusion of Travellers using an ordinary social setting that results in an extraordinary outcome. The Travellers' being refused a basic service based on their ethnicity is ridiculed along with the

prejudices of the hotel owner; instead of profiting from the Travellers' business as guests at his hotel, the hotelier is, ironically, punished financially for his ignorance and racism. The protagonist of Williamson's story is the American, with his antagonist appearing in the form of the hotelier. The characterisations in Williamson's narrative represent a dichotomy, a common feature of oral narrative which Olrik describes as 'The Law of Contrast' (1992: 50). The essence of Olrik's law of contrast is that oral narratives such as Williamson's can personify the distinction between perceptions of 'good and evil'. In this sense, the American represents an *ideal*, an embodiment of the values and rectitude that stand in opposition to the ignorance and prejudice of the antagonistic hotelier. Moreover, the humanitarian values of the American that intimate the narrative are ultimately aligned with that of the Travellers when they share in the spoils of the exploit by feasting and drinking. Once the story is over, Williamson is asked if the story is true, and he replies 'that's supposed to be true aye, that happened many, many years ago' (TAD 36850). The veracity of the events in the story are irrelevant because the truth of the narrative is self-evident. Through this hyperbolic narrative, we are furnished with Williamson's view of a world where virtue and empathy are rewarded, and where ignorance and inhumanity are punished. For my purposes, the status of everyday storytelling – such as the example from Williamson discussed above – is being elevated to allow its narratives to be analysed and interpreted. The efficacy of this approach to oral narrative will be demonstrated throughout my analytical chapters, where I consider a range of stories in detail.

It must be noted here that I do not mean to suggest that performances of Gaelic romances or hero tales, such as Duncan MacDonald's 'The Man of the Habit' discussed by Lamb (2012), are on an equal footing with the everyday stories being told at familial and social gatherings. What I am suggesting is that both the quotidian and the 'poetic' forms of oral narrative confer meaning, only in different ways. For instance, lexical analysis of examples of

traditional Gaelic narratives compares orally collected versions of the same story, ‘The Man of the Habit’, also known as ‘The Man in the Cassock’ (TMC). Lamb’s analysis involves the ‘statistical measure of lexical consistency’, to address ‘questions of variation and authorship in traditional Gaelic narrative’ (Lamb 2012: 112). His points open up the possibility of using similar quantitative techniques to enhance our understandings of the linguistic relationships between oral and manuscript versions of Gaelic romances (ibid.). On the other hand, an alternative analysis of the same story might focus on thematic elements such as the nature of the protagonist, with his ambiguous Gaelic epithet of *Feamanach Fabhsach* (Scot. Gaelic ‘Guileful Tailed One’).<sup>3</sup> Bruford and MacDonald offer a different translation of *Feamanach Fabhsach*, suggesting that the protagonist’s name means “‘false hypocrite”, because he is not all he seems’ (2003: 454). Given the title of the narrative – a ‘habit’ being a clerical uniform – both translations give the protagonist a duplicitous and nefarious aspect. In any case, Bruford and MacDonald assert that the protagonist in TMC must be a supernatural character, noting that the narrative represents a visit to the otherworld (ibid.: 435-454). Under these circumstances, favouring a qualitative approach to the narrative, the nature of the protagonist seems to be a central theme.

For instance, while discussing Gaelic romances – of which TMC is one – Bruford tells us that ‘clerics do occasionally appear’, and that they are ‘rather sinister characters, enchanters [...] or supernatural beings in disguise’ (1969: 25-26). Bruford goes on to suggest that the Irish pagan deity Manannán is the most likely candidate for the supernatural being in the case of TMC (ibid.: 26). In Gaelic romances and folktales, Manannán often appears as a peasant-like character, and one who often misunderstands accepted courtly behaviour (MacQuarrie 1998: 12). This is certainly true in Duncan MacDonald’s version of TMC; when we are introduced to the eponymous man in the cassock, he is collecting firewood in the forest and

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<sup>3</sup> Translation by Angus Matheson and Derick Thomson  
<https://calumimaclean.blogspot.co.uk/2017/06/the-man-with-cassock.html>

implores Murchadh mac Brian not to ‘think ill of me because I’m going to carry this load, it would have been easy enough for me to have got man after man and woman after woman to come here to fetch this bundle’ (MacDonald 2003: 154). Despite the menial task being performed, the man implies that he has many servants at his beck and call. Again, ambivalence seems to be a defining feature of the man in the cassock. Moreover, the man’s uncourtly behaviour is evident when he makes a series of *faux pas*; firstly, by entering his castle side by side with Murchadh, then by offering Murchadh the inferior chair in his court, and finally by refusing to drink from the vessel offered to him by Murchadh (Bruford 1969: 139). On one hand, MacDonald’s protagonist is a powerful hero who rescues his damsel in distress, through ‘trials such as no one of my people ever suffered before’ (MacDonald 2003: 157). On the other, he is a lonely sorcerer who compels Murchadh to ‘keep [him] in conversation’ (ibid.: 155), before luring Murchadh to his castle to spin a blarney in-tale about his heroic exploits. From this perspective, the protagonist of TMC is everything Murchadh is not and Olrik’s law of contrast is at work; his clerical garb, churlishness and tall tale conspire to represent an ambivalent relationship with Christianity, and an affront to Murchadh’s heroic career. My point here is that meaningful critical analyses can be performed on any given narrative, whether it be a complex Gaelic romance, or a narrativised quotidian experience, the difference being that Lamb’s purpose of uncovering variation and authorship diverges from my own purpose of revealing what the narratives stand for.

I have argued above that oral tradition in the present context is viewed as an inherently dynamic resource that individuals and communities utilise to negotiate and express commonly held values and beliefs. This dynamism gives oral narratives the ability to react to their environment. As opposed to a static text, such as a novel, oral narratives in transmission convey the ever-evolving perspectives of everyday individuals and communities. The perspectives of canonised authors in Western literature are just that, *canonised*. What this

canonisation amounts to are value judgements based on the perspectives of an elite core of academics. These perspectives, therefore, rest on and are directly representative of the ideological profiles of the dominant class. Or, as Klein and Stern put it, canon formation and value judgements within academia ‘work to create an “in-group” that is insular, self-perpetuating, and self-reinforcing’ (2009: 588, emphasis in original). In terms of the Traveller narratives that this thesis examines, the aim is to resist these academic value judgements and view the narratives on their own terms. I view the stories from the perspective of their autochthonous narrators, delivering plausible interpretations of the meaning of the stories.

An instructive approach to the interpretation of oral texts has been outlined by Holbek during his study on the *Interpretation of Fairy Tales* (1987). Although Holbek’s study is primarily focused on fairy tales, he offers a robust theoretical framework in which we can view items of folklore, as oral texts, in general. The dilemma that confronts Holbek from the outset is ‘what do these tales *mean?*’ (1987: 2, italics in original). As expressed in the introduction to this chapter, I too am primarily concerned with what Travellers’ stories mean. I therefore introduce Holbek’s theoretical approach and describe the ways that his ideas and methods can be critically appropriated in the context of Travellers’ narratives. Following Weitz’s (1965) survey of literary criticism on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Holbek proposes a theoretical framework divided into three categories: description, explanation and evaluation (1987: 188-189). In the first category, description, the critical aim is to present to the reader with verifiable facts and data. For the present study, these descriptions will consist of combinations of such facts and data. For instance, who the narrator is, including elements of their upbringing, their kin, their religious views, their working life and so on. Additionally, these descriptions will include details that are intrinsic to the narratives themselves; for example, the names of the protagonists/antagonists, the sequence of the events being narrated, the actions of the characters, any specific objects, locations or events, and any

metanarrative framing that the narrator may include. Descriptions of narratives are useful in and of themselves, especially to researchers involved in comparative exercises. It is also important that the description of the narratives is as accurate as possible. This description also extends to an identification of the narrative where possible. ‘Identification’ here refers to cross-examining the narrative under scrutiny with other known tale-types. My subsequent chapters demonstrate this technique in practice while remaining cognisant of Dundes’ warning that ‘naïve analyses can result from inadequate or inaccurate identification’ (2007b: 70). However, as Holbek goes on to assert, ‘no amount of description can eliminate the need for interpretation’ (1987: 190).

The second category, explanation, is a key concept to illuminate as I address my research questions. For Holbek, ‘explanation is concerned with meaning. The interpreter aims at true clarification, at a hypothesis describing *what* observable facts signify, *how* they relate to each other and *why* they have been put together as they have’ (ibid.: 189, italics in original). With this concise description of the ‘explanation’ category, Holbek gets to the very kernel of the act of interpretation. My central aim is to hypothesise on the meaning of Travellers’ narratives based on their context – both in terms of Travellers as minority communities, and the individualised context of the narrator – and then to validate these hypotheses using evidence drawn from the narratives. Of course, explanation under these conditions is problematic, most notably so because of the glaring element of the subjectivity of the interpreter. However, Holbek anticipates the element of the subjectivity of the interpreter, noting that ‘the best one may hope for is a more or less *adequate* interpretation of some of the describable data’, and he then goes on to state that during our interpretations we must aim for an ‘explanation that *does not contradict* known facts but *accounts for* as many of them as possible in a manner that can be shown to possess a high degree of *plausibility*’ (ibid., italics in original). The describable data, from this perspective, would be the details that are intrinsic

to the narratives, as noted above. In terms of contradiction and accounting for known facts, the interpretations offered in this thesis will be based on contextualisation, also as noted above. In this way, through the combination of description and explanation, interpretations of the Travellers' narratives will be germane, and possess the plausibility advocated by Holbek. Ultimately, the *meaning* of the Travellers' narratives will be elucidated as the corollary of the application of the above-described methodology.

The final category, evaluation, is outwith the remit of this thesis. The reason for this is that evaluation, in the present context, amounts to value judgements. As I noted above, it is not my intention here to create a canon of Traveller narratives based on highly subjective value judgements, but to approach the diverse modes of narrative on an equal footing. This of course presents the dilemma of how to select the narratives that are to be interpreted. The selection process will be based on a corpus of narratives compiled by me from the SSS Archives (Appendix II). The corpus has been categorised by me and is based on the extant theme of the recorded material. For example, themes include conflict, family, storytelling, food, religion, marriage, lifestyle, and the supernatural. Several of these themes will be explored in my analytical chapters, with the individual narratives being drawn upon as the primary source material. Additionally, Holbek suggests that in deploying this method involving description and explanation, we must be able to test it, ideally in the field (1987: 190). To this end, the research is committed to collecting and interpreting narratives from contemporary Travellers in the field.

## **2.2 Functions and Meanings in Folklore**

In this section, I consider how items of folklore – such as oral narratives – function when they circulate in society. Bascom's important essay, *Four Functions of Folklore* (1954), provides a

solid platform on which to begin. In his essay, Bascom is concerned with the social and cultural context of folklore, and how these elements are connected to its function. Although Bascom's discussion centres on the folklore of non-literate societies, his essay provides insights that are useful to the study of folklore in general. This is primarily because Bascom frames his discussion with a quote from Hallowell; discussing oral narrative and its recording by anthropologists, Hallowell suggests that, historically, there has been a 'failure to exploit fully the potentialities of such data' (1947: 544). Hallowell argues that this failure stems from anthropologists, and scholars from other disciplines, viewing oral narratives as a literary-historical problem (ibid.: 545). That is, when oral narratives are viewed as 'historical texts', the central concern had been to discover what they reveal about the (historic) environment from which they came. This is undoubtedly a worthwhile scholarly enterprise, except that the literary-historical method neglects the relationship between culture and oral narratives as items of folklore. Put another way, the literary-historical method can neglect viewing items of folklore as reflexive expressions of the contemporary culture in which they are expressed. And this is the issue that Bascom addresses when he considers the social and cultural context of folklore; Bascom is ultimately interested in discovering what role folklore plays in the daily lives of the individuals who use it (1954: 334).

At this point, I consider a dilemma recognised in recent folkloristic scholarship between folklore and tradition. Bronner suggests that 'tradition in folkloristics is revealed as both continuous and changing, obvious and elusive, and therefore in need of explanation' (2012: 92). To begin to formulate such an explanation in the Scottish context, I consider the relationships between the cultural expressions we know as folklore, and the complex nature of the traditions that condition these expressions. Specifically, I focus on the unique relationships that Scottish Travellers have with their shared history and how these relationships manifest themselves in their storytelling traditions. In terms of narrative

traditions, tracking the development of Traveller communities as distinct social groups is most productively limited to the relatively recent past – the past 150 years or so – as identifying stories as conclusively ‘Traveller’ before 1860 would be problematic. This is down to the fact that at the time of writing, I am not aware of any stories, in print or in manuscript, that are explicitly attributed to a Traveller storyteller prior to 1860. This period, though, provides useful insights into Travellers’ milieu by showing how the nature and content of narratives reflects the socio-political landscape in Scotland. For instance, socio-political trends and anxieties can manifest themselves in Travellers’ anecdotes and stories. And, as Stone-Mediatore has it, although ‘not a replacement for theory or empirical data, stories have an irreplaceable function of their own insofar as they sensitise us to yet untheorised human and historical significances of political phenomena’ (2003: 67). By viewing stories in this way, I access the wealth of information that they represent. This material is then utilised within a critical framework to deliver insights into the communities where the stories are being told.

For my purposes, Bascom’s focus on the social aspect of folklore echoes the applications of socio-narratology that I introduced in Chapter 1; the reader will recall Frank’s suggestion that ‘stories and humans work together, in symbiotic dependency, *creating the social*’ (2010: 15, italics in original). Both Bascom and Frank are concerned with what folklore *does* in societies and communities. I am also concerned with how Travellers’ folk narratives function during transmission from one generation to the next. Moreover, my examinations focus on both the social context and the cultural context of the narratives. The social aspect of Travellers’ lives is crucial in terms of their relationships with the settled population, and how these relationships are negotiated through narrative. As to the cultural aspect – culture being understood here as learned behaviour that conforms to communally accepted societal norms – I focus more specifically on how Travellers’ folk narratives condition and then represent their

worldviews *as Travellers*. In terms of function, Bascom concludes that folklore ‘operates within a society to insure [sic] conformity to the accepted cultural norms, and continuity from generation to generation’ (1954: 348-349). What I go on to demonstrate is that Traveller narratives embody a fusion of the social and the cultural to form complex expressions of distinctive identities. This complexity is anticipated by Bascom when he highlights ‘the basic paradox of folklore’ (ibid.: 349), suggesting that while folklore can function to maintain the stability of a culture, it can also function as a socially sanctioned outlet that questions imposed societal conventions.

I have intimated throughout this thesis that Traveller narratives are infused with a shared set of values and beliefs. In the present context, these values and beliefs have been collectively described as a distinctive Traveller worldview. As was noted above, the collective term ‘worldview’ represents the ‘subjective interpretations of perceived and experienced reality of individuals’ (Dégh 1995: 132). It is important to note here that Travellers’ worldviews are by no means homogeneous, and my aim is not to describe a ‘unified field’ of Traveller worldview or to engage in a *comprehensive* overview of Traveller storytelling. Broadly, the Travellers’ storytelling traditions share characteristics with wider European traditions, including Irish and Scandinavian cultural spheres. We find many examples of international tales from the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) index: ATU 591 – *The Thieving Pot* (Thompson 1946: 185; Uther 2004 Vol. I: 348), for instance, is examined in Chapter 5 below and can be shown to share characteristics with Christiansen’s migratory legend (ML) 5085 – *The Changeling*. Elsewhere in the corpus collated for this thesis (Appendix II) but not examined are versions of ATU 470 (TAD 65859), ATU 403 (TAD 65438), ATU 910B (TAD 31634) and ATU 331 (TAD 67502). What the present thesis does is take a close look at the types of narratives that negotiate themes specific to the Scottish Traveller context. For example, the Burkert tales I examine in Chapter 4 are singularly

Traveller, and the narratives involving folk onomastics in Chapter 7 are similarly culturally specific to Travellers' traditions. Although the stories under examination are shown to share themes and characteristics with narratives found in a variety of other storytelling contexts, my interest here is in the stories that set the Traveller traditions apart. The novelty of the methodological approach being deployed means that my detailed analyses are based on a relatively small number of narratives that showcase the uniqueness of the traditions from which they come.

A further important and related point to make during the explanation of my critical underpinnings is that the Travellers' storytelling traditions share characteristics with non-Traveller narrative traditions. One of the most extant examples that the forthcoming analyses demonstrate is an empathetic attitude to the natural environment. During my analyses, I do not mean to suggest that such laudable attitudes to our natural world are exclusive to the Traveller storytelling communities with which I engage. The relationships with international tale types cited above, for instance, are evidence of common themes shared by a multitude of oral storytelling communities. Thompson recognises this commonality when he stresses that 'there is an unmistakable historical connection among the traditional narratives of all the peoples extending from Ireland to India [and] an obvious common store of narrative motifs and even of formal elements' (1946: 14). It is no surprise, then, to find motifs and environmental concerns, that are common among international tale types, within Traveller storytelling traditions. When it comes to an affinity with the natural environment, Ní Fhloinn recognises one such instance when she points out that Irish seal-traditions 'reflect an infinitely more refined and sophisticated understanding of the delicate balance which exists between mankind and the natural environment' (1999: 241). Again, the present study is aware of commonalities within the context of separate storytelling traditions and my purpose is to elicit the culturally specific examples found within the Scottish Travellers' traditions. An

example of the interconnectedness with other storytelling traditions is provided in Chapter 4 below, where I highlight a striking parallel from within Irish oral tradition surrounding Daniel O'Connell.

Meantime, a strong Traveller tradition-bearer, Stanley Robertson, who features heavily in forthcoming chapters, gives a concise summation of cultural specificity; after telling a story he calls 'The Traveller's Parchment', Robertson explains that 'no two Travellers would tell that tale the same way twice [...] it builds to your creative imagination' (TAD 38319). The key points to note here are that that tale is culturally specific, it is a *Traveller's* parchment, and the narrative is open to invention as long as the basic structure is in place. The 'basic structure' can be considered here as the tale-type, with the specificity embodied by the nature of the protagonist. On the same note, and following Dégh's notion of individuality, each narrative is viewed as an individualised expression of worldview that is informed by a shared sense of cultural identity. What this means in practice is that we find common themes and assumptions embodied within Travellers' narratives. To clarify the relationship between worldview and cultural identity further, Dundes' conception of 'folk ideas' (2007: 185) is useful. For Dundes, folk ideas are 'traditional notions that a group of people have about the nature of humanity, of the world, and of life in the world [...] the building blocks of worldview' (ibid.). The 'group' is a discrete element in this formulation, with each group having their particular sets of folk ideas. Moreover, folk ideas are understood as products of their social, political and economic environment. Dundes goes on to explain that 'worldview will be based upon many individual folk ideas' (ibid.), and this is the crucial point: the combination of a group's environment interacting with multiple folk ideas produces unique and discrete worldviews. The central aim of this thesis is to provide new understandings of the unique worldviews and ideological imperatives of Scotland's Traveller communities.

I already described how narrative expressions are being conceptualised as manifestations of shared assumptions and worldviews. The Travellers' narrative tradition represents a unique example of such manifestations. The reader will recall that 'tradition' is being defined here as a process by which contemporary narrators voluntarily acquire, modify and sustain an inherited pool of cultural resources, or Dundes' 'folk ideas'. More significantly, this narrative tradition is infused with a distinctive Traveller aesthetic, a culturally significant aesthetic that underpins the impetus of the present study. Expressions of a shared cultural identity are revealed within the content of the Travellers' narratives, and the narrators' accessing and expressing their inherited cultural resource is the process of tradition. Another function of the narratives, then, is to house these shared cultural identities and worldviews, allowing them to be accessible to future generations. For the purposes of this thesis and in addressing my primary research question, I argue that the Travellers' narratives function as ciphers. It is my purpose here to decode the narratives and thereby offer plausible interpretations of their meanings. As Betsy Whyte explains, 'all of the stories had some special meaning [...] *if you pay attention*' (TAD 82457, my italics). Dawkins also addresses the meaning of folklore, proposing that ostensibly simple stories can be the carriers of complex allegorical or symbolic meanings that negotiate human nature and experience (1951: 418). More recently, Bronner asks 'what does folklore connote?' (2016: 83). Bronner promotes the concept that folklore can be analysed from many different perspectives – such as historic-geographic, functionalist, psychoanalytic, feminist – and that the analysts of folklore collaborate with practitioners to construe the 'meanings, connotations, and consequences of traditional knowledge' (ibid.: 142). The tangible characteristics of stories – their manifest and latent meanings within specific cultural contexts – are therefore the central focus of my discussions.

Given this focus, a further important consideration is to whom do the stories have meaning? Popova's *a posteriori* conception of meaning at once problematises and reinforces

this question: the claim that ‘meaning in any human endeavour is only constituted by and through experience’ (2015: 4), may well apply to the teller who has experienced certain things and embodies their experience through narrative. On the other hand, where does the meaning come from to an inexperienced listener? If I have never experienced a certain thing, how can it have any meaning for me? Discussing the issue of ‘whose meaning?’ when interpreting folklore, Holbek refers to groups of ‘interested parties’ (1987: 191). It is not necessary to recreate Holbek’s list of said parties here, however two of these parties are relevant to the search for meaning within stories. The first of these parties is the interpreter, the critical approach to which has been described in section 2.1 above. Secondly, when it comes to the narrators themselves, Holbek suggests that narrators of folklore have deliberately ‘remembered the [...] tales and carried them on to new generations because *they themselves* appreciated them’, and that the tales ‘meant something to the narrators [...] regardless of what they had meant to narrators in the distant past’ (ibid.: 192, italics in original). This view is also held by Dawkins: ‘that a story should have lived for certainly centuries and been found valuable and interesting’, says Dawkins, ‘does suggest that it must in some way be more than a mere stringing together of the fantastic and incredible’ (1954: 419). I too argue the position that this sort of appreciation – or more accurately *understanding* – of stories applies to the interpreter of the narratives, and that a lack of direct experience of a thing does not necessarily deny its meaning. The key differentiator is the analyst being cognizant of the cultural context of the story under analysis. The analyst evaluates ‘the ideological as well as teleological implications of *their position* in relation to the material or people being studied’ (Bronner 2016: 142, my italics). Consequentially, my analyses deliver interpretations of the stories that are mindful of the many perspectives from which we can view folkloristic expressions.

The process of contemporary narrators acquiring, modifying and sustaining inherited cultural resources, or stories, discussed above is a key consideration as this thesis progresses. Holbek goes on to provide a useful analogy for this transmission in the form of a contemporary craftsperson: although their tools and procedures may be of considerable age, our narrators' knowledge and skills are contemporary (1987: 191). This view is consistent with the description of tradition-bearers and their differing roles that I presented in Chapter 1. I showed that passive, active and strong tradition-bearers all contribute to the survival of the Travellers' narrative traditions. Moreover, expanding upon Holbek's analogy, the active and strong tradition-bearers become the verbal craftspeople of their generation, learning the stories and applying their own unique knowledge and experience to them. Additionally, there are metanarrative details included in the recordings that can assist my inference of meaning. Of course, any fieldwork carried out with contemporary Travellers will have the question of meaning at its very core because I resist a pure taxonomy of the stories, focusing on their cultural significance to their narrators. Consequently, questions around meaning will be incorporated into my fieldwork methodology to undermine Popova's reliance on experience being prerequisite to meaning.

### **2.3 Critical Foundations – Lives Shaped through Stories**

To show what this approach resembles in practice – and to demonstrate its efficacy when it comes to interpreting storytelling – it is useful to consider in some detail Donald Braid's *Scottish Traveller Tales: Lives Shaped through Stories* (2002). Braid's study – an adaptation of his 1996 doctoral thesis *The Negotiation of Meaning and Identity in the Narratives of the Travelling People of Scotland* – sets out to explore the complex relationships between Travellers and the stories that they share. His overarching hypothesis is that the Travellers

use their stories for entertainment, as vehicles for education, as reminders of who they are and as a way of comprehending their experiences in the world more generally (2002: 37). Braid is not the first author to make this point about the storytelling traditions of Scotland's Traveller communities; Niles makes an equivalent summation when he reflects on the function of the traditions (1999: 165). For Niles, the Travellers' 'lore is an expression of their reality. The oral narratives of the travellers [sic] provide sauce for their life, true. They also yield spiritual nourishment' (ibid.: 172). Braid goes further than this, suggesting that 'Travellers use stories as a way of responding to the social, political, and historical issues that affect their lives' (2002: 46). These various functions of storytelling could be said to be true of practically any ordered narrative in any given social context. However, like the remit of the present work, Braid recognises that Scotland's Travellers have a set of unique Scottish identities that are based on their distinctive worldviews.

For instance, Braid sees 'the premium Travellers place on freedom and autonomy, and the choice they make for family over economic success' (ibid.: 105) as expressions of Traveller worldview. It is important to note here that Braid conceptualises worldviews in terms of similarities and differences. For instance, the Travellers' veneration of personal freedom can be viewed as opposed to members of the settled population whose worldview is perhaps more attuned to the accumulation of wealth and property. Moreover, Braid's arguments rest on the assertion that Traveller storytelling represents a creative process that summons and adapts traditional resources to create meaning (ibid.: 107). At the same time, Braid informs us that Traveller storytellers engage with international tale-types, transforming well-known stories to 'embody Traveller identity, worldview, and style [...] giving listeners an experience of the coherency of their own identity and worldview' (ibid.: 148). As I demonstrated in Chapter 1 when discussing the roles of tradition-bearers, I too adopt the premise that traditional material is deliberately acquired, modified and then

sustained as a collective resource. Again, preceding Braid, it is worth quoting Niles at length when he articulates this point precisely:

Songs and stories are not just handed down, like heirlooms, from one generation to the next. If a singing or storytelling tradition exists, then it is re-creative at every stage. Every time a person learns a song or story, he or she remakes it to a greater or lesser extent. This process of re-creation will continue so long as the world presented in the narratives and the worldview of the singers and storytellers coincide, if not in literal detail then through an algebraic set of equivalencies that is implicitly understood. As long as this happens, successive generations of people will learn a body of traditional narratives, will remake them, and will find in them a system of belief and perception by which they can live in the midst of a changing world.

(1999: 172)

Building on the insights of Niles and Braid, this thesis presents new evidence regarding the transmission and filiation of the Travellers' stories. My overarching purpose is to utilise previously unexplored evidence to demonstrate *how* these stories function to condition and then represent the Travellers' distinctive cultural identities.

Based on these two already established premises – that the Travellers possess distinctive worldviews and identities, and that their stories are carriers of these worldviews and identities – Braid's monograph considers the Travellers' stories within the context of the storytellers' lives, and vice versa, hence the title. In terms of methodology, then, Braid relies heavily on his recordings from the field and offers transcriptions of these recordings. Braid's analysis of the stories and songs that he collected is bolstered because he tests his conclusions with the Travellers themselves. A similar methodology is being deployed in the present work: the analyses of fieldwork recordings, and engagement with archival recordings, will be appraised, wherever possible, by members of Traveller communities. Many of the individuals that Braid interviewed and collaborated with also appear in the

present work. Consequentially, it is possible to ‘double-check’ – as did Braid – the observations and conclusions that come about during our analyses and interpretations of the Travellers’ stories.

As a demonstration of what happens when we begin to apply these theoretical positions to the stories themselves, Braid’s study offers several useful examples. By engaging with a representative sample of Braid’s analyses, the reader will benefit from an introduction to both the applicability of its critical underpinnings and to the results that these underpinnings can achieve. Moreover, the purpose here is to advocate Braid’s theoretical and methodological frameworks so that the present thesis can contribute fresh understandings of Traveller culture using corresponding techniques. My example comes from Braid’s exploration of Duncan Williamson’s performance of ‘The Traveller and the Hare’. This short story tells of a ‘local Travelling man [who] had never married, and he didn’t have any family’ (cited in Braid 2002: 110) and who one day decides that he has had enough of the Travelling lifestyle. After spotting a hare feeding in a field, the Traveller hatches a plan to seek his fortune in pig farming, starting with the capture and sale of the hare. In his excitement, the Traveller spooks the hare and it runs off, foiling his plans; in the closing line of the story, the Traveller man laments, ““Well”, as he turned away, “it could have happened”” (ibid.: 112).

Braid begins his analysis by reminding the reader that Williamson’s ‘story is more than a humorous anecdote’, it is also a ‘serious commentary on Traveller identity, choices, and values that transcends the boundaries of the performance event’ (ibid.: 114-115). For example, to the Traveller-listener, Braid suggests that the narrative is indicative of a Traveller behaving in a marginal way because he has chosen a solitary lifestyle and has no family (ibid.: 115). Braid’s interpretation refers to the immutable familial bonds that exist between not only Travellers and their extended families, but also often extending to include

the wider Traveller communities found throughout Scotland and beyond. In terms of Williamson's 'The Traveller and the Hare', the results of Braid's interpretation mean that the Traveller protagonist has effectively 'abandoned Traveller worldview and accepted settled worldview' (ibid.). With divergent worldviews as the central theme, Braid continues, Williamson demonstrates the relative validity of Traveller and non-Traveller worldviews (ibid.: 116). For the Traveller-listener then, when the object of the Traveller's desire is scared off by his enthusiasm, 'the illusion of comfort and security is humorously revealed to collapse at the slightest provocation [...] pointing out the absurdity of settled worldview and vindicating Traveller worldview' (ibid.). As suggested above, Braid goes on to 'double-check' his interpretation with Williamson who confirms that his protagonist's intentions amount to 'a non-Traveller idea [...] he chose the wrong way to start [...] that's the idea of the story' (cited in Braid 2002: 118).

At the same time, by considering Williamson's story from a Traveller's perspective, Braid's interpretation supports my own critical approach: firstly, filiation – an individual's conviction in the veracity and reliability of transmitted traditional material – is an important function of Traveller storytelling; and secondly, it is crucial to approach the stories from an emic perspective if we are to gain plausible understandings of their meaning. In the case of 'The Traveller and the Hare', Braid's emic conclusion is that Williamson's fictional story functions to explore 'differences in cultural identity [...] to argue the validity of deeply held cultural beliefs [that] should be understood as intentional aspects of meaning' (2002: 118) within the context of the story. I argue that it is possible to elaborate on Braid's method to reveal not only the macro-meaning of these stories, but to uncover other significant meanings within the minutiae. Braid goes on to consider an *etic* interpretation of the story. Again, my critical underpinnings are vindicated here; because I utilise an integrative methodology allowing for both emic and etic interpretive frameworks, an example of an

outsider's perspective of 'The Traveller and the Hare' is instructive. From an outsider's perspective, such as the future-orientated planning that Braid says defines American worldviews (ibid.: 116), it seems reasonable that the Traveller would like to escape the state of penury in which he exists. Additionally, again from an outsider perspective, the Traveller protagonist's sacrifice of raising a family, and his imagined investment that begins with the sale of the hare, amounts to a non-Traveller worldview. Given the protagonist's poverty and isolation, the outsider perceives his aspirations to wealth and security as admirable. When the Traveller ultimately fails in his ambitions, the outsider would perhaps view the story as tragic and find pathos in the protagonist's final lament. However, the logic of the story casts such ambitions as absurd, thereby reinforcing the Traveller worldview that family and belonging are paramount when pursuing a meaningful life. Elsewhere in Braid's analyses, he identifies and engages with other outsider perspectives that are negotiated within Traveller storytelling. For instance, during the analysis of one unnamed narrative involving a Traveller and a gentleman, Braid argues that the protagonist 'masterfully plays on the prevailing stereotype of Travellers as ignorant and potentially irrational' (ibid.: 211).

I expand such emic perspectives further, considering wider socio-political and economic discourses that enhance the plausibility of my conclusions. Consequentially, this thesis expands upon Braid because it considers a wider range of contextual factors and applies a wider range of methodological approaches to the stories. For instance, I show how literary criticism and structuralism are potent allies when searching for deeper meanings within ostensibly simple narratives. Additionally, Masoni's reaction to Braid's analyses provides a useful point of departure; Masoni points out that Braid guides 'his interviewees through a critical evaluation of their own words and culture' (2005: 112). The methodology being deployed in my own thesis critically engages with the stories to uncover aspects that that would otherwise remain hidden or obscured. Braid deployed a similar strategy and his

questions to contemporary Travellers revealed careful thought about, and understanding of, the nature of the stories being told (2002: 287). The originality of my own method is that I combine both emic and etic perspectives on the narratives to deliver fresh interpretations that represent closer scrutiny of their meanings. My originality, therefore, comes from my inclusion of detailed contextual information during my analyses. Furthermore, I draw on primary source material that has, thus far, not been considered in the academic literature surrounding Scotland's Traveller communities. These contexts not only situate the narratives within the wider European folkloric tradition, but in the unique lived experiences of Travellers in Scotland. Braid concludes that 'Travellers themselves are capable of thinking about stories in analytical ways although they may not choose to do so on a day-to-day basis (ibid.). Braid's discussions are plausible and persuasive, giving the present work a reliable foundation on which to expand and improve.

### **Summary - Moving on**

My opening two chapters served to situate the Travellers in terms of their status in Scottish society and to mobilise the contemporary debate about the uses of tradition. Chapter 1 provided a nuanced picture of Travellers' socio-cultural history and suggested that tradition be viewed as a dynamic cultural resource. In Chapter 2, I built on my previous discussions about how these cultural resources are used to present a set of fresh critical perspectives. Such perspectives are rarely applied to oral narrative and conspicuously so when it comes to Scotland's Traveller traditions. I advocated the view that oral narratives can and should be interpreted in the same way as *artistic texts*. This elevates the stories to a position where their contents shift from 'vestigial' understandings of an apparently simpler world to sophisticated negotiations of contemporary social and cultural issues. I went on to propound that one

function of Traveller storytelling is to provide an arena where cultural continuity can be sustained; this function represents the process of tradition wherein communities store cultural capital, making it accessible to future generations of tradition-bearers. My own role as researcher in the process of tradition is to distil plausible meanings from a given traditional resource, providing clearer understandings of the communities to which the resources belong.

I made clear that my interpretations are underpinned by previous research in the field; Braid's *Lives Shaped through Stories* (2002) was invoked as a foundational study of the ways that Traveller storytelling is fertile ground for ethnological study. Using the details from Chapter 1, and a variety of secondary sources, my close readings expand on Braid's work to deliver original insights into distinctive Traveller worldviews. I argue that these worldviews set the stage for the complex ideological negotiations that take place within the stories themselves. To get at these negotiations within the stories, my emic critical approach amounts to interpretative close readings that are based on 'thick descriptions' of their socio-cultural context. Finally, the plausibility of my interpretations is enhanced by including etic perspectives. What the stories *mean* is at the heart of my approach. I therefore draw on relevant secondary sources to demonstrate how the Travellers' stories are engaged in a broad range of discourses. The following four chapters examine different varieties of narratives, delving deep into their inner workings to reveal a folkloric idiom unique to Scotland's Travellers. My conclusion draws my analyses together and demonstrates how *Nackian* narratives mobilise contemporary debates around what folklore does.

## Chapter 3

### ‘They dinnae hae the deeper wisdoms’

‘As long as they are there in their stories, they’re alive. We can bring them back’.

(Williamson 1980: 141)

It has been recognised for some time that storytelling practices are intrinsically linked to the educational and cultural development of individuals within their communities. Niles observes that storytelling amounts to the maintenance of ‘social equilibrium by strengthening bonds of affection between individuals while affirming the beliefs and values on which the continuing existence of a community depends’ (1999: 172). I consider these bonds of affection and how they manifest themselves in Travellers’ stories. This chapter will also engage with Travellers’ stories featuring the State, and how this engagement can shed light on both political and academic debates around Travellers’ unique Scottish identities. I show that Traveller storytelling traditions demonstrate sophisticated negotiations with perennial truths and engage with themes that are relevant within a Traveller-centric humanistic framework. Moreover, my examinations of these stories demonstrate their singularly Traveller conceptualisation.

The information held within Travellers’ storytelling traditions is at the heart of this research, yet the way we are *using* this information must be distinguished from its uses and functions within the communities themselves. For the ethnologist, stories, ballads and songs represent a body of intangible cultural heritage that can help us to understand more about the inner lives of the communities that share them. For many Travellers, oral narratives are a central part of their early education and upbringing. Niles makes a point of foregrounding the educational function of stories in Travellers’ lives, propounding that ‘stories provided

them with lessons in life more useful than anything that they were taught in school' (ibid.: 165). The concept of education being delivered through storytelling as part of the intellectual developments associated with childhood is affirmed by Stanley Robertson. Robertson explains that growing up, 'nearly a' the auld Traveller women telt ye stories' (TAD 50189), and that 'you needed a spiritual training, and you needed a physical training, and one was as important as the other' (ibid.). Robertson elaborates on his point of education through stories, revealing that during storytelling sessions, 'when you were there, it became part o' your character an' makeup. You were being shaped and moulded' (cited in Niles 1999: 165). Stories, then, not only function to impart 'training', as Robertson puts it, but can also be seen as the transmission of knowledge, character and experience from one generation to another. Elsewhere, discussing the intergenerational transmission of stories in Traveller communities, Traveller Geordie Stewart confirms that stories have been passed around for 'generations, aye, generations', and that after supper, he and his family would tell 'stories the whole night' (TAD 81408). More evidence of storytelling practices being central to Travellers' domestic and social lives comes from John Stewart: storytelling 'played a big part' in day-to-day life, explains Stewart, 'because there were no televisions' (TAD 65775). Stewart goes on to describe 'when Travellers would stay beside one another [...] they sat up late at night and they would swap stories round the fire' (ibid.). Moreover, Stewart articulates the difference between stories learned at school, and stories learned around the Travellers' camps: 'we couldnae be bothered wi' the likes o' Jack and the Beanstalk', Stewart tells us, 'they were too schoolified [sic] for us, there wisnae enough depth in them' (ibid.). The sense of a depth of meaning within Traveller storytelling, alluded to by Stewart, is something that will be thrown into sharp relief during the forthcoming examples.

As we heard from Robertson and others above, the process of intergenerational transmission among Travellers can also extend to emotional and intellectual levels, further

strengthening the deeply rooted familial and community bonds that Travellers have with one another. The strong emotions evoked through sharing stories in this way has been eloquently described by Betsy Whyte. Whyte tells us that when she is telling stories to children, ‘the whole thing comes right back, instead of you tellin’ your mother the story, you’re sittin’ there listening to your mother telling you the story, but the words are comin’ oot of your mooth’ (TAD 67341). Moreover, commonly held values and beliefs are included in this process of transmission, the sum of which becomes the conveyance of ‘cultural capital’. ‘Culture’, in this this sense, is defined as the outward expression of commonly held values (Jacobson-Widding 1983: 14) and ‘capital’, as a resource to be drawn upon when negotiating the wider world. Stories are the cultural capital of the Travellers; they are at once the outward embodiment of a shared set of values and beliefs, and simultaneously an inner reservoir of experience that can be drawn upon at need. Testament to this conceptualisation of the central importance of stories to contemporary Travellers comes from Traveller storyteller Jess Smith: ‘stories are the way forward for the Travellers to learn about their past’, Smith remarks, ‘many Travelling families have kept these stories, crucially important gems, and they’ve shared them down through the years [...] stories are so important’ (*Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month 2021*: online).

Intriguingly, there were also more material uses for the stories; John Stewart tells us that as children, Travellers would use stories as a form of currency, to be used in exchange for things that other children had (TAD 65775). Duncan Williamson shares a similar experience where he once ‘walked to Coupar Angus for an ounce o’ baccy’ (TAD 30610) to exchange it for a story from Johnnie MacDonald, who was ‘a great storyteller’ (ibid.). Williamson goes on to declare that he ‘would listen to a story better than go to the pictures’ (ibid.). The value that Williamson places in the receiving of stories – along with Stewart’s more materialistic example – makes tangible the importance of storytelling in Travellers’ lives. Furthermore,

the notion that stories represent a form of capital that can be stored, freely given, and exchanged, illustrates a worldview that stands in contradistinction to the possession-driven ethos of high-capitalism. This contradistinctive worldview can also be witnessed through depictions of conflict with the State, or the dominant elite and their ideologies. It seems sensible to assume that this unsympathetic view of capitalism is anachronistic, and that modern Travellers 'embrace' the system. However, it must be recognised that there are other factors to consider; it is not 'capital' or money, per se, that seems to be the problem for the Travellers and the protagonists of their stories. It is more the recognition of the greed and inequality that the capitalist system engenders. As I move on to close examination of examples of Traveller storytelling, I show that seemingly anachronistic attitudes towards capitalism and inequality have percolated through generations of Traveller storytellers. The following section addresses my central research question – which asks how the Travellers' storytelling traditions condition and represent their distinctive values and worldviews – by revealing how Traveller narratives function during the process of intergenerational transmission. What follows is a close look at examples of Traveller storytelling that demonstrate their capacity to creatively encode expressions of worldview, identity and ethics into oral narrative. I argue that deceptively simple stories can contain sophisticated messages about the nature of family and society, negotiating what it means to be a Traveller within a capitalist society that is often hostile to Travellers. Moreover, these examples demonstrate a relationship with the environment that speaks to a more reverential relationship with the landscape and thereby echoes an identity that has perhaps been renounced under the auspices of progress.

### 3.1 Identity Strategies within Traveller Storytelling

We might ask at this point, what is it that makes these stories ‘Traveller tales’? If the characters of the story *and* the narrator are explicitly identified as Travellers, then the story is considered ‘Traveller’. If the narrator identifies as Traveller, but the characters within the story are not explicitly identified as Travellers, close attention must be paid to details of the story in order to categorise it as a ‘Traveller’ tale. However, if the characters within the story are identified as Travellers, but the narrator is not, then this approach is problematised. For instance, the non-Traveller Reverend Norman MacDonald (TAD 8571) tells a story in Gaelic similar to one told by Duncan Williamson. Williamson’s story tells of a Traveller baby who is given to and raised by wealthy but childless landowners. When grown up and out walking with his adoptive father, the Traveller boy recognises the makings of a spoon in an old cow’s horn, thereby affirming his Traveller roots.<sup>4</sup> In MacDonald’s story, a childless Duke meets a Traveller family with many children, and the Travellers agree to give the Duke a young girl to raise as his own. The Traveller girl is raised accordingly and becomes a ‘Gentlewoman’. Many years later, the Traveller-Gentlewoman is out walking, encounters a group of Travellers and is never heard from again. MacDonald then informs us that this story is the origin of the Gaelic phrase, ‘Thoir bò gu ruige taigh mòr is iarraidh i don bhàthaich’ [Take the cow to the big house and it will want the cowshed]. At the conclusion of MacDonald’s story, the Traveller-Gentlewoman is married to a Traveller man: ‘agus phòs i fear aca’ [and she married one of them] (TAD 8571) could be read as an affirmation of Traveller values relating to family, in that the protagonist instinctively knows where she will feel happiest. The parallels with Williamson’s story are clear. However, the focus of MacDonald’s story remains the opposite; where Williamson’s story is an affirmation of an inner Traveller identity that exists in harmony with its environment, MacDonald’s story

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<sup>4</sup> Williamson’s story about the finding of the cow’s horn is considered in more detail below.

carries a similar message about an inner identity, but the implication is negative – the cow does not know what is good for it, or you can take the Traveller off the road, but you cannot take the road off the Traveller.<sup>5</sup> MacDonald's story may be read as positively affirming the Traveller protagonist's self-awareness *as a Traveller*, but its context as the origin of a condescending proverb remains.

This differentiation in meaning concerns what the story *is doing* in the context in which we find it. This contextualisation is at the heart of the interpretations being carried out in this thesis, a process of contextualisation that facilitates meaningful engagement with stories from the Traveller tradition. At the same time, an awareness of stories about Travellers that we hear from other sectors of society is important. As was demonstrated in the example from MacDonald above, it is the *meaning* of the story that aligns it to the Traveller tradition. In the same way that *Orwellian* is evocative of dystopia, or *Swiftian* speaks to political satire, *Nackian* storytelling traditions conjure up sophisticated negotiations of perennial folkloric themes, all the while leavened by the socio-political realities of the Travellers' status as unwelcome misfits.

Before moving on to more detailed examinations, when it comes to my interpretative close readings, I reassert that I am affording what Braid has described as 'careful generalisations' (2002: 32-33). I proceed on the premise that, viewed from a certain perspective, individualised narrative expressions can provide insights into the formation of collective identities. The narratives under analysis are drawn upon to explore the identities of the narrators as *individual* Traveller storytellers, offering plausible interpretations of Traveller culture and tradition more generally. Therefore, it must be stressed that each narrative is being viewed as an individualised expression of worldview that is informed by a sense of a shared cultural identity. However, the analysis of one individual's narrative and

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<sup>5</sup> A variant of the same proverb runs: 'Thoir leat a' bhò do'n chaisteal, 's thèid i dhachaidh do'n bhàthaich' [Take the cow to the castle, and she'll go home to the byre] (Nicolson 1882: 368).

the broader context of storytelling are not mutually exclusive; they supplement each other (Lüthi 1982: 125). Spicer's (1971) notion of individual and collective identity systems is useful from this perspective. For Spicer, an individual system is a person's recognition of certain symbols, and what those symbols stand for; the collective system amounts to the 'display and manipulation of the symbols', which in turn 'calls forth sentiments and stimulates the affirmation of beliefs on the part of the individuals who participate' (1971: 796). Spicer's summation is redolent of the concept of ideological imperatives that I introduced in my opening chapters. For my purposes, items of folklore, such as oral narrative, represent the 'display and manipulation' of symbols within these identity systems. The *recognition* of these symbols is the tradition, with tradition being understood as 'a dynamic, multivalent body of meaning that preserves much that a group has invented and transmitted' (Foley 1992: 227). The individuals who participate to sustain and modify this body of meaning are the various degrees of tradition-bearers that we encountered in Chapter 1 above.

Spicer's concept of 'identity systems' is reminiscent of Honko's 'identity strategies' (1988: 14) that were explored previously in Chapter 1 section 1.3. The reader will recall Honko suggesting that we can tap into the overarching values and beliefs of groups ('identity strategies') by looking closely at the identities of individuals from within the group. However, Honko voiced concerns about making assumptions about group identity based solely on the utterances of individuals (*ibid.*). This seems to be a rational position, given that members of a group each have a unique, individual identity and can therefore only speak for themselves. Of course, this position creates a theoretical barrier; if no one individual can absolutely speak for the group with any authority, then how do we study the group at all? The group would disintegrate into unconnected, isolated individuals. In practice, this is patently not the case, and the keystone is an individual's acquisition of

traditional material through volitional participation. To mitigate this disintegration of connected communities, I argue that ‘filiation’ – an individual’s conviction in the veracity and reliability of transmitted traditional material – plays a central role in the formation of collective identities. Consequently, Spicer’s symbols and Honko’s strategies can be seen to complement one another; oral narratives are the vehicles for the transmission of the symbols, with the strategy being the deliberate participation in the transmission of codified information that is enthusiastically received. Put another way, oral narratives, when viewed as ‘manipulated and displayed’ items of folklore, function as expressions of a shared collective identity, and in this case, one that is distinctively ‘Traveller’. Moreover, the expressions of individuals from within this collective identity operate reflexively. Folklore, as Bronner propounds, can be ‘malleable according to varied contexts, and individuals could even construct their own identities based upon the creative manipulation of traditions’ (2017: 11). The folk narratives explored here are a two-way street from this perspective – the individual identity can be informed by the traditional material, and the traditional material is consistently updated during *the creative process of tradition-bearing*.

### **3.2 The Traveller-Judge and a Lovely Spoon**

For McDermitt, Traveller storytelling is often inculcated with perennial truths, and close attention to the plots of the stories can reveal dualities (1980: 144). This observation by McDermitt could be said to be true of practically any society or culture that shares stories. For instance, I present an example from a study by Lévi-Strauss who shows how stories from different cultures negotiate contradictions within their societies. However, as we will see, the stories that come from the Travellers have distinctive aesthetic qualities. To demonstrate this, I examine two ‘identity strategy’ stories from two strong tradition-bearers,

Stanley Robertson and Duncan Williamson. I show that we do find the dualities highlighted by McDermitt and that these dualities are conceptualised in specific ways. Both stories represent meaningful negotiations of Traveller identity through nuanced explorations of superficial appearances. What we find in both stories is the theme of an enigmatic *inner* Traveller identity, an identity that is juxtaposed with a specious outward identity. From this perspective, the core duality within these stories is that of Traveller and non-Traveller, and the function within each story is to articulate this very distinction. The fundamental element of contrast between Travellers and non-Travellers has been made explicit by many Travellers (cf. J. Robertson TAD 10285; S. Robertson TAD 42990 & 38124; Stewart TAD 56424; Whyte TAD 39610 & 76669). As a recurring theme in Travellers' stories, Braid propounds that the inclusion of this contrast functions to 'strengthen the bonds between Travellers [...] and to maintain autonomy and identity in the face of pressure to assimilate into a settled culture' (2002: 46). In terms of perennial truths and dualities then, these stories can be seen to illuminate the former – from a distinctly Traveller perspective – through engagement with the latter. For instance, we encounter themes of justice and injustice being negotiated through protagonists with dualistic identities. We also find the concept of immutable familial bonds being used to expose the oppositional forces inherent to social existence. Additionally, as Braid goes on to point out, we should not take stories involving inner Traveller identities literally to mean that Travellers view their identities as genetically inherited (ibid.: 37). Instead, stories involving the miraculous reawakening of an innate Traveller identity should be viewed figuratively as an expression of how deeply 'Travellers experience their culture' (ibid.). Although I agree with Braid on this point, I expand on his analysis to advance more revealing readings of Robertson's and Williamson's 'reawakening narratives'.

My first example comes from Stanley Robertson. Robertson recalls a story that he ‘remember[s] ma grandda’ telling when I wis a bairn, and then I’ve also heard it reiterated again by ma mither’ (TAD 38131). The story involves a young Traveller couple who have a baby but cannot afford to feed it properly. Crucially, the child has a ‘most unusual birthmark, just right doon tae the back o’ his neck, an’ it was a black mark like a black mole, and it had a red scar that went ‘roon it’ (ibid.). Fearing for the child’s life, the young, starving couple decide to leave it ‘right at the door of this toff [wealthy] folk’ (ibid.) in the hope that the child will be saved. Twenty-five years later, the couple are accused of poaching on private land and sent to trial, where they will no doubt be hanged. It is important to note at this point that Robertson places his story at a time when a person could indeed be hanged for poaching on private land. More importantly for the narrative, Robertson explains that at this time ‘it was illegal to be a Traveller, and you could’ve been hanged, ’cause Macpherson was hanged in Banff for being a Traveller’ (ibid.).

This mention of James Macpherson – executed in 1700 at Banff – places the chronology sometime before 1783, when capital punishment of Gypsies and other itinerant individuals was still being recorded (Okely 1983: 4). In framing his narrative in this way, the theme of Robertson’s narrative becomes, ostensibly, the persecution of Travellers and Gypsies. Macpherson, having been accused of various capital crimes, was executed mainly on the basis of his illegitimate birth to a Gypsy mother, and his subsequent associations with Gypsies (Mackenzie 1878: 28, Whyte 2013: 221, *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland* (TSAS) Banff 1845: 23). I remind the reader here that during the eighteenth century – and up until the late-nineteenth century – Travellers (‘Tinkers’ at that time) and Gypsies were regarded as synonymous.<sup>6</sup> It is therefore plausible that James Macpherson’s mother could

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<sup>6</sup> I presented evidence above of the widespread conflation between Travellers and Gypsies in Scotland in TSAS Eaglesham (1792: 124), TSAS Bunkle and Preston (1792: 157), TSAS Borthwick (1845:

have been a Traveller, or a Gypsy. In Chapter 6, I present a present-day Traveller's rendition of Macpherson's story to demonstrate how such narratives remain culturally significant to contemporary Travellers. Meantime, the theme of persecution remains at the heart of the story, but the narrative can also be interpreted in other ways. At the conclusion of Robertson's story, the young couple are saved from the gallows when the judge at their trial – who was 'known to be a hanging judge' (TAD 38131) – inexplicably lets them go free. As the couple are released, they encounter the judge and notice the distinctive birthmark on his neck. They ask the judge why he set them free, to which he replies "I don't understand it, I've never been known to be like this", he said, "just when I looked down to you, I had the cold shivers running up and down my spine", he says, "I think you're putting some sort of curse upon me" (ibid.).

This statement from the judge warrants closer scrutiny. Up until this point, my analysis of Robertson's story has been focused on the perspective of the Travellers, but what of the judge? If the judge is being cast here as symbolic of a State that unjustly persecutes Travellers and Gypsies, it seems only fair to consider the narrative from the perspective of the State. As I noted above, the changing perception of Travellers from useful members of Scottish society to maligned non-conformists appears to have taken root sometime around the middle of the eighteenth century. It is not surprising that a people who, in Neat's words, display 'an almost pathological aversion, not to hard work, but to habitual labour and the discipline of the clock' (1996: 224), would not fit in to the mechanical repetition of a newly industrialised Scotland. The evidence I presented in preceding chapters affirms that the settled population's perceptions of Travellers and Gypsies in Scotland suffered a marked change for the worse during this period. The peripatetic lifestyles of Travellers and Gypsies not only did not fit with the prevailing winds of industrialisation, but this lifestyle became

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185). As noted, the conflation was not dissolved until the late nineteenth century by Macritchie (1894: 52).

associated with criminality, immorality, and anti-social behaviour in general. Predictably, this hostility, coupled with the Travellers' resistance to assimilation, led to conflict. It is not hard to imagine who would come out on top in such a contest. Such misconceptions about Traveller culture are borne out by the words of the judge; the supernatural 'curse' of the Travellers, so feared by the judge, betrays the prejudicial attitude of the State towards the perceived insidious mysticism of the Travellers and Gypsies that stands in stark opposition to the rationality of modernising industrialisation.

The judge is, of course, the Travellers' grown-up child. In Robertson's narrative, the judge has a dual persona: On one hand he is 'a very harsh looking young man, donned with his wigs and pomp and splendour' (TAD 38131); on the other hand, the judge's Traveller persona is symbolically represented by his birthmark. The 'black mark' of the Traveller is representative here of some inherent disfigurement, or otherness, that differentiates and distances him from the establishment. Robertson remarks at the end of his narrative that in other versions of this story, the disfigurement comes in the form of a 'hairy knuckle' (ibid.). The juxtaposition of the 'pomp and splendour' with disfigurement becomes the corporeal representation of the judge's dual nature. The disfigured and impoverished Traveller child is thrust into a world of privilege and power by his parents, and reluctantly so. By the conclusion of this short story, when the Traveller child has matured, his resulting pompous appearance as a court judge is ironically lambasted on two fronts. Firstly, the outward disfigurement of the innocent Traveller child is mirrored by his grotesque appearance in adulthood, after being raised in the 'rare big toff mansion hoose' (ibid.). The duality revealed by the plot of this story is clear: what is deemed outwardly ugly or repulsive is betrayed by the inner rectitude provided by the Travellers' culture. Braid also recognises this theme of outward appearances being deceptive and meaningful in Travellers' stories,

arguing that deceptive appearances within Travellers' narratives demonstrate 'deeper ways of perceiving and understanding the world' (2002: 37).

The harsh judge, given to hanging, in his pomp and splendour is therefore symbolic of the injustice that Travellers and Gypsies faced at the hands of the state. In Sheila Stewart's printed collection of Traveller stories, *Pilgrims of the Mist* (2008), she explains that the stories come from Travellers all over Scotland and that her selections reflect the fact that the tellers 'think in the same way I do' (2008: vii). The opening narrative, entitled 'The Hanging' and framed as an oral history, engages with the same themes as Robertson's – lethal persecution based on identity. In Stewart's story, a Traveller named Andy Campbell is accosted by a man on horseback who accuses him of lying about having no tobacco to spare. "All you damn tinkers are the same" (ibid.: 1), says the aggressor, and he proceeds to strike the Traveller with his horsewhip with such force that he falls from his horse. "How dare you unsaddle me from my horse! You will pay for this, tinker" (ibid.: 2), the horseman shouts, and he drags Andy to jail. Not only is Andy persecuted in this account, but his persecution occurs in such a way that he himself is to blame for it. When Andy's family arrive at the jail the next morning, they are told that he is being hung that day; "because he is a tinker", the jailors tell the family, "we need to get rid of tinker scum" (ibid.: 3). Andy's family duly protest, identifying themselves as 'Tinkers', and are sentenced to suffer the same fate on the gallows. In Robertson's Traveller-Judge narrative, the symbolic content cooperates to convey the meaning of the story by challenging such blind persecution. Regardless of his establishment upbringing, the Traveller child grows up to display an inherent sense of justice, despite the tension that this creates with the immorality and prejudice associated with the establishment's persecution of Travellers and Gypsies. The 'cold shivers and curses' that the judge persona experiences in the presence of his biological parents galvanises his latent Traveller persona to win the day. The judge remains unaware of

his Traveller heritage throughout the narrative, and resorts to superstition to explain his actions. The judge's perceived lack of agency ultimately reflects the fate of the many doomed Travellers and Gypsies who were executed based solely on their identities.

Moreover, the Traveller parents' initial sacrifice of their child to save his life is reciprocated when their child defies his establishment upbringing to save his parents' lives in return. The narrative thereby epitomises the strong familial connections that many Travellers see as central to their identities. At the same time, Robertson's story reminds us that the lethal persecution that Travellers faced at the hands of the State has not been forgotten and has passed into the oral traditions shared by Travellers. Robertson concludes his narrative by explaining the deep, unconscious familial bond that transcends the material transformation of the abandoned child: 'mother nature's ties of the cord must still be there', Robertson tells us, and that 'there are things that can testify to ye a blood kin, without actually havin' to be telt' (TAD 38131). Thus, the abandoned child's Traveller identity is immutable, despite his alternative upbringing, his resulting high social status and the power over life and death that he wields in adulthood. The incorruptibility displayed by the abandoned child demonstrates the Travellers' ability to negotiate an unfair system of justice – embodied by the State – through narrative. In a 1949 lecture entitled 'The Role of the Artist in Society', Henderson explained that 'folk art is an implicit and in many respects explicit challenge to the ruling class way of looking at the world [:] we have more to learn from them than they from us' (cited in Neat 2007: 236). Robertson's narrative embodies this sort of challenge to the ruling class in a particular way; there is no explicit defiance, confrontation or belligerence on the part of the Travellers. Instead, the challenge comes through the Travellers' affirmation of their worldview. Notwithstanding material and intellectual transformation – not to mention access to power over life and death – the Traveller child ultimately remains loyal to his family. The 'hanging judge' is ironically

cured of his persecutory ways when he exclaims to his Traveller parents, ‘I think you’re putting some sort of curse upon me’ (TAD 38131). Robertson’s use of dramatic irony, by way of ‘the curse of the Travellers’, demonstrates a level of sophistication that typifies Traveller storytelling. In Robertson’s story, the deeply entrenched sense of persecution felt by Travellers to this day is vitiated by their ability to morally transcend their persecutors. Moreover, Robertson’s plot structure, narrative technique and characters collaborate to challenge persecutory behaviour whilst simultaneously affirming aspects of Traveller worldview. In terms of the ideological imperatives being enacted here, I return to this point in section 3.4 where Robertson’s story is revisited in further detail.

A narrative from Duncan Williamson engages with the same theme of an immutable, inner Traveller identity and strong familial bonds. This story also demonstrates the theme of deceptive outward appearances playing a pivotal role in the plot. In Williamson’s untitled story, the two sets of protagonists are referred to as ‘the Travelling People’, and ‘this lady and gentleman’ (cited in Braid 2002: 35-36). By depersonalising his protagonists, Williamson effectively creates a binary between Travellers and members of the settled population as discrete groups. From this perspective, the protagonists of Williamson’s narrative embody the entirety of the two disparate social groups and are symbolic of opposing ideological commitments. Ostensibly, Williamson’s story can be viewed as an encounter between the Travellers and the settled population, regarded as discrete social units. For ease, I will refer to the two sets of protagonists as the ‘Travellers’ and the ‘Settled People’ henceforth. Williamson explains that the Settled People liked the Travelling People, and so allowed them to camp on their land. One night, the Traveller woman is begging for food at the Settled People’s mansion and discovers that the Settled woman is unable to bear children. The Traveller woman, on the other hand, is fecund and tells the Settled woman that she has already borne six children (ibid.: 35). Given these further details, the binary aspect

of Williamson's narrative comes into sharp focus: Settled and Traveller, have and have-not, infecund and fecund. Of course, the first two binaries exist outwith the narrative, they exist in reality and are routinely observed in the lived experiences of both sets of protagonists. However, the final binary is not so visible, and it is here at the familial level that the narrative is played out. The Traveller woman's inner fecundity and outer poverty is juxtaposed with the Settled woman's outward material wealth and her inner dearth.

During their meeting at the mansion door, the Settled woman proposes that the Travellers give the Settled People one of their children, imploring to the Travellers that 'I'll give you anything that you want' (ibid.). After a consultation together, 'naturally, the Travelling People went on their way. And they left the wee baby' (ibid.). Giving away a child in such a way is anything but natural, and the baby in Williamson's story fulfils an allegorical function. What is conspicuously absent as Williamson's story continues is evidence of any transaction having taken place; the Travellers simply hand over their child and the Settled people 'reared it up to be their own' (ibid.). It is clear that the Travellers stood to gain materially by giving the Settled People one of their children, yet they do not. Whether it came in the form of money, land, animals or something else, the material wealth on offer to the Travellers is refused. In the context of Williamson's story, ill-gotten material wealth is denounced as the Travellers effectively refuse to sell their child. It would be difficult to argue that Williamson's story is a comment on avarice, but the theme of have and have-not remains central to the advancement of the plot. The fact that the Travellers can give something as precious as a child – with all that that carries in terms of Traveller worldviews around family – without receiving anything in exchange is perhaps a safer reading in this respect. Moreover, the Settled People's *perception* that the Travellers are the have-nots in the situation is a more revealing consideration. By refusing the offer of 'anything you want', the Travellers affirm that there is nothing the Settled People have that they want.

This presents the question, what *is* it that the Travellers have? The answer comes at the conclusion of the story where we meet the Traveller child at five years old, out walking with the Settled man and their pet dog. The dog picks up an old cow's horn and the Traveller child exclaims, "Daddy, wouldn't that make a lovely spoon!" (ibid.). There is evidence that, in the past, Travellers were known for fashioning spoons from animal horn (for example, TAD 82053). Discussing Traveller handicrafts, Traveller Belle Stewart remarks, 'horn spoons they used to make. My father could dae a' these things' (TAD 100320). There are also mentions of Travellers being referred to as 'Horners' in TSAS (Auchterderran 1791: 458), and Macritchie also cites the Horner appellation when discussing Travellers (1894: 1). In Campbell's *Reminiscences*, he tells us of Travellers he knew in his youth who 'made spoons out of the horns of rams and cattle' (1910: 24). Elsewhere, Isabel Grant, curator of the Highland Folk Museum, describes how the 'Tinkers' she knew would fashion spoons from horn (2007: 128).<sup>7</sup>

Consequentially, the conclusion of Williamson's story explicitly aligns the child with a handicraft known to be practised by Travellers. The implication being that, in spite of his upbringing, the child remains a Traveller. Like the judge in Robertson's narrative, the child in Williamson's story has a Traveller reawakening. Crucially, both stories are linked in that each reawakening is intimated by the presence of blood relations. In Robertson's story, the familial presence is literally the appearance of the judges' biological parents; as we heard from Robertson, 'there are things that can testify to ye a blood kin, withoot actually havin' to be telt' (TAD 38131). In Williamson's story, the familial trigger is the presence of a cow's horn. Although the horn could be read as an allusion to a handicraft practised by

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<sup>7</sup> The Highland Folk Museum opened in Kingussie in 1944 and is known as *Am Fasgadh* (Eng. 'The Shelter') (Cheape 2007: 9). The museum contains all manner of artefacts pertaining to farming, fishing, crofting and domestic life in the Highlands.

Travellers in general, Williamson specifically casts the child's father as the artisan, explaining that the child's father 'used to make spoons, you see?' (cited in Braid 2002: 36).

### 3.3 International Tales and Traveller Ecotypes

In the above analysis of Robertson's and Williamson's narratives, we saw Traveller storytelling engaging with immutable familial bonds that highlighted aspects of the Travellers' family-centred, environmentally aware ethos. An alternative approach to the stories can demonstrate an engagement with these same themes, and others, from a different perspective. At the beginning of Robertson's narrative, he remarks that he thinks that his story might 'come under some of the international tales [...] because you find that these Traveller tales are international tales' (TAD 38131). An international tale is a story with a theme, specific and identifiable events and/or characters (motifs), and recognisable overall structures that appear across the globe. The overall structures, or 'tale-types', of international folktales were classified by Antti Aarne in 1911, then augmented later by Stith Thompson in 1955 and again in 1981. More recently, the overall structures were updated by Hans-Jörg Uther in his 2004 work *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography*. Considering these classifications, Robertson's narrative does not appear to conform to the characteristics of any one tale-type that I can identify. At the same time, Robertson's awareness of international tale-types is not surprising. In my previous research on Travellers' storytelling traditions, I suggested that strong tradition-bearers – such as Robertson – often combine, and reimagine, well-known international and local tales. Consequently, Travellers' stories come to represent a *mélange* of international tale-types that are modified to reflect local conditions. These narrative *mélanges* are palpable demonstrations of the distinctiveness of Traveller storytelling that has been alluded to

throughout this thesis. In the context of the combination of tale-types and motifs, Traveller storytelling can be viewed as a distinctive mode of orality where the narrators create narrative ecotypes (cf. von Sydow 1934: 349). A narrative ecotype is a version of an international tale-type that has adapted to a certain socio-cultural milieu.

This adaptation amounts to combining and manipulating various plots and motifs that can be shown to appear in other discrete socio-cultural milieus. It is not my purpose to explore *how* or *why* these plots and motifs appear in discrete milieus, but to examine how the Travellers' stories become embedded with nuanced meanings that reflect *their* unique culture and lived experiences. With this process of combination and manipulation in mind, comparisons and analysis with common themes and motifs can offer complementary interpretations of Robertson's narrative. Additionally, if Lüthi is correct and 'the secret power of the folktale lies not in the motifs it employs, but in the manner in which it uses them – that is, in its form' (1982: 3), then Robertson's narrative can provide a case study in which to explore this 'secret power'. Through the combination of plots and motifs found in international tales, Robertson's narrative engages with perennial themes from a different perspective. We find that the themes and motifs in Robertson's narrative reflect the Travellers' subaltern position in society, whilst simultaneously engaging with the very same familial tropes discussed in my analysis above. I also consider Williamson's narrative technique in more detail through an example that engages with an international tale-type. Williamson's Traveller version of an internationally-known story provides a germane contrast to Robertson's explicitly 'Traveller' narrative in further demonstrating the sophistication of the narratives under examination.

As noted above, Robertson's narrative does not conform to any one specific international tale-type that I can find. However, the motifs that Robertson deploys do appear in the Aarne-

Thompson-Uther (ATU) tale taxonomy.<sup>8</sup> With this in mind, I want to highlight tale-type ATU 327A – *Hansel and Gretel* (Uther 2004 Vol. I: 212) to demonstrate the themes and motifs shared with Robertson’s narrative, and to offer interpretations based on the central themes. These discussions aim to articulate how Traveller storytellers invert and manipulate international themes and motifs to reflect the Travellers’ unique cultural identities. Before making any interpretations based on the tale-type classifications and motifs, it is useful to summarise the events which take place in Robertson’s narrative, which are as follows: destitute parents abandon a child, said parents enter a crisis, the crisis is averted, the fate of the abandoned child is revealed, there is a recognition by birthmark, and finally, the parents and child are separated once more. Table 1 below displays the ATU tale-type, the associated motifs, and their appearance in Robertson’s story:

Motif	Tale-Type	Robertson’s ‘Traveller-Judge’ Story
<p><b>S301</b> – children abandoned</p> <p><b>S321</b> - destitute parents abandon child</p>	<p><b>ATU 327A</b> – <i>Hansel and Gretel</i></p>	<p>Robertson’s narrative is intimated when the starving Travellers abandon their child.</p>
<p><b>H51.1</b> – recognition by birthmark</p>	<p><b>ATU 850</b> – <i>The Birthmarks of the Princess</i></p>	<p>The Traveller child is recognised by his distinctive birthmark.</p>

*Table 1: Tale-Types and Motifs in Stanley Robertson’s Traveller-Judge story.*

In Table 1, the alpha-numeric motifs on the left represent the specific incidents related to ATU 327A, the ATU tale-type number in the central column represents the overall tale-type

<sup>8</sup> Based on the combined work of Aarne-Thompson-Uther, all ATU references and motifs in the present work refer to Hans-Jörg Uther’s *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography*, 3 Vols. (2004).

classifications made by Aarne-Thompson-Uther, with the left-hand column describing the corresponding events in Robertson's story.

On the surface, Robertson's story of an abandoned child 'coming good' bears no resemblance to the plot of *Hansel and Gretel*. Therefore, I do not mean to suggest that Robertson's narrative is a version of the international tale-type ATU 327A. However, considering the central themes and motifs in conjunction with the plots of these stories, several similarities become apparent. Moreover, it is useful to consider Robertson's story from a structural perspective to better understand its function. The structure of any given story can be seen as a specific set of principles that govern the plot, the characters and the motifs that appear within the narrative. Consider Olrik's position that 'storytellers have a tendency to observe certain practices in composition and style that are generally common to large areas', and considering this, that 'the regularity with which these practices appear makes it possible for us to regard them as "epic laws" of oral narrative composition' (1992: 41). As we saw in Duncan Williamson's narrative about a group of Travellers' experiences with a wealthy American tourist in Chapter 2, examples of Olrik's laws can, unsurprisingly, be found in the Traveller tradition. In Williamson's story involving the American tourist, the law of contrast was identified as central to the meaning of the story. Olrik goes on to observe, regarding the epic laws, that 'a large part of the poetic tradition [...] looks to the preservation of the production of the individual poet, and is viewed as a tradition developed among specific peoples and within specific eras' (ibid.: 42). Olrik's 'individual poet' can be thought of as a strong tradition-bearer – such as Robertson or Williamson – and the 'specific people' as Scotland's Travellers.

From this perspective, the two stories currently under examination are evidence for my argument that Traveller storytellers adhere to certain narrative compositional rules, while simultaneously *creatively engaging* with these rules. It is in such creativity here that we find

the distinctive Nackian folk idiom. For instance, we saw that the central theme of Robertson's Traveller-Judge story is the absent Traveller child and his sense of an immutable inner rectitude enjoyed by the Travellers. In terms of Olrik's laws, Robertson's narrative follows the 'Law of Centralisation' in that the narrative arranges itself around a central character (ibid.: 49); in this case, the absent child. Moreover, Olrik's central character functions in tandem with the 'Unity of Plot' law, allowing him to reshape 'the given material, especially when it deals with the extraneous [for example, historical occurrences], in order to better place all of the episodes in relation to the main character' (ibid.). As in Williamson's story involving the rich American tourist, we also find the 'Law of Contrast' in Robertson's story, manifested in the dual nature of the Traveller-Judge. We have then at least three of Olrik's epic laws at work in Robertson's narrative: firstly, the absent Traveller child is the central character and therefore dominates the plot; secondly, the Traveller-Judge brings unity to the plot by embodying events that are external, yet pertinent to the narrative – the fatal persecution of Gypsies and Travellers in the past, for instance; and thirdly, contrast in character is also a function of the centralised Traveller-Judge, where the contrast in the characters is as explicit as possible. The Nackian idiom manifests itself in the way that Olrik's overarching narrative devices are rendered in the telling of the stories. In this way, the laws identified by Olrik provide a frame for the stories, but the details used to develop this frame into a coherent narrative are distinctively Traveller.

### **3.4 The Traveller-Judge (Revisited) and The Hedgehurst**

For the purposes of the present discussion, I use the Grimm's version of *Hansel and Gretel* for comparison. As Thompson has pointed out, the central elements of the European versions of *Hansel and Gretel* are so simple and uniform that a theoretical discussion based

on one version does not suffer for it (1946: 37). A brief synopsis of the Grimm's *Hansel and Gretel* is as follows: parents abandon their children in a forest due to lack of food; the children find nourishment but are captured by an antagonist; finally, the children escape their captor and return home with material wealth. Considering *Hansel and Gretel* alongside Robertson's Traveller-Judge story, the lack of food that forces the parents to abandon their children is a theme explicitly present in both narratives. Lack of food intimates the journeys of the children in both cases, and this is, ostensibly, where the similarities between the stories end. However, following Lüthi's (1982: 3) notion cited above that the import of a story lies in its form, rather than which motifs are present, I argue that *Hansel and Gretel* negotiates the same anxieties and hierarchical relationships found in Robertson's narrative. I go on to show that the Traveller story is a narrative negotiation of basic human needs and motivations that are tempered by singularly Nackian nuances. At the same time, I show how Robertson's story shares certain impulses with *Hansel and Gretel*, impulses that I incorporate in my interpretation.

During his discussion of *Hansel and Gretel*, Holbek asserts that the lack of food and the abandonment of children represent the socio-historical reality behind the fantasy (1987: 394). In Robertson's story, the socio-historical reality faced by Travellers could be viewed in the context of the Children Act (1908), which includes legislation aimed at persons who 'habitually wander from place to place' (*United Kingdom Government* 1908: Section 118). Under the provisions of the Children Act, parents were obliged to ensure that their children attended public elementary school during the months of October to March on at least two hundred occasions (*ibid.*). According to Taylor, the Children Act was a part of reformers' belief that 'Travellers were capable of change, and that their characteristics were not inherent', and that the 1908 Act aimed to 'promote education as a prime tool in their reformation' (2008: 80). Moreover, the 1908 legislation gave the authorities the power,

without a warrant, to remove children to ‘a place of safety’ should their living conditions contravene any part of the legislation. In this way, the Children Act could assert control not only over the education of Traveller children, but also their upbringing more generally. Essentially, the Children Act aimed to take control of the early scholastic and cultural education of Traveller children to integrate new generations of Travellers into mainstream society. This attempt to eradicate Traveller culture through their children did not entirely escape the public’s eye, with sympathetic citizens recognising the cruelty of such oppression. Writing in protest to the editor of *The Scotsman*, G.A. Mackay exclaims that ‘to separate the [Traveller] children from their parents would be something like a death sentence [...] and would be one of the cruellest and most useless acts’ (‘The Tinker Problem’ 1917: 10). Similarly, one contributor to *The Scotsman* writing after the Children Act was passed commented that educating Traveller children ‘out of their natural instincts and traditions may be a greater form of cruelty than that which it is supposed to cure’ (‘The Wandering Tribe’ 1918: 4).

We have oral evidence of the impact that this had on Travellers during the first half of the twentieth century. Betsy Whyte reports that up until the 1930s, the authorities would take Traveller children away from their families and place them in homes:

[the children] had to be taught fi that size [i.e., a toddler] to be wise for them [the authorities] ye see. If they [the authorities] thought you were hungry, [then] “they kids are neglected, we’ll take them into a home”. And these bairns that were taken into homes, when they come home they had to be looked after because they’d learned to steal, they’d learned to do things that we’d never even heard about [...] They [the children] were never any good, they never had much sense after comin’ oot o’ a home.

(TAD 76578)

The anxieties expressed by Whyte come not only from the devastation of having a child taken away from a family, but of the negative impact that this has on the child during its

formative years. In terms of our narratives, anxieties around the loss of a child are inverted so that it is the Travellers themselves that facilitate the exposure. To put this inversion into context, Neat observes that in popular folklore – presumably within the settled population – Scotland’s Travellers have long been associated with the theft, abduction and purchase of children (1996: 225). In terms of Travellers adopting unwanted ‘settled’ children, Neat goes on to suggest that ‘over the years, guilt-twisted remembrance has turned “giving” into “taking”, agreed “deals” into “theft”’ (ibid.; cf. S. Robertson TAD 85577). As I have argued throughout this thesis, the sorts of lived experiences recalled by Whyte – and those perceived of in other sectors of Scottish society – are transposed into Travellers’ narratives and thereby negotiated in specific ways. Given the family-centeredness of the Travellers, the *absence* of a child becomes a powerful motivator in the composition and sharing of stories.

With this in mind, and notwithstanding *how* the child becomes absent, the central theme of the Grimm’s *Hansel and Gretel*, Robertson’s tale of the Traveller-Judge, and Williamson’s Traveller reawakening story is the absence of children. During an examination of the abandonment of children in literature from late antiquity to the Renaissance, Boswell remarks that child abandonment is commonplace as a narrative turning point; a fact that he puts down to the ubiquity of the experience for ordinary people during that period (1988: 99). Boswell goes on to note that the pervasiveness of child abandonment also extends to ‘Germanic and Celtic peoples’, where ‘Irish annals, folklore, and saints’ lives include almost the same range of forms and motivations for abandonment as Roman literature’ (ibid.: 212-213). Boswell’s evidence suggests that the abandonment – and subsequent absence – of children is an ancient theme, one that taps into the very nature of human reproduction and the universal instinct that tells us to protect our young. Intriguingly, Boswell also found that ‘the virtually unanimous testimony of literature is that the parents left with an abandoned child a token, sign, or symbol’, where ‘these tokens were often intended [...] to make it

possible for the parents to identify the child with some assurance' (ibid.: 126). In Robertson's story, this identity symbol is made manifest in the unusual birthmark – the 'Black Mark' of the Travellers – a point to which I return presently.

Meantime, in the Grimm's version of *Hansel and Gretel*, the childhood fear of abandonment – or even infanticide – becomes the inspiration for the children's journey into the fantasy realm of the forest. In this realm, interprets Holbek, the 'children's anxieties and aggressions are openly expressed without offending any real person' (1987: 394). The fictional witch of the story becomes a projection of the children's fear that their mother wants them dead; therefore, according to Holbek, it is psychologically safe for the children to kill the witch (ibid.). At the conclusion of the Grimm's story, the antagonistic stepmother – the architect of the children's absence – is also dead and their benevolent father has been eagerly awaiting their return.<sup>9</sup> Unlike Holbek's interpretation where the children are the focus of the story, Böhm-Korff's interpretation shifts the focus from the children to the adults. Böhm-Korff perceives that the central meaning of *Hansel and Gretel* is the abandonment of children viewed from the parents' perspective, and that this meaning reflects the treatment of children during the period that the Grimms were compiling their tales (cited in Zipes 1997: 46). Zipes agrees with this refocusing on the adults, arguing that the Grimms' *Hansel and Gretel* amounts to the rationalisation of abandonment on the part of the parents (1997: 46). Consequentially, the Grimms' version of the story can be seen to reinforce hierarchical relationships; consider the fact that it is the parents who choose to abandon their children in times of dearth, rather than sacrifice themselves in some way to ensure that their children thrive.

In terms of the adults' rationalisation of an absent child, it is important to note that the Grimms' children return home with pockets filled with jewels and pearls. It could be argued

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<sup>9</sup> In the Grimm's original tale, it is the children's biological mother who dies. The stepmother was a later addition (Dundes 1991: 78-79).

that the children's new material wealth is symbolic not only of their triumph over adversity, but of their transition towards adulthood because they can now make a material contribution to the household. However, as Zipes has pointed out, we must realise that in analysing the Grimms' *Hansel and Gretel*, 'we are dealing not with a "pure" oral tradition that may have mythic roots in German or European culture but with a literary fairy-tale tradition *connected* to folklore that was part of a civilising process' (1997: 42, my italics).<sup>10</sup> From this perspective, the symbolic material wealth gained by the children becomes a literary addition that Zipes sees as an ideological function within *Hansel and Gretel*; despite the abandonment of his children, the 'happy ending' at the conclusion of the story sees the father not only as a wealthy man but absolved of the guilt of abandoning his children. The ideological commitment Zipes refers to is the quintessentially sedentary position that views material wealth as a central indicator of 'civilised' society. By the conclusion of Robertson's story, however, the symbolic wealth that has been gained is not represented in material terms at all. On the contrary, the value that has been gained by the absent Traveller child comes in the form of a transcendental sense of natural justice. It is a *moral* gain that has resulted from the absence of a child in Robertson's story, and it is a moral perspective that is represented in his story as inherently 'Traveller'. The reader will recall that there is no reconciliation of the parents and the children in either Robertson's or Williamson's stories. Instead, the conciliatory aspect of the Traveller stories manifests itself again in what we have already heard Robertson describe as the 'deeper wisdoms' (TAD 50189). A sense of justice and moral rectitude are placed above the familial and material reconciliation that we find in the Grimms' *Hansel and Gretel*.

Moreover, Robertson's story contains nuances of plot and motif that highlight the refined nature of Traveller storytelling traditions. For instance, Robertson uses narrative devices

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<sup>10</sup> I discuss this connection in further detail below.

such as anagnorisis – the critical moment of recognition – that can be found from Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* (c. 430 BCE) to Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* (1861). Similarly, Robertson makes use of peripeteia, a reversal of fortune, as a narrative technique. Peripeteia occurs where the ‘action of an agent of a dramatic action is prevented from achieving its intended result and instead arrives at an opposite actual result’ (Belfiore 2009: 634). The reversal of fortune and recognition occur when the Traveller couple are inexplicably saved from the gallows, and their miraculous reversal of fortune is made explicable only when the recognition by birthmark occurs outside the courthouse. At a basic level, this combination of anagnorisis and peripeteia performs a cathartic function for the listener; there is a moral cleansing when the persecuted Travellers’ lives are spared and a sense of closure as to the ‘hanging’ Judge’s unexplained leniency.

Lack of agency permeates Robertson’s story: the persecution faced by the Travellers denies them agency; the Traveller-Judge has no agency when he inexplicably releases the parents; and the prejudicial State’s agency is nullified when the Travellers are righteously liberated. The anagnorisis and peripeteia, from this perspective, function not simply as catharsis, but as symbols of emancipation. Both literally and figuratively, Robertson’s Traveller characters are emancipated from society’s ills: the starving child is saved from hunger; the Traveller-Judge’s cruelty is inverted when he is compelled to release innocent detainees; and the persecuted Travellers have their freedom. After careful examination, Robertson’s allusion to international tale-types in the metanarrative of his story becomes clearer. Central themes from ATU 327A – *Hansel and Gretel*, and motifs from ATU 850 – *The Birthmarks of the Princess*, collaborate in his story to elicit a nuanced meaning. Robertson achieves this meaningful collaboration between theme (child abandonment) and motif (anagnorisis/peripeteia) by making the outcome of the story obscure to all but the Traveller parents who abandoned their child. As noted above by Boswell, parents leaving a

token or symbol to assure future recognition is a pervasive motif in child abandonment narratives (1988: 126). In Robertson's story, the symbol that assures recognition is the unusual birthmark borne by the child. The 'Black Mark' of the Travellers is central to the meaning of the story because the birthmark is just that, an innate part of the Traveller child's constitution. The birthmark as a symbol is neither deliberately bestowed by the parents, nor has a function as a turning point in the plot. Viewed in this way, Robertson's short story about the Traveller-Judge is a representative example of how meaning within Travellers' tales is revealed. I cited Boswell's study of child-abandonment narratives – and the ATU tale-types – because I recognise that Robertson's story is not a unique invention in terms of the overarching themes with which it deals. However, by unpacking the complexity of this narrative through close attention to the plot, motifs and characters, we can peer deep into the culturally significant meanings of deceptively simple stories. *How* the story means, therefore, is dependent on Robertson's narratological competence as a strong tradition-bearer; his use of international themes and motifs, coupled with his own social location as a Traveller, means that a plausible dialogical analysis of his story is made possible. In Chapter 1 section 1.3, I invoked Frank's notion of an individual's 'social location' as a set of narrative resources that are based on their shared experiences, expectations and circumstances (2010: 13). I linked social location to ideology in the sense that experiences and expectations inform an individual's beliefs about the socio-cultural environment in which they live. In the present example from Robertson, the ideological commitment of the story, as a reflection of the Nackian folk idiom, is the negotiation of a lack of agency experienced by the Travellers. As a social reality, this lack is projected on to the very pattern of the story and becomes a positive affirmation of the potency of the Travellers' inner identities and symbolic of their resilience in hostile situations. Using the character of the

Traveller-Judge, the inner worth of the Traveller protagonists is ironically projected onto the very agent who denies them their agency.

Another example of a Traveller ecotype is Duncan Williamson's version of ATU 441 - *Hans My Hedgehog*. Williamson's version – entitled *The Hedgehurst* (TAD 36536) – represents a further example of how his stories engage with themes such as familial bonds, individualism, and the Travellers' relationship with nature and their environment.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, I present further evidence of the Travellers' unique position in Scottish society; Williamson's story represents a narrative negotiation of isolation, marginalisation and how these anxieties are reconciled within the Travellers' storytelling traditions. Unlike Robertson's story about the Traveller-Judge, where the narrative connections to *Hansel and Gretel* were less obvious, Williamson's retelling of ATU 441 resembles recognised international versions. However, certain aspects of *The Hedgehurst* give Williamson's version a particular complexion and, again, nuanced meanings. As Ziolkowski has pointed out, the essence of a story will of course differ from culture to culture, yet this characteristic variability does not mean that analysis of variations is futile (2009: 110). On the contrary, using flexible techniques during the analysis of such variations provides compelling evidence to support my central argument around the ways meaning is deeply embedded within the Travellers' stories. The following discussion deploys comparative techniques to reveal how Williamson's story – situated as it is within the Traveller tradition – differentiates itself from other renditions of this international tale-type. I compare the symbolic meanings that are extant in several versions, then engage with these common meanings within the context of Traveller worldview and ideology. I go on to demonstrate that the Travellers' storytelling traditions do not always exist in isolation from the global community, arguing that international tale-types manifest themselves in specific ways in the

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<sup>11</sup> *The Hedgehurst* is the title given to the transcription of this story – based on TAD 36536 – in Williamson's *Fireside Tales of the Traveller Children* (1983), pp. 21-32.

Traveller tradition, and with specific meanings. As noted above, this phenomenon has been recognised already by von Sydow (1934) in his discussion around narrative ecotypes.

Ultimately, I reveal what these ecotypes resemble in the Traveller tradition and thereby discover their ability to condition and represent the distinctive values and identities of the communities to which they belong.

In terms of the themes and motifs found in ATU 441 – *Hans My Hedgehog*, Uther describes the tale-type as follows: After a hasty wish, or a curse, a previously-childless couple have a son who is a hedgehog; the hedgehog grows up to become a swineherd in the forest and is very successful; the hedgehog encounters a lost King to whom he gives directions out of the forest, and the King promises one of his daughters in marriage as a reward; the hedgehog rides his rooster to court to claim his prize; on the wedding night, the hedgehog's skin is destroyed, he is disenchanting and transforms into a handsome young man (2004 Vol. I: 263). In Williamson's version, the plot and characters are broadly similar to Uther's description of ATU 441; a woodcutter and his wife are childless until the miraculous birth of a particularly hairy baby boy, the eponymous Hedgehurst; the boy matures and sets off into the forest with several animals, where he becomes a successful carpenter and wood builder; Williamson's version includes a lost King, and a promised reward after the Hedgehurst guides the King out of the forest; the Hedgehurst duly rides to the King's court on his cockerel to claim his reward, the King's daughter's hand in marriage; Williamson's narrative concludes when the Hedgehurst's skin is destroyed, the spell is broken, and he transforms into a handsome young man.

According to Uther (*ibid.*), the oldest printed version of ATU 441 is to be found in Straparola's collection of stories, *Le Piacevoli Notti* [The Pleasant Nights], first published in Venice in 1551. Straparola's story tells of a childless King and Queen, and of 'one who was born as a pig, but afterwards became a comely youth' (1894: 58). In Straparola's story –

known as *Il re Porco* [The Pig Prince] – three fairies cast spells on the childless Queen so that she bears a son who has beauty, every virtue under the sun, but who is born in the skin of a pig (ibid.: 59). For the disenchantment of The Pig Prince to take place, the fairies deign that he must marry three times. After The Pig Prince’s third marriage, his pig’s skin is removed and destroyed, he is crowned ‘King Pig’, and lives long and happily with his wife. Ziolkowski disagrees with Uther’s provenance for this story, pointing out that ‘Straparola’s “Il re Porco” relates a tale substantially the same as that recounted by the male narrator of *Asinarius* [an anonymous Latin elegiac verse narrative composed c.1200]’, where ‘an ugly animal who weds a princess turns out to be a handsome youth and becomes king when the animal skin in which he has been enveloped is burnt’ (2010: 384). Ziolkowski goes further, suggesting that the animal-bridegroom motif and the general plot of ATU 441 have their roots in a Sanskrit myth named *The Story of Vikramāditya’s Birth*; Ziolkowski’s argument is that – during an unspecified time period – the Sanskrit myth passed into Europe, was divested of its Hindu pedigree, and then suitably altered in order to conform to its new Occidental circumstances (2009: 203, 224). Consequently, the animal-bridegroom transformation motif that is central to the plot of ATU 441 remained, whilst the circumstances of his transformation were adapted to be meaningful to new audiences. This process of adaptation during the transmission of stories is another way of describing a narrative ecotype, as described above.

Aside from Straparola and his influences, we also find other literary versions of ATU 441 published in the late seventeenth century; Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy’s *Prince Marcassin* [Prince Wild Boar] from her *Les Contes des Fées* [Fairy Tales] (1697) features an animal-bridegroom being transformed into a handsome young man at the conclusion of the narrative. Charles Perrault’s contemporaneous version entitled *Riquet à la Houppe* [Riquet with the Tuft] (1697) has similar narrative patterning and motifs, with the exception that the

protagonist, Riquet, is not explicitly described as animal at birth, but is merely described as being hideously ugly. Later, the Grimms' nineteenth century version – known as *Hans My Hedgehog* (trans. Zipes 2002: 361) – follows a similar pattern to that described by Uther. However, the four literary versions of this tale-type differ in two important ways. In the earlier versions from Straparola, Perrault and D'Aulnoy, the childless couple are royalty: Straparola's couple are 'Galeotto, King of Anglia [...] and his wife Ersilia, the daughter of Matthias, King of Hungary' (1894: 58); Perrault describes 'a Queen who was brought to bed of a son so hideously ugly, that it was long disputed whether he had human form' (1791: 75); and finally, D'Aulnoy's story begins with 'a King and a Queen who lived in great sorrow because they had no children' (1892: 481). In the Grimms' version, we are introduced to a farmer and his wife (trans. Zipes 2002: 361), whilst Williamson's oral version begins with a woodcutter and his wife (TAD 36536). The second difference between the various versions of ATU 441 cited above is that the miraculous birth of the animal-bridegroom, or hideous child in Perrault, is intimated by fairies in all but the Grimms' version.

The social position of the protagonist(s) is the first difference that alters the landscape of the narratives from the outset and is one that warrants discussion. If we understand ATU 441 as essentially a transformation narrative, then the fact that Straparola, Perrault, and D'Aulnoy *begin* with the protagonist in an elevated social position is telling. If the beastly child is already a Prince, the transformations of the animal-bridegroom in the earlier versions become biographies of an already privileged child ascending to the zenith of the social hierarchy. The presence of an innate privilege appears to fit well with the literary versions of ATU 441. For example, before his birth into royalty, it is prophesied by the fairies that Straparola's *Il re Porco* 'shall be gifted with every virtue under the sun' (1894: 59); similarly, Perrault's princely *Riquet with the Tuft* should be 'very amiable [...] since he

should be endowed with abundance of wit' (1791: 75); and finally, D'Aulnoy's *Prince Marcassin* will be 'always powerful, full of understanding and of justice' (1892: 481). By the conclusion of the pre-Grimm literary versions of ATU 441, the climactic shedding of the outer animal skin falls flat, somewhat betrayed by the already charmed lives of the protagonists. I show that the somewhat redundant transformations found in the literary versions of ATU 441 stand in stark contrast to the transformation of Williamson's protagonist.

It could be argued that these literary versions behave in this way because they were intended to appeal to certain strata of the social hierarchy at the time of their publication. This is the view expressed by Bottigheimer when she contends that Straparola 'spoke to the longings of a reading public with a taste for stories that would compensate for a dreary daily existence [...] and introduced magic into brief tales that promised wealth' (2002: 132). Perhaps Straparola's audience – like D'Aulnoy's 'literary acquaintances, all titled or wealthy or both' (ibid.: 129) – 'read to one another in dazzling painted and tapestried salons', knowing that they 'differed fundamentally from the humble [...] readership for whom Straparola had composed his rise tales' (ibid.). As for Perrault's tale, closer examination of *Riquet with the Tuft* reveals that the presence of the animal-bridegroom motif *at all* is debatable; Riquet's transformation is made metaphysical when his Princess, 'having made due reflection on the perseverance of her lover, his discretion, and all the good qualities of his mind, his wit and judgement, saw no longer the deformity of his body, nor the ugliness of his face' (1791: 87). That love is indeed blind appears to be the key message from Perrault, whereas in the other literary versions of the story, the transformations into maturity, and inherited titles, are explicitly physical.

In contrast to the tales just mentioned, both the Grimms' and Williamson's versions of ATU 441 begin with childless couples who occupy markedly different positions in society.

The Grimms' *Hans My Hedgehog* casts the childless parents as farmers who 'had plenty of money and property' (trans. Zipes 2002: 361); whereas Williamson's couple are cast as a 'woodcutter and his wife' (TAD 36536) who live on the edge of a forest. According to Zipes, 'though primitive in origin, the folk tale in Germany, as told in the late 18th century and collected by the Grimms in the early 19th, related to and was shaped by feudalism' (1975: 129). From the perspective of the inequitable socio-economic relationship of feudalism, particularly in the Grimms' version, a central theme of the narrative is upward social mobility, rather than the maintenance of the social status quo found in the earlier versions discussed above. However, by the end of the Grimms' *Hans My Hedgehog*, the protagonist is not only transformed into a handsome young man but is also transformed into a monarch. Hans My Hedgehog's animal skin is eventually destroyed by fire, and 'the old King bequeathed his Kingdom to Hans My Hedgehog' (trans. Zipes 2002: 364). Social *mobility*, then, is not the fate of the Grimms' protagonist; his fate involves a transformation from wealthy landowner to the pinnacle of the aristocracy. Unlike Zipes, I do not agree that this upward mobility is necessarily a reaction to the 'loss of family [that] must be compensated by the recreation of a new type of family that incorporates a sense of the Grimms' own bourgeois ethics' (1991: 216). For instance, the final event in the Grimms' *Hans My Hedgehog* involves Hans revealing himself to his father as a King, wherein 'the old man rejoiced and went back with him to his kingdom' (trans. Zipes 2002: 364). Given the son's new position as sovereign, the recreated family can hardly be described as bourgeois. Perhaps Zipes was closer to the mark with his contention cited above about the effect of feudalism on German folklore and the Grimms' collection. Rather than reconciliation into a bourgeois lifestyle, *Hans My Hedgehog's* metamorphosis amounts to a binary shift from ruled to ruler. On closer examination, the Grimms' *Hans My Hedgehog* is

not so very different from the other literary examples of ATU 441 I have described. All four of these narratives share the same basic impetus: the desire for power over others.

To put this impetus into context, it is useful to consider some of the motivations and methods of the authors of these tales. In a letter distributed in 1815, Jacob Grimm expressed his goal to ‘save and collect all the existing songs and tales that can be found among the common German peasantry [...] wherever possible with their very words, ways, and tones’ (cited in Zipes 2002: 26). Moreover, in their preface to the first edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in 1812, the Grimms declare that they will not allow these ‘morsels of poetry to be kept entirely hidden from poor and modest readers’ (cited in Zipes 2014: 42-43). These statements from the Grimms suggest that their intentions were not only to collect their material from the peasantry, but to sell the peasantry’s own cultural expressions back to them, repackaged in printed form. However, research based on documentary evidence from the Grimms’ archives – curated by Wilhelm Grimm’s son Hermann – has shown that many tales were gathered from educated members of the middle-classes residing in towns and cities, even including the Grimms themselves (Kamenetsky 1992: 114). Thompson agrees when he points out that a ‘large number of the tales in Grimm came from educated persons of the Grimms’ own social circle’ (1946: 407). Viewed with this in mind, interpretations of tales like *Hans My Hedgehog*, such as those given above, gain credence. It was the educated elite – the social climbers – who both created and consumed the Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in the first instance. Similarly, the tales printed in Straparola’s *Pleasant Nights* in sixteenth-century Venice were primarily consumed by individuals who could afford to buy them; it was the nobility, along with literate and prosperous merchants and their families, who were in a position to choose to buy books in addition to food (Bottigheimer 2002: 31). Bottigheimer also emphasises another important point about Straparola’s readership; the *Le Piacevoli Notti* were composed and published in a highly

urbanised society and were designed to appeal to a readership of would-be social climbers (ibid.: 17). It is not difficult to imagine similar motivations in D'Aulnoy, given Schacker's contention that D'Aulnoy's 'approach to the *conte de fées* is obviously different from that later valued by the Grimms and the folklorists they inspired', because D'Aulnoy deliberately included the 'dynamics of salon conversation into her fairy tale writing' (2011: 254).

The key point here is that the other extant, and clearly literary, versions of *Hans My Hedgehog* are markedly different in motivation from Williamson's. Although the present discussion does not engage with every known version of this story – such as those recorded in Lithuania, Sweden, Croatia, Iran, Japan, and elsewhere (Uther 2004 Vol. I: 263) – my argument aims to focus on the details of Williamson's version in the context of the Traveller storytelling tradition. In Williamson's narrative, we find that although the central theme of transformation exists, closer examination of *The Hedgehurst* reveals that this story does not share the same impulses as the literary versions described above. For instance, during the metanarrative of Williamson's story, he explains of his version that 'where originally it came from, I don't know [...] I don't think it's a very popular story among the Travellers' (TAD 36536). Williamson goes on to say that he learned the story in his teenage years from an elderly Traveller named Johnnie MacDonald; he explains MacDonald's technique as follows:

It wisnae exactly the story it's the wey he [MacDonald] told it, you know? He told it the right Traveller way, everything was really original, so that they [the audience] could understand it the real way it was told.

(ibid.)

Williamson's perspective here encapsulates the essence of my argument in that the Travellers' stories are meaningful to them as a community because of the *way* that they are told and re-told. Williamson's claim to the originality of the stories and his evocation of the 'right Traveller way' of their telling is a fluent description of the way stories are adapted to

suit a specific cultural milieu. Furthermore, considering Williamson's statement that *The Hedgehurst* story is less popular among Travellers cited above, its inclusion in his repertoire suggests that it has a personal meaning for him. The fact that MacDonald's version of ATU 441 – and consequently Williamson's – bears structural similarities to the literary versions discussed above is unsurprising given the length of time that the literary versions have been circulating in print. Pinpointing where and when the story entered the oral storytelling tradition of the Travellers in Scotland is outside of the remit of this thesis. However, considering these literary versions by way of comparison supports my argument that the Travellers engage with well-known international tale-types, borrowing themes and motifs to craft their own unique versions of the tales. Like Robertson, it is Williamson's narratological competence and social location that facilitates the meaningful analysis of his version of the story.

As was noted in the brief synopsis above, Williamson's version of ATU 441 is broadly similar in plot to the international versions recorded by Aarne-Thompson-Uther, and the same can be said for its similarity to the literary versions of Straparola, Perrault, D'Aulnoy and the Grimms. Essentially, we are introduced to a previously childless couple who miraculously conceive an animal-human hybrid child, and that child goes on to marry a princess and transform into a handsome man. Williamson frames his story in his opening line, placing the narrative at 'the edge of the forest' (TAD 36536). An important distinction to note in Williamson's Nackian version of ATU 441 – as with Robertson's and Williamson's other stories discussed above – is recognising the situatedness of the narratives when seeking plausible interpretations. At the highest level, Williamson's narrative is undoubtedly a version of the international tale-type ATU 441, and Williamson is undoubtedly a strong tradition-bearer operating within the Traveller storytelling tradition. This means that we are dealing with a story that has meaning to heterogeneous cultures

across the globe, as well as with Williamson as an active proponent of oral narrative. In my preceding analyses of Traveller storytelling, I showed that under close examination – and with proper contextualisation – nuances within Traveller storytelling can infuse stories with deeper, culturally significant meanings. The same can be said for Williamson’s version of ATU 441 – *Hans My Hedgehog*. As Röhrich reminds us, ‘only what is important and affects people directly enters folk narrative and tradition. Only what is meaningful is passed on’ (1991: 13).

From the outset, Williamson’s *The Hedgehurst* is predicated in terms of boundaries. As mentioned above, one key aspect of Williamson’s narrative that differentiates it from the literary versions is the childless couple’s position in society. The literary versions cited above all cast the parents as belonging to the upper echelons of the societies in which the narrative takes place. Williamson’s woodcutter couple, on the other hand, are not only cast as belonging to the ‘lower orders’ of society but they are also physically placed on the margins, with their home at the edge of the forest. Moreover, the childless couple are without social connections; unlike the Grimms’ farmer who ‘went into town with the other farmers’ (trans. Zipes 2002: 361), Williamson’s couple lead solitary lives in the forest. We are told that the wife was ‘often left on her own [...] because every day her husband was away cutting wood’, and when the husband implores his wife to “‘get someone up from the village! Get a woman or [?]’”, his wife exclaims, “‘I don’t want a woman [...] I don’t want anybody, I want a baby’” (TAD 36536). Williamson’s story takes place in a distinctly different social environment from the other versions of ATU 441 that I have introduced. Like the Grimms’ version, we are introduced to the protagonists in a rural setting, and the description that Williamson provides evokes a sense of social isolation. It goes without saying that tapestried salons and royal courts would be utterly alien environments to Williamson’s Traveller audiences. Furthermore, as Neat observes of the Travellers he

collaborated with, the ‘values and satisfactions of the farmer are not theirs’ (1996: 224). As a result, *The Hedgehurst’s* miraculous birth is situated in a socio-economic environment that exists in contradistinction to the earlier literary versions of *Hans My Hedgehog*. The protagonists of Williamson’s story thereby embody the marginalised lives that so many Travellers experience. The narrative is situated in a setting that speaks to the Travellers’ relationship with their environment and childlessness is depicted as emotionally painful, speaking to the importance of family in the Traveller context.

In his version of the story, Williamson negotiates this marginality through the journey of his Hedgehurst. As opposed to the literary versions of ATU 441, Williamson’s Hedgehurst loses his family when, after he left the family home, his ‘mother took to bed with a broken heart for her wee son and she died’ (TAD 36536). Meanwhile, the Hedgehurst’s father ‘married again and moved away to another country’ (ibid.) after his wife’s death. For the Hedgehurst, there is no reconciliation with his family, particularly with the father who resented him from the outset; we are told that Hedgehurst’s father ‘despised him and hated the look of him’ and referred to his son simply as ‘beast’ (ibid.). Conversely, the Grimms’ Hans is eventually reunited with his father who was initially ‘happy at the idea of getting rid of him’ (trans. Zipes 2002: 361). Similarly, in Straparola, Perrault and D’Aulnoy, the conclusion of the stories sees the protagonists ultimately embedded into a household, in one way or another. In this way, Williamson’s Hedgehurst is very much the individual. It is clear that Williamson himself places value in the sense of individualism and freedom that the Traveller lifestyle affords a person; ‘among the Travelling People in this country’, Williamson explains, ‘every family is an individual family, even though they are connected [...] there’s no bosses, no law, no king, no nothing [...] everyone goes his own way’ (cited in Braid 2002: 32). Similar sentiments are expressed by Bryce Whyte when he tells us that his sons ‘don’t like workin’ under a boss, they work for thirsels!’ (TAD 76669). Whyte’s

statement here is a stark example of the interaction between active or strong tradition-bearers and Traveller culture at large; the values that are expressed in discussions with outsiders manifest themselves in the stories that the Travellers share. Whether or not Whyte was familiar with Williamson's story we will probably never know, but the essence of the story provides valuable insights into the way that Travellers negotiate their inner identities and their outer worlds.

This individualistic, self-sufficient ethos is expressed within Williamson's narrative. After leaving home, the Hedgehurst establishes his own dwelling within the forest, described as 'the loveliest house built of wood that you ever saw' (TAD 36536). When the lost King arrives, Hedgehurst tells the King that "I need help from no-one [...] I've done all this myself" (ibid.). The Hedgehurst's solitary journey into the forest becomes significant from this perspective; the sense of trepidation and danger usually associated with forests does not exist in Williamson's story, or indeed in any of the literary versions under discussion. Instead, the forest represents an environment where the animal-human hybrid can thrive. For Zipes, the forest can also be a place where 'society's conventions no longer hold true. It is a source of natural right, thus the starting place where social wrongs can be righted' (2002: 67). A similar reorientation of the forest comes from Schmiesing, where she sees *Hans My Hedgehog* achieving 'a level of activity and success in the forest that he would not have realised in the socially oppressive environments of the town or his parents' home' (2014: 126). These conceptualisations of the forest are especially pertinent for Williamson's protagonist given that he is effectively an orphan who has no recourse to parental support. Moreover, as we will see, Williamson's protagonist ultimately transcends these perceived social wrongs, and the forest becomes not only the place where he thrives, but the place where he belongs.

The sense of innate social hierarchies that exists in the literary versions of the story are absent in Williamson's version; the idea that this hierarchy can be overcome or usurped is similarly absent. The socially determined boundaries that exist in the literary versions are of little concern for Williamson's Hedgehurst, an attitude that becomes apparent when the Hedgehurst encounters the lost King. "I am a King", exclaims the King who is lost in the forest, to which the Hedgehurst testily replies, "And I am a King! [...] And I have not lost my way: you are now in my Kingdom and you are no longer a king to me" (TAD 36536). The boundary of the forest that Williamson establishes from the outset of his story is transcended as the story progresses towards its conclusion. At the conclusion of Williamson's story, the Hedgehurst does not inherit or claim ownership of the Kingdom that he was instrumental in restoring through the safe return of the lost King. On the contrary, the Hedgehurst bestows wealth upon the King, giving him 'some of his fine animals' (ibid.), and returns to his own self-made Kingdom in the forest with the princess. Smith also recognises this sense of boundaries being transcended in the Travellers' oral traditions; discussing Jeannie Robertson's ballad *The Gypsy Laddie* – which tells the story of an aristocratic Lady that 'runs away' with several Gypsy men after being enchanted by their singing – Smith observes that the 'narrative is clearly shaped on the frontier between settled and Traveller society' (2001: 148). Smith goes on to suggest that the ballad of *The Gypsy Laddie* is a 'passionate lament and protest on behalf of the Traveller culture which transcends rather than transgresses the social order, because it aspires to the freedom of nature' (ibid.).

This insight from Smith is a useful way to segue into the second key differentiation between Williamson's story and the other versions that I introduced above. I have demonstrated already that the relationship Travellers have with the natural environment is based on respect and harmony; for example, in the story concerning the old cow's horn and its recycling into a spoon. That the narrative journey in Williamson's *The Hedgehurst* is

situated in a rural environment is, again, unsurprising. The plot of the story and the actions of the protagonist are predicated on the breaking of boundaries. The question that presents itself is: what is it that intimates this peculiar story and the protagonist's affirmation of his inner identity? The childless couple's wish for a child is the impetus of the narrative in all the above versions of ATU 441 and this is indeed the first motif identified by Uther (2004 Vol. I: 263). However, the *way* the miraculous birth occurs is an important consideration in the context of Williamson's version. I argue that the boundaries being broken in Williamson's narrative stand in stark contradistinction to the other versions of ATU 441. The central impetus of Williamson's version speaks to an affinity with a natural order that dispenses with hierarchical power relations. In Straparola, D'Aulnoy, Perrault and Williamson, the birth of the animal-human hybrid is the result of an intervention by fairies. Unfortunately, in the Grimms' version, we are given no explicit explanation as to how the previously childless couple suddenly become pregnant and are delivered of a supernatural baby. In the Grimms' version of the story, the mother does accuse her husband of cursing the family – ““You see how you cursed us!”” (trans. Zipes 2002: 361) the mother exclaims, and it could be argued that the curse is laid on the father as punishment for his pride. When the father goes into town, the other farmers often make fun of him for his childlessness, and this makes him angry enough to ask for a child, ““even if it's a hedgehog”” (ibid.). It is the father who has ultimate agency in the monstrous birth, and from this perspective, it is the reflection of the father's wish to vicariously ascend to power through his progeny.

In Williamson's version, it is a fairy that intimates the birth of the Hedgehurst, and in this sense, his version diverges significantly from the Grimms'. Williamson's story begins to have more in common with the earlier versions of ATU 441 that I have used for comparison. Williamson explains that fairies are ‘part of an Other World for Travellers that they love’, and he goes on to illustrate that the ‘people [fairies] of this Other World have the freedom,

have the power, they are immune from persecution' (1985: 15). In 'The Hedgehurst', the fairy that intimates the Hedgehurst's birth is described as wicked, yet the boy is born with 'two of the loveliest blue eyes you ever saw' (TAD 36536). The reader will recall the virtues that are bestowed on the monstrous births by the fairies in the earlier literary versions of ATU 441; true to Traveller style, the Hedgehurst's virtue is not described using abstract concepts such as wit, or justice. Instead, the indicator of the Hedgehurst's virtue is literally written on his face.

As we have experienced before in Stanley Robertson's narrative style, Williamson's stories also include elements of dramatic irony. Describing the Hedgehurst, Williamson explains that 'as the days went on the wee boy grew and the more he grew the uglier he got' (ibid.), yet his inner beauty is betrayed by his lovely blue eyes. Moreover, to facilitate Hedgehurst's transformation at the conclusion of the story, Williamson introduces a 'henwife'. Discussing the role of henwives, Williamson says that 'even in the stories, old-fashioned stories wi henwives [...] there were nae bad henwives', going on to explain that people 'went to them for cures, and they went to them for tasks' (TAD 30617). The wickedness of the fairy is contrasted with the benevolence of the henwife when, at the conclusion of the story, the henwife gives the Hedgehurst's bride 'a wee pitcher [and] no ordinary pitcher' (TAD 36536). The Hedgehurst's bride is instructed by the henwife to 'take this pitcher of cold clear water and you'll throw it over him – if it's a spell it'll be broken forever' (ibid.). The spell is indeed broken – "'Darling'", shouts Hedgehurst after the magical pitcher has been discharged over him, "'you've broken the spell that was cast on me many, many years ago'" (ibid.).

In this way, *The Hedgehurst* is framed by two supernatural interventions: on the one hand, the wicked fairy that cast a spell on the Hedgehurst at the beginning of the story is cast by Williamson as the agent behind his monstrous birth that ironically bestows him with

virtue; on the other, the benevolent henwife provides his deliverance from his curse and allows him to return to his kingdom in the forest. Williamson explains that the ‘people [fairies] of the Other World are part of nature – same as the Travelling folk’ (1985: 15). In this sense, the purportedly wicked fairy – with the help of the benevolent henwife – is the ultimate arbiter of the Hedgehurst’s fate. More broadly, the Hedgehurst’s return to nature, where he can be immune from persecution, is facilitated by two agents that transcend boundaries and challenge urban sensibilities. Discussing D’Aulnoy’s animal-human hybrid stories, Seifert argues that such stories explore ‘what might be gained from a hybrid subjectivity in which human reason is conjoined with animal instinct and human vice is counterbalanced by animal virtue’ (2011: 257). Seifert’s perspective here speaks of the animal-human protagonist’s exploration of an innate affinity with nature, and this is something that is affirmed in the story of the Hedgehurst: the Hedgehurst is at once passive, as both the narrative intimation and resolution are enacted by peripheral characters; at the same time, he is an active participant in his story as the builder of his sanctuary in the forest.

Perhaps it is Williamson’s *individual* Traveller identity that is being expressed in *The Hedgehurst*, and the meaning for him is therefore personalised. Braid has observed that when discussing Traveller life and culture, Williamson often generalises beyond his own personal perspectives (2002: 33). However, as Braid goes on to assert, he has ‘come to trust in [Williamson’s] observations and portrayals of Traveller life because they have been corroborated time and again’ (ibid.). From this perspective – viewed within the context of my previous readings and the testimonies of other Travellers quoted above – *The Hedgehurst* and my interpretations of the story are both personal and representative of a broader Traveller identity. Williamson’s Hedgehurst transcends boundaries; the situatedness of the narrative and the deeds of its eponymous central protagonist collaborate to reveal this central theme of the story. Unlike the literary versions that involve a physical transformation

that results in the usurpation of the reigning monarch, Williamson's Hedgehurst does not forsake his forest, or his identity. Instead, the Hedgehurst's physical transformation becomes incidental; his journey from birth to maturity is better understood as a symbolic representation of the marginalised individual overcoming adversity, transcending socio-economic boundaries and doing so as a self-assured individual that is in tune with the natural environment. The ideological commitment of the Hedgehurst is therefore aligned with the storyteller and the experiences of a real social environment where ascension to positions of power is neither desired nor sought. All the while, the sentiment of Williamson's story is tempered by the grim realities often faced by Travellers. In a song of his own composition, *The Hawker's Lament*, Williamson captures this sentiment by evoking the deep social trauma of international warfare, setting such conflicts against the familiarity of a Traveller lifestyle. In this protest song, Williamson juxtaposes the Travellers' sacrifices during wartime with the closure of many of the Travellers' traditional camping places by the mid-1960s (Williamson 1994: 272-273). His verse captures not only the loss of life in the service of the national interest, but also the loss of *lifestyle* that Williamson witnessed first-hand in post-war Scotland. The futility of war is expressed here from a quintessentially Nackian perspective:

But what did they fight for and why did they die?  
 For freedom to wander round.  
 But where can we wander, we have no place to go,  
 For they've closed all our campin' grounds down.  
 Though we fought for wir country and we fought for wir king  
 An some gave their life for this land,  
 It's out there in Dunkirk it's many they fell

With their blood mixed up with the sand.

[...]

But maybe someday when we're gone from this world,

An' we're buried deep down in the ground,

Will God make us welcome, will he give us a home?

Or will he tell us just to keep movin' on?

– Duncan Williamson, 'The Hawker's Lament'

(TAD 68649 & Williamson 1994: 273)

## Summary

On the surface, the stories discussed above have been shown to engage with themes of persecution, familial bonds, and social and cultural otherness. However, we have seen that both Robertson's and Williamson's stories explore wider social and environmental concerns. Robertson's ironically cast Traveller-Judge becomes the symbolic embodiment of the virtue of not judging people based on surface appearances. Meanwhile, the Traveller child with artisanal aspirations in Williamson's narrative about the cow's horn encourages us to make use of what is provided by nature, and to avoid the trappings of living solely for the pursuit of material gain. As Leitch has pointed out, 'the material culture of the travelling [sic] people demonstrates a marvellous ingenuity and awareness of natural resources' (1988: xxviii). The environmental awareness of the Travellers identified by Leitch is playfully represented in Williamson's narrative, when the Traveller child imagines a spoon within the old cow's horn. From this perspective, the focus of the story is shifted away from the Travellers 'naturally' giving up their child and is refocused on the Travellers' relationship with their environment. This may go some way to explaining why the child in the story was so willingly given away; the meaning of the story lies in the ethos of the young boy as a

representative of Traveller culture. The fecundity of the Traveller couple is aligned with the fecundity that Travellers recognise in nature. Similarly, Robertson's story utilises the outwardly disfigured and morally corrupted judge to highlight the pervasive rectitude of the Travellers. Or, as Robertson puts it, certain stories can 'give a very materialistic training [...] but they dinnae hae the deeper wisdoms' (TAD 50189).

Within these stories, there is an intangible yet indelible force at work. As noted above, we must not infer from these stories that Traveller identity is considered to be genetic. Instead, the figurative meanings within the stories must be sought to better understand their functions. Considered in this way, the question of a genetically inherited Traveller identity can be reconceptualised. What the stories explore is not some metaphysical connection between Travellers and their offspring that stands for a predetermined Traveller identity. Rather, the stories ask us to consider how we act, and how we interact with others and our environment. All three stories do indeed explore perennial truths and the inevitable dualities anticipated by McDermitt. What the above analyses and interpretations demonstrate is the singular way in which Traveller storytellers go about negotiating such themes. Furthermore, the stories discussed above function to transmit codified information that affirms a collective cultural identity and ethos. As Williamson so eloquently put it at the top of this chapter, 'as long as they are there in their stories, they're alive. We can bring them back' (cited in McDermitt 1980: 141). This ancestral evocation is the heart of it then; the seemingly anachronistic worldviews negotiated through narrative can be viewed as manifestations of the accumulated wisdom of generations of highly adaptable and successful Travellers.

At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that deep familial bonds in the Travellers' value system are transposed within both Robertson's and Williamson's stories to expose the underlying Traveller identity strategies. Traveller identity is fixed, while the changeable socio-cultural conditions are used as a platform on which to negotiate anxieties around loss

of identity. In Robertson's story, the Travellers' materially subaltern position is retained throughout the stories to elicit a more meaningful reconciliation when the Traveller parents are delivered from the vengeance of an unforgiving State. Ironically, the Traveller child is abandoned *to facilitate* this reconciliation, as opposed to literary abandonments where the absent child facilitates a corporeal and material sense of reconciliation. We also encountered this ironic trope in Williamson's story of the Hedgehurst, where an apparently malevolent agent intimates the protagonist's fortuitous return to his natural environment by bestowing him with a deep pastoral identity. This type of dramatic irony is a staple feature in Travellers' tales and one which allows sophisticated meanings to be embedded within the stories.

By deploying a comparative methodology, I showed how Traveller storytelling traditions contextualise and adapt internationally known tales and instil them with their own nuanced meanings. I showed that Williamson's version of ATU 441 – *Hans My Hedgehog* holds similarities with literary versions of the story, but also that Williamson blended motifs and characters to produce a unique Traveller version of the tale. As Ziolkowski points out, 'we have an obligation to approach each and every story with an open eye to possible orality lurking behind literature as well as to possible literature behind orality' (2010: 395).

Williamson's inclusion of the fairy that intimates the Hedgehurst's monstrous birth certainly aligns his story with older literary versions of ATU 441. Ultimately though, the combined agency of the fairy and the henwife in the Hedgehurst's fate is testament to the orality of this tale in the Traveller tradition. And it is in this oral tradition that we have witnessed the unique cultural identities of Scotland's Travellers being expressed. To ensure the plausibility of my interpretations, I shared the present chapter with a Traveller collaborator, Cathie Laing. After reading the interpretations presented here, Cathie remarked that 'what you are returning to the travellers [sic], is a sense of place in this world, a balance', before going on

to comment that ‘you seem to have seen into the souls of these people’ (2020: Appendix I). Cathie concludes that ‘from this old traveller [sic], from my heart, from the intuition of my soul, you have it right’ (ibid.).<sup>12</sup> Deeply entrenched familial bonds, a close affinity with the natural environment and a sophisticated awareness of relationships with wider Scottish society are the hallmarks of the stories that the Travellers continue to share. Although these hallmarks have been described and recognised in Traveller communities before now, my analyses above have demonstrated explicitly the ways in which the cultural identities of the Travellers manifest themselves during the transmission of oral narrative.

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<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, Cathie was unable to be directly involved in the present thesis but provided me with much appreciated feedback on my written work. I extend my sincerest gratitude to Cathie for her invaluable insights and generosity over the years.

## Chapter 4

### The Burkers

Ochancee, lads, I darena tell,  
 But if I was you, I'd rise and run.  
 Do you see that bottle o' chloroform?  
 It will be your death, oh, before the morn.

– (Geordie Stewart TAD 3817)

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, close examination and contextualisation of Travellers' stories are potent allies when seeking meanings within the stories. Both personal and collective cultural identity strategies are at work; the stories of the strong tradition-bearers I examined display themes that other members of the Travelling communities could identify with. In this way, cultural expressions from the Traveller storytelling traditions ventriloquise the sentiments and worldviews of the broader Traveller milieu. So far, I have focused my inquiries on the inner lives of the Travellers, and how these inner identities manifest themselves within the stories that they share. This is a theme that I return to in my subsequent chapters. In the present chapter, I scrutinise an intriguing external factor that has had a demonstrable impact on Traveller storytelling. The Travellers' oral history and storytelling traditions are replete with references to the so-called 'Burkers'. The term 'Burker' is a reference to William Burke and his murderous activities as a provider of cadavers to Edinburgh's medical colleges in the early nineteenth century. I begin this chapter with a brief survey of the salient points of Burke's activities to contextualise the term 'Burker'. This survey clarifies how the term itself is understood in the Travellers' traditions and is contrasted with more mainstream representations of Burke and his

associates. I show how a combination of factors affected the way that Burkean anxiety penetrated the consciousness of the Travellers and settled population alike.<sup>13</sup> The aim here is to gain a clearer understanding of the impact that such heinous crimes had on Scotland's collective imagination. I first provide contextualisation for the analysis of the Burker accounts that pervade the cultural memory of the Travellers. I go on to give a general synopsis of the Burker stories and present an indicative sample of how the Burker stories continue to manifest themselves to the present day.

The term Burkers relates to a group of individuals associated with the activities of the infamous William Burke, who, along with others, murdered people to supply bodies to the burgeoning anatomy schools of early nineteenth-century Scotland. Marginalised individuals and communities were perceived to be particularly vulnerable to such practices, the perception being that they would be far less likely to be missed than members of mainstream society (John Stewart TAD 75777; Braid 2002: 79). The fear and anxiety associated with Burkers has percolated through generations of Travellers; in one story involving her mother, Betsy Whyte explains that 'ma mother had been brought up [to believe] the Travellers wis terrified tae live wi the country people because of fear of Burkers, o' gettin' Burkit [abducted] through the night' (TAD 63443). Elsewhere, Maggie Stewart tells a story regarding her father that involves Burkers; in this story, the father stops to drink at a spring and sees the reflection of 'a Burker stande [standing], he see'd him, in the water, and he got feart [afraid] ken?' (TAD 10224). It turns out that the Burker was known to Stewart's father, but he had not recognised him as he was dressed in black for a dance. This portrait of the Burkers as spectres that lurk in reflections, with latent violence, is an indication of how they

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<sup>13</sup> The adjective 'Burkean' could have other connotations, the main one being a connection to the eighteenth-century politician and author, Edmund Burke. For instance, one biographer observes of Burke that 'quite different positions have been supported by Burkean wisdom, and proponents of new ones continue to find vindication in citing it' (Langford 2021: online). I use the term Burkean here and henceforth to refer specifically to the Traveller stories involving Burkers that are under analysis.

appear in the stories. These early examples are tangible evidence of both the historic and contemporary anxieties that Travellers harbour regarding both the mainstream population and Burkers. More recently, Davie Donaldson reflects that ‘my Great-Granny and Grandad – were getting chased by Burkers when they were camped out. And they were going to kill them if they caught them’ (2018a: online). Donaldson goes on to explain that ‘that was in the 1940s’, elaborating that mainstream communities must recognise ‘what happened to our community historically – [and] to actually realise the impact it has had on our community and *how that plays out today*’ (ibid., my italics). As a member of the current generation of Scottish Travellers, Donaldson’s conceptualisation of the Burkers provides an invaluable insight into the way that the Travelling communities were affected by Burke and his crimes. Additionally, a contemporary rendering drawn from the Burker tradition gives us clues as to why these macabre accounts continue to influence the current character of one of Scotland’s most marginalised communities. Donaldson’s own account will be explored in more detail towards the conclusion of this chapter.

My purpose here is to problematise the notion that the Travellers’ Burker stories are simply narrative manifestations of a persecution complex. Viewed from a certain perspective, this underlying theme of persecution can certainly be perceived. However, I argue that on closer inspection these stories are more complex than basic expressions or warnings about the threat posed by outsiders. Moreover, my analyses continue to demonstrate the sophistication of the narrative traditions being considered in this thesis. As has been my method throughout the previous analyses, I engage with both the perspectives of Travellers and the extant scholarship surrounding the Travellers’ Burker tradition. The Burker tradition represents not simply a negotiation of an understandable persecution anxiety, it also has significance for the narrators in terms of depriving them of that which they cherish most, their liberty. I argue that the fundamental loss of liberty is the central

thread that connects the Travellers' Burke accounts. I argue further that the loss of liberty negotiated within these narratives amounts to a resistance against ideological contamination. My arguments present further evidence of the utility of close readings of oral narrative to our understandings of their meanings. It must be stated from the outset that I do not dispute that Travellers in the past have suffered from criminal attacks and molestations by the medical establishment. It is outwith the remit of this thesis to test the veracity of any of the stories under analysis.

#### **4.1 Murder as a Commodity – William Burke & Co.**

The desecration of graves and the mutilation of the body after death has serious ethical, moral and eschatological ramifications in any human society. It is not my purpose to explore these ramifications here, only to briefly outline the historical context in which we encounter William Burke. By the time Burke arrived on the scene in Scotland, the association of cadavers as prerequisites for the advancement of medical science was centuries old. James IV's recognition and patronage of the *Edinburgh Guild of Surgeons and Barbers* in 1506 meant that the Guild were allowed to dissect the bodies of executed criminals, thereby establishing the relationship between medical science, the ruling elite and the dissection of cadavers (Richardson 1987: 32). Throughout the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century, the burgeoning scientific interest in anatomy and physiology prompted an increasing demand for human subjects for dissection. It was felt that the surgeons in training would not become qualified to operate on live subjects without direct experience handling human bodies.

This demand led to so-called 'Resurrectionists', or body snatchers, illegally exhuming newly buried bodies to supply the anatomists with subjects for dissection. Richardson

describes an atmosphere where ‘every buried corpse in the country was vulnerable to the predations of the body snatchers [...] leading to immense popular opposition’ (ibid.: xv). This opposition was also expressed publicly by a Select Committee appointed to investigate the way the subjects for dissection were being obtained. The report of the Select Committee, published in *The Scotsman* in 1828, claimed that ‘the law gives no security either to rich or poor that their relations are safe in the grave; and as the law, however strictly enforced, has, as is proved, the effect merely of enhancing the price of subjects’ (1828: 579). Published several months before Burke’s arrest, the Committee’s report goes on to predict that ‘it is insinuated that [Resurrectionists] would hardly stickle at committing murder for the sake of the money’ (ibid.). It was not until The Anatomy Act of 1832 – an act which legislated for the medical use of cadavers – that an end was put to the trade in ill-gotten bodies for dissection. More importantly, the provisions of The Anatomy Act meant that anatomists were responsible for the interment of the body after dissection. Consequentially, the corpse, as Rosner puts it, ‘while still a commodity, retained its connections to the community from which it had come’ (2010: 266).

As predicted by the Committee’s report cited above, during the years 1827-28 in Edinburgh, William Burke, Helen M’Dougal, Margaret Hare and William Hare were responsible for the murders of sixteen individuals to supply bodies for dissection. The method of murder was to render the victims insensible with alcohol, then smother them to prevent any damage to the body. The victims’ bodies were then be sold to anatomy schools that were desperate for subjects for dissection. This method of murder became known as ‘Burking’, an important phrase that I return to during my analyses of the Burkers of the Traveller tradition. Of the four individuals associated with the murders, only Burke was found guilty and consequently executed in 1829. One contemporary writer, Thomas Ireland, observed that ‘murder perpetrated in such a manner, upon such a system, with such an object

or intent [...] utterly transcends and beggars every thing [sic] in the shape of tragedy' (1829: 1). Quite so: subsequent generations of writers have grappled with the unprecedented crimes committed by Burke and his associates. For example, body snatching and cadavers were ubiquitous features in *Blackwood's Magazine* throughout the nineteenth century (Rosner 2010: 3); Alexander Leighton aimed at 'narrating a series of tragedies unprecedented in the history of mankind' (1861: iii) in *The Court of Cacus; or, the Story of Burke and Hare* (1861); later, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Body Snatcher* (1884) echoed the activities of Burke and the anatomists of Edinburgh whom he supplied; the twentieth century saw similar narrative efforts by William Roughead in *Burke and Hare* (1921), and on stage with James Bridie's play *The Anatomist* (1931); the twenty-first century has already seen John Landis' cinematic rendition, *Burke and Hare* (2010), yet another narrative account in Owen Dudley Edwards' *The True Story of the Infamous Burke and Hare* (2014), and *The Edinburgh Dungeon* entertainment venue currently features an exhibition centred on Burke and Hare ('Greyfriar's Kirkyard' 2022: online). Rather more disturbingly, a pocketbook alleged to be made from Burke's skin can be found in the *Surgeon's Hall Museum* in Edinburgh (2019, online). As we can see from these examples – which are by no means exhaustive – there remains a fascination with Burke's crimes. This fascination spans historical inquiry, artistic expression and a presumably lucrative enterprise within the Scottish tourist industry.

Aside from fictional representations, the crimes of Burke and his associates and Edinburgh's medical profession also affected the Scottish psyche in very real terms. Writing in *The Scotsman* in 1829, an anonymous columnist predicted that Burke's name 'will stand conspicuous – it will mark an era in the black record of human delinquency, and future ages will shudder at his horrid deeds, and fling back their curses on the name' (1829: 62). This prophetic statement rings true in light of the examples cited above, with the possible exception of Landis' (2010) comedic cinematic interpretation. Simon Pegg, who plays

Burke in the film, insists that ‘it’s not a horror. It’s not even a horror comedy. It’s a comedy, if anything a romantic comedy. It just so happens to be about two mass murderers’ (2010: online). The idea that Burke’s atrocities can be translated into a comic caper onscreen is somewhat perplexing; for instance, it is difficult to imagine the same treatment being given to the story of any other notorious serial killers and then flippantly sold to the viewing public. The enduring influence that Burke, and the willing anatomists he supplied with subjects, has had on Scottish culture is curious. According to McCracken-Flesher, Scottish culture’s continuing fascination with Burke’s crimes has ‘resisted integration for an entire community, and cut its way into cultural memory such that Scottish society continues to wrestle with it’ (2012: 22).

McCracken-Flesher puts this lack of integration, and a subsequent sense of closure, down to the way that the shocking crimes of Burke were handled after his execution in 1829. For instance, Doctor Robert Knox – the prestigious anatomist to whom Burke was supplying subjects – was conspicuously silent after the events of 1828-29. Some years later, Knox’s biographer remarked that Knox ‘could not, with 400 pupils around him, bear to see empty tables’, but he also offers evidence that challenges any liability of a ‘wilful oversight on Knox’s part to the *modus operandi* of Burke and Hare’ (Lonsdale 1870: 92-93). This bias towards the good character of Knox is not surprising given that this biographer was his pupil and colleague, Henry Lonsdale. Moreover, Lonsdale’s tacit advocacy for the illegitimate acquisition of bodies is abundantly clear during the very same pages: ‘the law virtually proclaimed that the surgeon should possess aptitude and powers as well as a formal license’, bemoans Lonsdale, ‘yet the only mode of acquiring that skill, namely, from dissections of the dead clandestinely obtained, was in the criminal court held to be a misdemeanour’ (ibid.: 62). Lonsdale’s final exoneration of his guileless mentor exemplifies his bias; Lonsdale explains that had Knox been receiving the victims personally, his ‘keen eye, equalling that

of a French detective, would most probably have penetrated the veil that hid the doings of these monsters' (ibid.: 98).

Unfortunately for Knox, Burke's published confession offers a different account of their transactions. Whilst awaiting execution, Burke divulged to three court officials that Knox was present during the delivery of the first corpse, authorised the payment and 'asked no questions as to how the body had been obtained' (cited in Roughead 1921: 261; *The Times* 1829: 4). On delivery of the second body, Knox 'approved of its being so fresh, but did not ask any questions' (ibid.). Despite any questions around the veracity of Burke's published account, Knox's portrayal in the contemporary press – coupled with his refusal to give his own account – gave rise to the feeling that he was somehow complicit in the murders. For example, in an article published in *The Lancet* medical journal in 1829, one witness to the affair reported that Knox 'had dealings with him [William Hare] for the procuring of dead bodies; he also had had dealings with Burke' ('The Late Horrible Murders' 1829: 426). Elsewhere, the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* of 7 January 1829 questions whether one victim of Burke's could 'fail to be recognised as a murdered man, by a body of scientific individuals, to whose close inspection his corse [corpse] was subjected' (cited in McCracken-Flesher 2012: 36). The perception in the popular consciousness that Knox was complicit in the murders is nowhere more succinctly expressed than in a contemporaneous rhyme:

Doon the close and up the stair  
 Butt and ben wi Burke and Hare  
 Burke's the butcher, Hare's the thief  
 And Knox the boy that buys the beef!

(cited in Maclaren 2000: 395)

Dudley Edwards argues that not only was Knox complicit in the murders but that he ‘simply did not regard the Burke and Hare murders as criminal’ (1980: 135). Edwards’ rationale for this argument rests on Knox’s opinions from his published works; in *The Races of Men* (1850), Knox’s racist attitude is palpable when he considers ‘the presence of three sections of the Celtic race’ living in Great Britain and ‘how to dispose of them’ (1850: 253). Considering this stance, Edwards deduces, Knox would view the murder of derelicts for the advancement of science as a positively enlightened method (1980: 135). It is ironic that Knox’s attitude to Scotland’s Gaelic population, which, probably unbeknownst to Knox, would include Travellers, is equally odious: ‘look at Wales, look at Caledonia’, Knox implores, ‘the race must be forced from the soil’ (1850: 253). From this perspective, the Travellers’ fear of the medical profession – or ‘outsiders’ – does not seem so irrational. Equally, whether or not the Travellers’ Burker stories were influenced or even inspired by the racist attitudes of elites such as Knox we are never likely to know. Nevertheless, the link between an authoritative, professional medical establishment and murder was consequently established in the popular consciousness.

McCracken-Flesher concludes that the activities of Burke and Knox are an unresolvable social trauma for Scotland, contending that telling stories are a means to alleviating such trauma (2012: 23). A macabre fascination with Burke’s crimes, the establishment’s complicity, and the method of murder used has penetrated the collective imagination of Scotland’s Travellers. The narratives of Scotland’s Travellers appear to have escaped the notice of McCracken-Flesher when she notes that ‘perhaps Burke and Hare can be situated in the dubious historicism of Scotland’s tourist culture because they no longer carry the load of meaning they have borne for almost two hundred years’ (ibid.: 195). Furthermore, authors and editors in the popular press were satirising Burke and Knox as early as 1832. One striking example is ‘The Philosophy of Burking’ (1832), published in *Fraser’s Magazine*

(1830-1869); here, the author, known only as ‘A Modern Pythagorean’, describes Burke as ‘one of the most ardent friends of science the world ever saw’ (‘The Philosophy of Burking’ 1832: 65). The Modern Pythagorean comes to this conclusion after characterising Burke’s activities as based on Burke’s philosophical commitment to advancing the science of anatomy, no matter the personal sacrifices that he had to make. The Modern Pythagorean’s tongue-in-cheek account of Burke’s ‘philosophy’ is an early indication of the way that Burke’s story passed into mainstream media; lampooning Burke and his motivation to murder is one way of reconciling the trauma in the minds of the everyday reader. Not so in the minds of the Travellers, where the stories of Burke and Knox *do* retain meaning and persist within their storytelling traditions to the present day. Both here and in Chapter 6, I provide contemporary examples of Burkean narratives to reaffirm this point.

## **4.2 Burkers in the Travellers’ Tradition – A Structural Approach**

Henderson believes that the influence of Burke’s activities on Traveller culture should be understood as a manifestation of the threat of persecution felt by Travellers throughout the centuries, and to this day. For Henderson, ‘we must probably look further back in history in order to understand the deeper-lying reasons for this persecution complex’ (2004: 230).

Considering the evidence of persecution that I reviewed in TSAS and elsewhere, it is hardly surprising that the Travellers have developed a certain amount of distrust regarding members of the settled population. Henderson cites the law against being an ‘Egyptian’ – or wanderer, vagabond, or tinsmith of no fixed abode – that existed in seventeenth century Scotland as one plausible root of this complex (1995: 2636). The reader will recall the case of James MacPherson from the previous chapter who was hanged at Banff in 1700 merely for ‘being a Traveller’. Henderson may be correct in suggesting that the real fear of premeditated murder

has percolated down through generations of Travellers and crystallised as an emotionally significant element of Traveller culture. As I suggested in Chapter 1, recorded instances of resentment towards Scotland's Travellers appear to coincide with the rapid industrialisation of Scotland sometime after 1750. With this industrialisation came modernisation and the usefulness of itinerant tradespeople and news-bringers consequently waned. The Travellers' lifestyles and services became anachronisms; the century 1850-1950 also saw the Traveller population decimated by global wars and their lifestyles rejected by rising social expectations (Neat 1996: 224). The shifting perceptions of Travellers over the last 250 years are in many ways reflex reactions to societal norms, with the Travellers being deemed outsiders. What the forthcoming analyses show is that the Travellers' Burker tradition reflects a sophisticated ideological negotiation of deeply entrenched social inequities. Henderson himself alludes to this reflection when he suggests that 'the alien phantasmagoric world of scalpel-toting predators [Burkers] has a more than symbolic reality' (2004: 160).

TSAS and other historical sources provide an abundance of evidence that Travellers have suffered unjustified persecution over the centuries. Part of this persecution meant that Traveller families were often unaccounted for in public records. This lack of formal registration – coupled with the general dislike for Travellers that we have witnessed – meant that many Travellers saw themselves as easy targets for abduction. The rationale here is that nobody would miss them except their families and friends, with the authorities taking little or no interest in the disappearance of 'undesirables'. Braid cites evidence of this view noting that 'some Travellers said their ancestors felt they were particularly at risk from Burkers', the reason being that 'Travellers would neither be missed nor cared about in situations of foul play' (2002: 79). Duncan Williamson clarifies this vulnerability and mistrust of the authorities, telling us that 'the Travellers were not registered [...] and if [the Burkers] took a body, whether it be a man, woman, or child, they were never missed. The Travellers never

reported it' (cited in Braid 2002: 80). According to Douglas, the inability to report unregistered individuals as missing is 'one of the reasons the Travellers became so punctilious about registering the births of their children, who consequently officially existed and could be reported missing' (1985: 200). Further evidence of anxieties around Burkers comes from their association with anatomists; Betsy Whyte explains that 'the idea of cutting somebody up just for the sake of finding out things, it was just beyond us. They [the anatomists] were like a different race, like something that wisnae human' (TAD 77229). Whyte's proclamations here speak to a fundamental ideological conflict with scientific enquiry that could be viewed as anachronistic. However, when viewed in the context of the Burker tradition, Whyte's anxieties around medical dissection voices broader concerns about the motivations of non-Travellers. In this sense, the ideological conflict does not represent a retrograde attitude to the scientific method, but rather an emotive response to a perceived threat; recall Maggie Stewart's story about her father seeing a Burker reflected in his drinking water, for instance.

In their 1975 study, 'Scottish Travellers or Tinkers', the Rehfishes reacted similarly when they encountered the Burker stories, concluding that 'these stories express in concrete terms the view that the outside world is hostile and one must be wary of it' (1975: 279). This seems a sensible conclusion – in terms of projecting the Burkean threat onto the non-Traveller world – given that Burke's murderous acquisition of cadavers did not extend outside of Edinburgh and took place over a relatively short period of time. In terms of Burke's murders and Knox's involvement, Rosner lists sixteen victims in total, all killed in or around Tanner's Close in the West Port of Edinburgh over a twelve-month period (2010: 1). However, there is evidence that the close association between medical schools and murder was not a phenomenon exclusive to Edinburgh. As opposed to the act of Burking – murder by intoxication and smothering, specifically to supply anatomists with subjects –

some anatomy schools outside of Edinburgh are more closely associated with grave robbing, or ‘body snatching’. In Aberdeen, the Spital and St Machar churchyards were often plundered for bodies to supply the Aberdeen Medical Society: the society was founded in 1789 and included prominent anatomists who openly advocated the robbing of graves to further medical science (Humphries 2014: 69). The most infamous of these Aberdeen anatomists was Andrew Moir who ran a private anatomical theatre in St Andrew Street. In December 1831, some carelessness on the part of Moir, or more probably his staff, resulted in the discovery of partly dissected human remains inadequately buried behind his theatre. Moir’s theatre became known locally as the ‘Burking-Shop’ and was burned to the ground by incensed locals after the discovery of the human remains (*The Aberdeen Journal* 1831).

Despite the fact the Moir’s theatre was supplied, albeit illegally, with exhumed corpses, the conflation between Burking and body snatching to supply the anatomists was instilled in the local public’s imagination. Moreover, the destruction of a medical establishment known as the Burking-Shop is a stark example of the close association between medical schools and murder that permeated Scottish culture during the first half of the nineteenth century. As was noted above, the key turning point came with the introduction of The Anatomy Act in 1832, which contained articles allowing ‘unclaimed’ bodies to be sold to the anatomy schools for dissection. The 1832 Act practically extinguished the trade of the body snatchers and, in the eyes of the public, the ‘Burkers’. However, according to Moir, viable subjects were hard to come by in Aberdeen even after the 1832 Act; Moir noted that supply had never met demand, with only ‘stray vagrants’ to be had, and then only if the kirk-session permitted it (cited in Rodger 1893: 244). Moir’s appraisal of the situation after The Anatomy Act seems at odds with *The Register of the Funerary* records from the period; the records indicate that between 1832-1902, at least 1479 bodies were sent to Aberdeen’s anatomy schools for dissection alone, which equates to approximately 2 bodies per month (Hoole 2018: 239).

Despite the seemingly adequate, and legal, supply of subjects for dissection, the social trauma engendered by Burke's activities – coupled with the prevalence of body snatching across Scotland – has left an indelible scar on Scotland's national consciousness. Add to this Traveller Belle Stewart's comment regarding Burkers: 'Oh aye, Marischal College [Aberdeen]. There's a hell of a lot of young Tinkers in Aberdeen went and sold the bodies' (TAD 55956). Stewart's statement here seems to suggest that there were also *Travellers* selling cadavers to the anatomy schools in Aberdeen. Douglas identifies one such individual as 'Danny the Burker', the 'ultimate horror of the Traveller who sells his own people's bodies to the doctors in the college at Aberdeen' (1985: 264). However, Douglas is sceptical about the veracity of Danny's nefarious activities, noting that it is possible that Danny 'encouraged other Travellers to believe what was said about him [and] he may even have been the source of the tales; for this would have given him special status and power among his own people' (ibid.: 265).

The social trauma engendered by Burke and Knox was not bound exclusively to Edinburgh where the murders took place. Furthermore, the conflation between Burking and body snatching is a plausible explanation for the nation-wide terror felt after Burke was executed. Campbell captures the conflation neatly in his *Reminiscences* noting that, 'the scare caused by the Burke and Hare case sent such an after-fear into the Highlands that, among others, our churchyard was watched for weeks after every funeral because of the body-snatchers' (1910: 4). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that the bodies of the recently buried began to acquire a monetary value towards the end of the seventeenth century in the British Isles (Richardson 1987: 52; McCracken-Flesher 2012: 10). From this perspective, it is safe to say that body snatching – in the form of grave robbing for the purposes of dissection and financial gain – was a reality faced by generations of Scots before Burke committed his crimes. However, it was not until the extent of Burke's crimes – and

Knox's complicity – came to light that the trauma associated with the desecration of dead bodies was properly crystallised on the national scale. The anxiety of having your corpse desecrated was elevated to mortal threat and amplified by the nature of Burke's methods; the triple act of deception, murder and *then* bodily desecration was given a name. The personification of such unprecedented crimes as Burke's put a face on the trauma and provided the national consciousness with an identity to fear and revile.

Nowhere is the deep-seated Burkean trauma more perceptible than in the oral history and storytelling traditions of Scotland's Travellers. According to MacColl and Seeger, the Burker tales that they experienced during their time with the Travelling Stewarts of Blairgowrie 'show little of the inventiveness that characterises so many of the older tales' (1986: 57). This appraisal by MacColl and Seeger is in one sense an accurate description of many of the Burker stories in the Traveller tradition in that the Burker stories do appear to follow a broadly similar pattern. However, I argue that this narrative patterning serves a specific function within the Burker stories. This function is perhaps an element that eluded MacColl and Seeger when they see 'plots that are depressingly hackneyed', including characters that 'are as stereotyped as the interchangeable cops and robbers of television drama' (ibid.). The hackneyed and stereotypical protagonists, and antagonists, are cast deliberately so that the narratives can function and deliver their meaning. For instance, as Traveller Sheila Douglas has pointed out, Burkers, the medical profession and body snatchers have all been fused within the Travellers' stories into one and the same thing (1985: 24). Douglas goes on to point out that Burker stories 'tend to follow a pattern, a fact that must have some significance' (ibid.: 254). This fusing of elements or patterning within the narratives is perhaps what inspired Henderson's assessment that the Travellers' Burker stories are manifestations of deeper anxieties involving people from the non-Traveller world (2004: 230; cf. Rehfisches 1975: 279, cited above).

The predictability of the Travellers' Burker stories disparaged by MacColl and Seeger is further evidence of the rigidity of the functions of the characters. There is a distinction between the innocent Traveller and the nefarious non-Traveller within the narratives, an interpretation similar to that of the Rehfishes'. As a result, many outsider interpretations of the Burker tradition are one-dimensional. Not that these interpretations are altogether erroneous, only that, as is often the case with the Travellers' traditions, there is more to these narratives than meets the eye. For instance, Henderson contends that the persecution complex he recognised finds expression in the 'gruesome folklore about "burkers" (body-snatchers) who were supposed to be continually on the wait to waylay and murder travelling folk' (1995: 2636). Henderson's conflation of Burkers and body-snatchers is an indication of his misperception of the stories themselves. In his synopsis of the Burker tradition, Henderson also describes how the sinister medical students 'drive the "burker's coach" into the countryside to try and find isolated tinker encampments' (ibid.). As I show, a significant number of the Travellers' Burker accounts do not involve a coach or deliberate waylaying. Furthermore, the Burkers in these narratives are not 'body snatchers', rather the antagonists *create* the bodies themselves, giving the murders their most execrable characteristic. The narratives I examine rely on the Travellers themselves approaching the would-be Burkers. In the spirit of the flexible methodological approach being taken in this thesis, I begin to look more closely at the Burker stories by considering their morphology. The results achieved in Chapter 3 of the present work are testament to the efficacy of comparative techniques when analysing folklore. Moreover, the fact that these stories exist in relative isolation among Scotland's Travellers is an advantage in light of my research questions. A further aspect of the unique values, beliefs and worldviews of the Travellers is revealed through the close examination of their Burker tradition. The Travellers' Burker stories are a rare opportunity to examine stories from a community that can truly call the stories their own.

A useful methodological framework that is not so heavily reliant on comparative techniques is a structural approach. At its core, the structural approach within the folkloristic context relies on a similar framework to the ‘describe, identify, interpret’ model that was utilised in Chapter 3. First, the item of folklore is broken down into its most significant constituent parts, or ‘structural units’; secondly, the organisation of these units is described; finally, an interpretation of the interrelationships between the units is undertaken. Stimulated by Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) and the insights of Lévi-Strauss, Dundes concluded that detailed structural descriptions can reveal how folklore embodies and transmits the key metaphors of a society (2007a: 139-140). Although Propp’s work on the morphology of ‘the folktale’ was limited to certain Russian fairy tales and neglected the social and cultural context of the narratives, a structural methodology can be applied to the study of other folk genres (Dundes 2007a: 127).

Moreover, structural analysis should not be deemed an end in itself, rather it is what Dundes calls a ‘powerful technique of descriptive ethnography [wherein] the form must ultimately be related to the culture or cultures in which it is found’ (1968: xiii). At the most basic level, the overall pattern of the Burker tradition involves a move from disequilibrium to equilibrium. During his own study, *The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales*, Dundes recognised the same pattern, what he refers to as the ‘nuclear two motifeme sequence: lack/lack liquidated’ (1964: 61). Frustratingly, Dundes does not elaborate on the meaning of this sequence in his study, noting that it is ‘not part of the morphologist’s task to interpret his findings’ (ibid.: 107). However, he does suggest that structural analysis can indeed facilitate better understandings of the psychological origins of folktales (ibid.: 108); in other words, how they function within discrete cultures and/or communities. Additionally, the forthcoming descriptions and analyses will follow a paradigmatic approach to structural analysis. Using this approach, I demonstrate how the overarching pattern (paradigm), or

organisation, of the item of folklore can provide insights into its meaning. As opposed to Propp's method that dealt with the 'text' alone, a structural analysis of the Travellers' Burker tradition is brought to bear on the wider socio-economic context of the Travellers' lived experiences. Finally, my descriptions and analysis are synchronic; it is not my purpose to trace the development of the Burker stories, only to describe and offer interpretations of a corpus of examples from archives and contemporary fieldwork.

To demonstrate how structural analysis works in practice, I provide a summary of Lévi-Strauss' study of the story of Asdiwal, an indigenous myth from the Pacific coast of Canada belonging to the Tsimshian people. Lévi-Strauss' analysis is a pertinent example of how structural approaches to stories can provide important insights into the lives of the people who share them. Lévi-Strauss' method involves isolating the various levels on which the story evolves – what he calls the underlying logical structure – then evaluating the organisational structure within the context of the storytellers' lives and social environment (2004: 1). A similar method has been deployed throughout this thesis in that the lives and social environment of the storytellers are central considerations during the interpretations of the narratives. During his study of the story of Asdiwal, Lévi-Strauss distinguishes several levels of activity; in one such level, the sociological, he concludes that 'real and imaginary institutions are interwoven' (ibid.: 13) because the sequence of the myth 'evokes clearly defined sociological conditions' (ibid.: 10). The sociological conditions identified by Lévi-Strauss are related to marriage customs which are negotiated within the myth.

At the beginning of the story, two female protagonists – mother and daughter – are separated when the daughter gets married and moves away to her husband's village, following the patrilocal custom of the people. In the story, this custom is undermined by a famine in which the husband perishes, thereby freeing the newly married daughter from her obligations to him. The daughter then returns to live with her mother in a liminal zone

between villages where she gives birth, by a supernatural father, to the eponymous Asdiwal. Crucially, all subsequent marriages within the reality of the myth are required to be matrilocal, with the husband going to live with his wife's community (ibid.: 11). Asdiwal goes on to marry several times, and all of his marriages fail. By the end of the story, the status quo is returned when Asdiwal returns to his childhood village with his son and the usual patrilocal custom is restored. However, whilst hunting in the mountains during winter, Asdiwal is stranded; unable to go either up or down the mountainside, Asdiwal is turned to stone, his calcification being symbolic of the similarly calcified marriage customs of the Tsimshian. The structural units of the story, then, can be interpreted as follows:

1. familial separation through patrilocal marriage;
2. subsequent familial reconciliation;
3. alteration to the status quo by supernatural means;
4. a narrative negotiation of the new patrilocal marriage customs; and
5. the death of the protagonist and resumption of the status quo.

The function of this sociological negotiation, Lévi-Strauss concludes, is to mediate between the polar oppositional forces of maternal and paternal kin (ibid.: 13). The real and imaginary institutions of the Tsimshian – the patrilocal reality and the matrilocal fantasy – are negotiated within the story of Asdiwal to resolve a paradox that is inherent to Tsimshian marriage customs. The Tsimshian custom of marrying your first matrilineal cousin, coupled with the patrilocal custom, was practised to protect the hereditary privileges of the male (ibid.: 25).

However, this system produces what Lévi-Strauss describes as a 'hostile equilibrium between the matrilineal lineages of the village chiefs, [where] the respective superiority or inferiority of the groups involved was openly contested' (ibid.: 26-27). The paradox lies in

the fact that whether the family is ‘wife-giver’ or ‘wife-taker’ they are always simultaneously losing something whilst gaining something else. For instance, the transfer of titles and property occasioned by Tsimshian marriages can simultaneously end one familial dispute whilst creating another, hence the hostile equilibrium. Lévi-Strauss argues that the story of Asdiwal functions, at the sociological level, to *admit* to the inherent contradictions of Tsimshian marriage customs, something that cannot be achieved in reality. Considering the insights from Lévi-Strauss described above, Jameson suggests that narratives can represent the ‘imaginary resolution of a real contradiction’ (2010: 1828). Thus, for Jameson, structural analysis of stories such as Asdiwal allow for interpretations that view formal patterns as enactments of the social within the aesthetic (ibid). Asdiwal’s final predicament and calcification are symbolic of the paradoxical nature of marriage customs among his people. What this example has demonstrated – in terms of my research question around values and beliefs – is that a structural approach to the Burker stories can unlock meanings behind certain representations and narrative patterns. Dundes goes on to propose that the identification and interpretation of such representations has the potential to provide unparalleled insights into the worldview and behaviour of communities (2007a: 140). My analyses therefore deploy a structural methodology to gain access to these unparalleled perspectives and to address the one-dimensional interpretations of the Travellers’ Burker tradition.

The contextualisation provided in the opening sections of this chapter demonstrated that the nation-wide social trauma engendered by Burke and the anatomists has impacted Scotland’s Travellers in a unique way. As I have argued throughout this thesis, the sensibilities and lifestyles of the Travellers are markedly different from those of the settled population. With that in mind, it is not surprising that an event of national significance not only affected the Travellers but affected them in ways that are at odds with the settled

population's experiences. What this contextualisation also revealed is further evidence of the fundamental contradistinction between Travellers and other sectors of Scottish society that lies at the heart of this thesis. In the present context, my examples show that the morbid fascination with Burke that has inspired mainstream storytellers is negotiated differently within the Travellers' storytelling traditions. A detailed exploration of examples of Burker accounts broadens our understanding of the impact that the crimes of Burke and Knox had on Scotland's Traveller communities and how such experiences are negotiated. Additionally, what follows presents further evidence of the efficacy of the emic methodology being deployed in this thesis; as demonstrated in Chapter 3, close examination of the Travellers' storytelling traditions reveals an inner identity that is not based on biological determinism. Instead, I showed that Travellers' cultural identities are generated and conditioned by sophisticated relationships with their social and physical environments.

As opposed to a simplistic binary 'us and them' negotiation of identity, the stories that the Travellers share have been shown to represent more complex identity strategies. Therefore, this thesis focuses on what Reith sees as 'representing Traveller identity from within' (2008: 99) by resisting ethnocentric approaches that limit the scope of the interpretations. For example, appraisals, such as those cited above, that the Travellers' Burker tradition is simply a manifestation of anxiety about outsiders can be augmented if we view the stories using new perspectives. By viewing the Travellers' stories from within, Reith recognises 'the powerful potential of folkloric contexts to create transformative spaces through which divisive boundaries between "self" and "other" may be renegotiated' (ibid.). Building on Reith's insights, I deploy an emic methodology to renegotiate what, at first glance, appear to be divisive expressions of Traveller cultural identity. In terms of the Burker tradition, what becomes clear is that as opposed to the biographical or fictional representations found in the more mainstream media cited above, the Travellers' Burker

stories are often related as having *actually happened*. In one interview recorded in 1975, Betsy Whyte exclaims that ‘it was true, they did Burke the Travellers, they did [...] that went on all over. And although youse folk [settled communities] mibbe disnae believe it, it goes on as much now as it did in these days’ (TAD 77229). Moreover, in terms of the method of murder, we find that the Travellers’ oral history and stories contain remarkable similarities to the methods used by Burke. That is, the victims are lured into an ostensibly benevolent house and given drink until incapacitated, facilitating the victim’s murder without inflicting unnecessary damage to their body. This verisimilitude is revealing. By blending reality and fiction, the Burkean narratives’ function is to structure the latent *representational* meanings of the stories upon real situations.

### **4.3 Equilibrium and Captivity**

It has been argued that the Burkean anxiety that pervades Traveller storytelling has its roots in an earlier mistrust of the medical profession; Douglas suspects that ‘Travellers feared doctors long before the Burke and Hare case but this certainly intensified it beyond rational bounds’ (1985: 24). The underlying historical fear of the medical profession could be extended to include a variety of ‘authority’ figures. As I demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, the Travellers have faced manifold forms of persecution over the last 250 years. The examples surveyed showed that TSAS are replete with evidence of the established order maligning the lifestyles of the Travellers (for example, Auchterderran 1791: 458, Eaglesham 1792: 124, Monteith 1845: 1281, Knockando 1845: 81). Outside of the Burker tradition, there are many examples of stories, songs, poems, anecdotes and riddles in which Travellers come into conflict with members of the settled population. A touching illustrative example is Belle Stewart’s untitled poem about the berry harvest in Blair:

It happened at the berry-time when Travellers came to Blair,  
 They pitched their tents on the berry fields without a worry or care.  
 But they hadn't been long settled there when some heid yins cam' frae Perth,  
 And told them they must go at once and get off the face o' the earth.

[...]

It's a hard life being a Traveller, but I've proved it to be true,  
 I've tried in every possible way to live with times that's new.  
 But we're always hit below the belt, no matter what we do,  
 But when it comes to Judgement Day, we'll be just the same as you.

(TAD 74588)

Belle Stewart's verses are not only evocative of the plight of the Travellers in a general sense, but also of the serious existential threat posed by an unsympathetic establishment. The perceived threat is palpable when Belle speaks of leaving the face of the earth, and the continuous persecution despite the Travellers' best efforts to adapt to changing times. Belle's hope of an ultimate reconciliation is an affecting reminder that the Travellers are not antagonistic to the settled population. There are many other examples of the narrative negotiation of such conflicts held in SSS Archives which will be referred to during the forthcoming analyses. What is revealed is that other negotiations of conflict do not share the same narrative patterning as the Burker stories. Consequently, the question presents itself: what is it about Burke and his crimes that inspired a tangential tradition that deals with conflict? The understandable mistrust of authority figures from the settled population manifests itself elsewhere in a variety of narrative negotiations. Moreover, the specific mistrust of the medical profession amongst Travellers, observes Douglas, has long since subsided, with many Travellers visiting local surgeries and being admitted to hospitals (1985: 25). At the same time, Douglas acknowledges that Burker stories continue to be told

among Travellers in an ‘almost ritual manner’ and that ‘the explanation for this can be found only by examining the stories themselves’ (ibid.). With all the above considerations in mind, the fact that Burker stories have persisted in the Traveller tradition compels the ethnologist to make a closer examination. I return to engage with Douglas’ insights during my analyses of the Travellers’ oral histories and stories involving Burkers.

As observed by Henderson above, there exist versions of Burker narratives that include a ‘Burker’s Coach’, but there are also examples from the Burker tradition where no villainous coachmen are involved. These variations are related, of course, by virtue of their link to the medical establishment and by the theme of ‘murder as a commodity’. Citing *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, Shaw recognises that the motif of sinister black carriages roaming the countryside appears in other discrete folkloric traditions recorded throughout the nineteenth century (2006: 167). From this perspective, the appearance of a ‘Burker’s Coach’ is not necessarily unique to the Travellers’ tradition. On the other hand, the Burker accounts where the coach *does not* appear seem to have escaped the attention of Henderson and will therefore be my focus. At the same time, the motif of the sinister Burker’s Coach can be seen to correspond with the overarching pattern of the Burker tradition, so a brief overview of their role in the narratives is pertinent to the present discussion. In his autobiography *The Book of Sandy Stewart*, Traveller Alexander (Sandy) Stewart gives an account of his perceptions of Burkers. Sandy Stewart was born in 1920 in Kirriemuir, Angus (Leitch 1988: xi). Stewart’s account gives us an insight into the way that Travellers conceptualised Burkers in the first half of the twentieth century. Stewart’s description of how the Burkers were seen to operate also provides a useful synopsis of the Travellers’ Burker stories in general. Stewart tells us that ‘at wan time thir wes an awfie lot o Burkers went roond the country an ye hed tae watch yirsel on the roads [...] they could tak ye awaa tae God knows whaur – colleges or oniething’ (1988: 24). Stewart goes on to explain that the Burkers knew

where the Travellers' camping places were and that they would watch the camps in search of their victims. Stewart recounts that the Burkers knew their camping grounds 'about Arbroath, Dundee an aa roads [...] away by Coupar Angus an up tae the Hielans o Perthshire' (ibid.). It is clear from Stewart's account that he is acutely aware that the Burkers were either employed by medical institutions or were medical students themselves; 'they would take ye', Stewart explains, 'then operate on yer body in a college. That saved them payin fer bodies' (ibid.: 25). Stewart's mention of 'colleges' is reiterated later in his account when he reports that there was a 'college at Logiealmond an they [Burkers] could come fae Dundee [...] whaurever big colleges wes' (ibid.).

Later, Stewart gives an account of a case of Burking involving an 'uncle belongin tae ma fether – Donald Whyte' (ibid.: 25). Stewart's relative is captured after falling behind his peers during a walk, but he is eventually rescued and the Burkers' coach and horses are taken by the Travellers. According to Stewart at the time of his recollection in the 1980s, the coach could still be found at Sim's Garage near Birnam in Perthshire (ibid.). Finally, Stewart details the Burkers' method of anaesthetising their victims: 'they jest stuck a thing like a plaster ower yer mooth an ye couldnae dae nae mair then! Ye forgot everything jest the same as ye wir dead' (ibid.). There are several key elements found within Stewart's testimony above that are found within the wider Traveller tradition of Burker stories and that give the accounts an overarching similitude. The central tenets are: the Traveller protagonists are on the road and somehow find themselves in a precarious situation; the Travellers are taken in by ostensibly benevolent hosts; the Travellers are then held in captivity; the kidnappers that the Travellers encounter are somehow associated with anatomists or the medical profession; there is often an element of intoxication, by some means or another, involved during captivity; and, finally, the captured Travellers – more often than not – escape at the end of their encounter. The key incident to note, in terms of the synopsis above, is the element of

captivity. As we will see, these high-level motifs collaborate to represent an overarching 'Burker theme' that is predicated on the loss of personal liberty.

In terms of the structural approach being taken in the present chapter, the central tenets described above are the structural units of the Burkean stories. As noted, I am concerned here by how these units are organised and what this organisation can tell us about the meanings of the stories. In the same way that Lévi-Strauss saw the structure of the Asdiwal myth evoking sociological conditions among the Tsimshian, the structure of the Travellers' Burker accounts illuminate certain elements of their lives and experiences. At the same time, the details of the stories can be seen to reflect personal experience and therefore include nuances. The individualism that we experienced in the previous chapter's narratives continues to manifest itself within the oral histories and stories involving Burkers. However, the individual nuances of the encounters with Burkers develop into a recognisable pattern that helps us to understand the motivations of the storytellers and unlock the meanings within their testimonies. As Dundes points out, one advantage of synchronic structural analysis is that 'not all the variants of a given tale or myth need to be analysed in order to ascertain the structure' (1964: 46). Furthermore, the initial 'descriptive' task of synchronic structural analysis is made easier by the fact that the Burker tradition is prevalent among Traveller storytellers, where there are a multitude of examples to work with (see Appendix II).

My first example from the Traveller tradition comes from John (Jock) Stewart. Stewart recounts an experience from his childhood when his tinsmith father sent him, his sister and one of Stewart's nieces out on a business errand (TAD 11474). Stewart was born in 1870 in Blairgowrie, Perthshire, which places the chronology of his story sometime towards the end of the nineteenth century. Stewart's story begins when the companions are unable to make the return journey home to Fraserburgh in the dark, so they seek lodgings at a farm that they

come across. At first, the woman who answers the door at the farmhouse is reluctant to provide lodgings but asks Stewart and his companions to wait until her son comes home. ‘When the son come in’, recounts Stewart, ‘he wis a tall chap about six fit high he wis’ (ibid.). The son offers Stewart and company a turnip shed to spend the night in, but it has been snowing and the shed is full of blown snow: ‘well if we had plenty straw we’d manage fine’, Stewart implores, but the son replies “‘oh you’ll no need nae straw”, he says, “before morning”” (ibid.). With Stewart protesting, the son leaves the Travellers and bars the door of the turnip shed from the outside. Stewart manages to pry apart the boards of the shed with his pocketknife and the company collect their goods and escape. Later, the company come upon a row of crofts and encounter the Burkers who snatch at Stewart’s hair and rip the clothes from Stewart’s young niece as they flee in terror. The Travellers eventually come to a shop where the shopkeeper tells them that she cannot offer them sanctuary, explaining that the Burkers are “‘here every night of the week”, she says, “lookin for folk [and] they sell everybody they get”” (ibid.). The connection to the medical school in nearby Aberdeen becomes clear when Stewart questions the motivations of their attackers; “‘bless me boy””, exclaims the shopkeeper, “‘they tak and sell them in Aiberdeen”, she says. “The quicker you’re aff the road the better”” (ibid.). Eventually, Stewart and his company reach a farm where the farmer knows Stewart’s father. The farmer agrees to hide the Travellers in his dog kennel for the night, assuring them that if the Burkers approach he’ll give them “‘an ounce full of leed [shotgun pellets] in the backside”” (ibid.). Thus, Stewart and his family successfully avoid the Burkers and Stewart’s account ends.

As noted above, Stewart’s encounter with Burkers consists of a few key incidents – i.e. structural units – and follows a discernible organisational pattern: whilst on the road, the Travellers involved somehow find themselves in a precarious position; they therefore seek refuge or a modicum of comfort before continuing their journey; during the suspension of

their travels, the Travellers are taken in by malevolent hosts and held captive; during their captivity, or after their escape, it becomes clear that their hosts intended to murder them in order to sell their bodies; finally, the Travellers are delivered from their precarious situation or they escape by some other means. Consequentially, Stewart's account consists of the optimum narrative sequence, recognised initially by Aristotle in his *Poetics* as consisting of an appropriate beginning, a probable or necessary elaboration, and a dramatic resolution (2010: 94-95). Moreover, at an even more fundamental level, Jock Stewart's narrative amounts to a movement from a state of equilibrium, through disequilibrium, and then returning to a state of equilibrium.

Of course, this tripartite narrative sequence appearing in the present context is neither surprising nor revelatory. However, for the purposes of the present analysis and interpretation, Todorov's insights into the nature of this fundamental narrative sequence are useful. Using Boccaccio's *Decameron* as an example, Todorov describes what he terms a 'schematic formulation' to describe the commonalities between the four main plots within the *Decameron* (1969: 73). Todorov's scheme consists of a series of common elements that act upon each other to form a sequence of events. The scheme identified by Todorov amounts to a 'minimal complete plot [that] can be seen as the shift from one equilibrium to another' (ibid.: 75). The germane analogy of a sense of equilibrium – understood in the present context as 'a stable but not static relation between the members of a society' (ibid.) – effectively represents a shift in the balance of relationships between social actors. Todorov's examples from the *Decameron* involve the social relations between misbehaving monks and abbots, deviant nuns and abbesses, unfaithful wives and duped husbands. The nature of the relationships chosen by Todorov to illustrate his point are clear; they are inequitable power relations. In the examples cited by Todorov, there is a violation of a law by the subordinate actor – their celibacy or fidelity – which demands punishment from the senior actor

(equilibrium). The punishment is avoided either because the subordinate reveals that the senior *also* violates the law, or that the senior is beguiled in some way into thinking that the violation never happened (both a state of disequilibrium). At the conclusion of the narratives, normality is restored but critically, says Todorov, the equilibrium will have a ‘different mood or status [...] seen from different points of view’ (ibid.: 74). The crucial shift within these relationships, concludes Todorov, means that the ‘story is basically the description of an improvement process until the flaw is no longer there’ (ibid.: 75). Put another way, inequitable relationships are negotiated within the *Decameron*, with the function being to alter the nature of the relationship and create a new equilibrium where the subordinate has new knowledge or power.

With the sense of inequitable social relationships and the function of narrative in mind, I return to Jock Stewart’s Burker account. Considering Stewart’s narrative in terms of Todorov’s shift from equilibrium to a new equilibrium, the sequence of narrative elements can be described as follows: the everyday plying of the Travellers’ trade as tinsmiths (equilibrium); a movement into the unknown and subsequent captivity (disequilibrium); a dramatic escape and safe return to familiarity (equilibrium). As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, the Travellers have experienced persecution and hostility from other sectors of Scottish society for many generations, past and present. Most significantly, the sense of an inequitable social relationship between Travellers and the State has been demonstrated from the outset; the impact that this has had on the Travellers clearly manifests itself in their various storytelling traditions. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, the ostensibly binary ‘us and them’ negotiations that appear on the surface of the stories can be enhanced through closer examination to reveal deeper meanings. Moreover, it is not my intention here to repudiate the veracity of the encounters detailed within these accounts. Indeed, the veracity of the accounts is altogether irrelevant to the type of analysis that is

being conducted here. What is important is the Travellers' ongoing fascination with accounts of Burkers, and why these narrative traditions continue to be shared among Travellers long after the very *real* threat has been extinguished. Or, as Douglas puts it, she 'became aware of the pattern of the stories and realised that their importance lay not in the facts they purported to relate but in the expression they provided for the Travellers' sense of insecurity' (1987: 10).

In Stewart's account, the reality of the protagonists' situation functions on two levels. Firstly, the details provided by Stewart – the plausibility of the cross-country errand, the description of their route, the physical description of the Burker, the blown snow of the turnip shed – collaborate to place the narrated events in a recognisable reality. Consequently, the narrative is not merely an amusing anecdote or a supernatural tale. It is at once to be considered both a cautionary tale shared by a specific sector of Scottish society and, for the ethnologist, a unique brand of oral history. The second functional level, and the one that we are concerned with here, is the historicity of the Burker accounts among the Travellers; the term historicity is being deployed here not in the definitional sense of a 'verifiable past', but in the anthropological sense that draws attention to the 'social moulding of perceptions of the past and the political contests between competing versions of the past' (Stewart 2016: 89). It is the *social* history of the Travellers that is being negotiated within the Burker narratives, but not in the straightforwardly binary sense that I have challenged throughout this chapter. Instead, the Travellers' social realities are captured within a narrative structure that speaks directly to lived experience, while contesting dominant worldviews that prioritise conformity to sedentary lifestyles.

Stewart's narrative is intimated by the quintessentially Traveller trade of the itinerant tinsmith, a way of life that literally spans generations in the premise of Stewart's account. As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, rapid industrialisation in Scotland meant that

the livelihoods of the Travellers were increasingly under threat due to dramatic changes to both mercantile and social relationships. This precariousness – or sense of insecurity, as Douglas has it – manifests itself during the disequilibrium of Stewart’s Burker account. When the weary travellers reach out for help to members of the settled population, they are met first with distrust when the woman at the farmhouse denies them sanctuary, then with malevolence when they are held captive by the would-be Burker. A compelling detail included by Stewart is the height of the individual who imprisons the Travellers; Betsy Whyte informs us that ‘according to the Traivellers, the Saviour [Jesus Christ] was pure red-headed and exactly six foot tall’ (TAD 36470). It is ironic, then, that the figurehead of the ultimate form of sanctuary can appear in Burker accounts as the polar opposite. From this perspective, it is the *trust* of the Travellers rather than their *mistrust* that engenders their captivity. The disequilibrium of Stewart’s account is indicative of the inequitable social relationship being negotiated through the narrative; the persecution complex recognised by Henderson is not solely at issue here, it is the underlying sense of the betrayal of one class over another. A new equilibrium is reached when Stewart and his company come under the protection of the benevolent farmer. The settled farmer’s knowledge of Stewart and his family challenges the hostility of the malevolent farmers, signifying a more equitable social relationship that is based on understanding and empathy. Stewart’s Burker account is therefore framed by a distinct sense of reality; the everyday activities of the Travellers are disrupted by the intrusive Burkers, only to return to everyday reality at the conclusion of the narrative. In her analysis of the same account, Douglas also recognises the distinct social reality that is being expressed by Stewart: ‘For the farmer to protect the traveller’, notes Douglas, ‘is of course in keeping with what we know from the family history was the attitude of Perthshire farmers to tinkers’ (1985: 262).

Davy Hutchison, a Traveller born in Meldrum, Aberdeenshire in 1899 (TAD ID 5207), tells a slightly different story involving Burkers.<sup>14</sup> Hutchison frames his account by telling us that ‘it’s quite true, there was such a thing, once upon a time, as Burkers’, and elaborates that ‘the doctors, once upon a time, they badly wanted bodies [...] they wanted fresh bodies, nae auld rotten bloody corpse’ (TAD 74614). Again, Hutchison’s Burker story is framed in reality, including specific details that contribute to the verisimilitude of his account. The story proper begins with the introduction of a woman and her young son: ‘There’s a woman bide in Leadsid Road, Aiberdeen and by goodness, she was a weedow woman’, Hutchison begins; we then find out that ‘at that time o day, there wis nae relief fir naebody’, and Hutchison explains that the woman ‘jist had tae mak a livin fir her ainsel’ (ibid.). At the conclusion of his narrative, Hutchison places the date of his story at ‘aboot a hundred an seventy year ago’ (ibid.). Hutchison’s narrative was recorded in 1955, which places the narrated events at around 1785, by his reckoning. This date of course precedes Burke’s crimes by almost half a century. However, as was noted above, the commodification of human corpses existed before the infamous activities of William Burke (Richardson 1987: 52, 72). Indeed, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Burke was not, in fact, the first ‘Burker’; although no extant historical sources exist to provide evidence, it is certainly possible that committing murder to obtain cash from Aberdeen’s anatomists had also occurred to other nefarious individuals outside of Edinburgh.

Returning to Hutchison’s story, one Saturday, the mother and son leave their home in Leadsid Road, Aberdeen, heading for the village of Whitecairns, which lies approximately ten miles to the north. Hutchison explains that the woman intends to sell her goods and make a small profit (TAD 74614); this practice is what is known as hawking, or brokering, an activity that many Travellers favour as it means they are free to work for themselves.

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<sup>14</sup> References beginning ‘TAD ID’ refer to the Person ID on *Tobar an Dualchais* which can be accessed via the website by searching the numerical Person ID - <https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/>

Although Hutchison does not explicitly identify his protagonists as Travellers, details such as the woman's occupation as a hawker suggest that this is indeed the case. On arrival in Whitecairns, the woman leaves her son outside the grocer's shop window playing marbles and heads off around the village to ply her trade. When the woman does not return as expected for the four o'clock return bus to Aberdeen, the grocer sends the young boy home by himself. Back at home in Aberdeen, there is no sign of the boy's mother and a neighbour alerts the police; Hutchison highlights the sinister nature of the story when he comments that 'at this time o day, there wis big prices geein for bodies ye ken. Five pound apiece for bodies, it's awa back a while ye know' (ibid.). Presumably cognizant of the woman's peril, the police dutifully head to Whitecairns to investigate her disappearance, beginning their enquiries at a local hotel.

Crucially at this point, Hutchison describes the hotel's proprietors as 'aa reid-heeded folk that wis there at that time. The father wis reid-heeded, so wis the wife and so wis the daughter' (ibid.). This curious motif of the antagonists in the Travellers' Burker stories having red hair is linked to the identity of the Burker character from Jock Stewart's account; discussing the Travellers' Burker tradition, Duncan Williamson explains that 'Burkers wis a red-heided woman [and] a red-heided man' (TAD 36470). In a published collection of Williamson's stories, he includes a tale called 'The Boy in the Boots'.<sup>15</sup> In his preamble to the story, Williamson explains that there were people 'who used to steal people away and take their bodies, kill them and cut them up, and use them for research in colleges' (1983: 127). It is clear from the outset that the story is about Burkers and it follows the Burkean morphology described above. 'My daddy had told me, "Beware of red-headed people, especially farmers or land-owners"', says the narrator, 'he told me they were bad people' (ibid.: 132). The six-foot tall, red-haired antagonist dutifully appears to hold the waylaid

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<sup>15</sup> Bruford and MacDonald identify this tale as a version of AT 1281a ('AT' before Uther) – *The Wandering Piper* and note its adaptation to a Burker tale within the Traveller tradition (2003: 331).

Traveller protagonist captive, while the Burkers are summoned to claim their victim (ibid.: 131-133).

The taboo around red-headed people also appears in Andrew Stewart's story about a baker who accepts three pieces of advice rather than wages from his employer (TAD 31634). The second piece of advice given by his employer is "never go intae a hoose", he says, "where there's a red-heided man an' a red-heided wuman' (ibid.). Stewart's protagonist encounters Burkers on the road and seeks sanctuary in a house belonging to a red-headed family. True to the Burkean pattern, Stewart's protagonist realises his peril and makes a cunning escape by hiding in a pig-sty. The reader will recall from Betsy Whyte's testimony cited above that, in the Traveller tradition, Jesus Christ was also red-headed. In the same interview (TAD 36470), Whyte goes on to point out that 'according to the wey some o the Scaldies [settled population] has got it, it wis *Judas* that was red-heided' (ibid., my italics). Whyte's observation here concurs with a multitude of depictions of Judas Iscariot, the ultimate betrayer, found throughout Western art and literature from at least the eleventh century (Baum 1922: 526). With this in mind, the parallels with Stewart's account and Williamson's story are clear, the Burker antagonists are ironically aligned with Jesus in both narratives. The motif of an ironically cast captor appears across the Travellers' Burker tradition and the use of dramatic irony is a trope we encountered in the examinations of Chapter 3. The significance of these characters will be elucidated during the conclusion of the present chapter after further examples have been introduced and discussed. Meanwhile, the police in Hutchison's story do not uncover any evidence of the missing woman's whereabouts, despite further enquiries throughout the village. However, the grocer – where the boy was playing before his mother's disappearance – recalls seeing the woman going into the hotel with the red-headed proprietors. The police therefore return to the hotel and they 'go richt inside this time, they burst their wey inside' (ibid.). The police soon discover

the woman ‘lying in a box wi her throat cut, ready for the college in aul’ Aberdeen. So, that was a very, very true story, it’s a way back about a hundred an seventy year ago’ (ibid.).

Despite any speculation around the chronology of the narrated events, Hutchison’s narrative remains a valuable thematic example of the Burkean anxiety found within the Travellers’ storytelling traditions. Given the contextual details offered by Hutchison, it is important to note that the woman’s socio-economic situation places her and her son in a precarious position. As I showed in the previous chapter in the case of Williamson’s Hedgehurst and Robertson’s Traveller-Judge – the forest dweller who would not forsake his home and the Judge whose reputation for injustice was subverted, respectively – the socio-economic situation of the protagonists plays a central role in many of the Travellers’ stories. Without the benefit of the modern welfare system, the widow and her dependent in Hutchison’s story would certainly struggle without financial support. For instance, Smout points out that the so-called ‘Poor Laws’ in post-Reformation Scotland had their foundation in the medieval concept of the ‘able-bodied poor’ and the ‘helpless impotent poor’: the able-bodied poor were to be scorned and punished as deliberately idle vagabonds; whereas the helpless poor were seen to have a genuine need of the charity of society (1998: 84). Decisions on whether to provide relief for the poor ultimately fell to the Kirk Session, and it was often ‘able-bodied’ widows who suffered.

Lindsay concurs with Smout noting that ‘the Scottish Poor Law as it functioned in the North-East in the period 1745-1845 was largely based on an act of 1579’, elaborating that ‘regular assistance was given only in cases of physical or mental disability, and allowances were generally small’ (1962: ‘Summary’). William Alison’s 1840 treatise *Observations on the Management of the Poor in Scotland* begins to address the inequitable nature of the poor laws in Scotland: ‘Take the common case of a labourer dying in middle life, and leaving a family of young children in Scotland’, Alison asks, ‘the legal relief granted is often a mere

pittance: the children are brought up in misery' (1840: 54). Evidence of the effect of the poor laws on widows comes from *The Poor Law Manual for Scotland* (1848) which contains the principles of the poor laws and decisions of the courts. In one 1846 case in Glenrothes, the Lord Justice-General exclaims that 'it would be hazardous to say that a woman earning 5s. a-week, and having one child only, is entitled to throw it on the parish, and say that the parish must aliment it' (McNeel-Caird 1848: 54-55). In another 1846 case from Killearnan in Ross-shire, a widow who is entitled to relief is denied by the inspector of the parish, even after the sheriff orders the inspector to pay; we are told that the inspector had 'intimated his resolution to disobey the order for interim relief' (ibid.: 230) of the widow Margaret Mackenzie and her three infant children. What these examples demonstrate is that the Scottish poor laws, even well into the nineteenth century, made it difficult for able-bodied widows to claim financial support from their parish. Moreover, in light of Hutchison's Burker account, these contextual details function to place his protagonists in a precarious position, a motif that intimates many of the Travellers' Burkean narratives. As I have demonstrated above and elsewhere, many of the Travellers' storytelling traditions engage in historical discourse that situates their narratives within a broader contextual framework whilst at the same time adding the nuances that make the stories unique.

Based on the earlier synopsis of Traveller Burkean narratives offered above, it is clear that Hutchison's story shares many of the central motifs: the precariousness of the protagonists' situation; the capture and captivity by malevolent hosts, in this case, hoteliers; the victim's body is prepared for sale to the anatomy schools of Aberdeen; alas, in this case the woman did not escape, but her young son lived to tell the tale. Hutchison's inclusion of the details of the protagonists' socio-economic position is revealing; similar to Jock Stewart's account explored above, an inequitable social relationship exists between the widow and a State that is unwilling to come to her aid. What is also clear is that from a

structural perspective – equilibrium, disequilibrium, new equilibrium – Hutchison’s Burker narrative *does not precisely* follow the same pattern as Jock Stewart’s account. Instead, the conclusion of Hutchison’s narrative sees the young son alone in Aberdeen without his mother. However, if we consider this conclusion in terms of my earlier argument relating to the social relations under negotiation, a parallel exists. Specifically, the young son’s safe return home is facilitated by the benevolent grocer, and his neighbour in Aberdeen takes pity on the boy and instigates the search for his missing mother (TAD 74614). In the same way that Jock Stewart’s protagonists are given sanctuary during their encounters with Burkers, so too is the young son in Hutchison’s account saved by the benevolence of the grocer and the concerned neighbour. The same can be said for Andrew Stewart’s Burker story, where the good advice of his employer ensures that the Traveller protagonist eventually escapes. The underlying structural principle, then, is the same across multiple Burker accounts: the betrayal of the Burkers is atoned by the benevolence of others. The narratives share a positive outlook and are expressions of an optimism that can prevail even in the direst of circumstances. Moreover, the combination of the pattern of the narratives and the interactions between the characters challenges negative stereotypes around the ‘threat’ that Travellers and their culture pose to the settled population.

#### **4.4 Contamination and Resistance**

The idea that the Travellers’ Burker accounts are imbued with meanings that do not appear on the surface of the narratives has been suggested elsewhere. In one interpretation of a Burker account by the Traveller storyteller Jess Smith, Shaw concludes that Smith’s story ‘acts as a pedagogical and ideological tool, as it promotes the idea that women need to be independent in order to deal with the unpredictability of their economic and social roles’

(2006: 170). In terms of structure, Smith's story follows the Burker theme already identified; after a fruitful day hawking, Smith's Grandmother, and her infant child Maggie, find themselves alone on the 'vast expanse of Rannoch Moor' (2002: 96); they encounter the dreaded Burkers' Coach where the villains demand possession of baby Maggie; terrified, and on account of an injured arm, Smith's Grandmother briefly hands Maggie to the Burkers; through quick wits and sleight of hand, Maggie is retrieved from captivity; finally, the pair escape across the moor to the sanctuary of her cousin's camp on 'the far side of Loch Tulla' (ibid.: 99). According to Shaw, Smith's Burker story does not fit squarely within the Travellers' Burker tradition because it is usually adult Travellers that are threatened (2006: 168). However, the familiar Burker motifs, as described throughout the present chapter, are again present in Smith's account: a quotidian beginning, a precarious situation, an element of captivity and finally a return to familiarity, or sanctuary. Additionally, Smith's account is situated in lived experience, including a cast of female protagonists that are known to Smith, and with references to specific topographical features within the narrative.

Shaw's intriguing conclusion is based on the gender of the protagonists and the way that they act when confronted with mortal threat. In Smith's account, we are told of her grandmother that 'there was no way she'd give up her child without a life-or-death struggle' (2002: 98). Both female protagonists are thereby placed in mortal danger – or the precariousness that we continue to encounter in the Burker accounts – and it is the logic and experience of the grandmother that wins the day. Specifically, the pair escape when the grandmother tricks the Burker into reining his horses, then uses the opportunity to snatch Maggie back and dash off into the boggy familiarity of Rannoch Moor, a place where the Burkers dare not follow. For Shaw, this means that the 'heroine or resistance figure of the story is [...] infused with knowledge of the environment that she operates in and [has] an

advantageous knowledge of other ways of thinking' (2006: 170). From this perspective, Smith's Burker account is more than the straightforward negotiation of a deep-seated-community-wide persecution complex, becoming what Shaw sees as a 'blueprint for how disempowered Traveller women [...] can use their wits to get through difficult situations' (ibid.: 169-170).

However, Shaw also suggests that the 'meaning behind Smith's story goes beyond the threat of the Burkers; it is a metonym for the perceived vulnerability of women and children in relation to unfamiliar others' (ibid.: 168). Thus, we are back in familiar territory. The point here is that close attention to the details within the Travellers' Burker accounts can reveal more nuanced, yet equally plausible, interpretations of their meanings. If what is at stake for Shaw, then, is the 'unpredictability of their [women's] economic and social roles' (ibid.: 170), Smith's narrative can be viewed from a different perspective. In Smith's account, the familiar Burker plot structure also speaks to the emancipatory qualities of 'local knowledge' and empowers the female protagonists to resist the Burker's naïve instructions to 'let her [Maggie] go, tinker, it's futile' (Smith 2002: 98). In Jock Stewart's Burker account, perhaps Shaw would comment on the untenable poor relief for the able-bodied widow. For example, the widow's tenacious pursuit of her economic independence, fatally thwarted by an establishment that is ideologically opposed to her lifestyle, could be considered an act of resistance. Again, it is the social and economic realities experienced by the Travellers that are being negotiated within the Burker accounts. Any charge that these stories are either apocryphal or metaphorical loses credence from this perspective because, as is often the case with the Travellers' traditions, the more significant meanings are embedded below the surface.

As a final example of the functionality of the Burker tradition, I will conclude my analyses by considering the element of intoxication. The reader will recall the method of

murder favoured by the narratives' namesake, William Burke. Burke and his accomplices would ply their unsuspecting victims with alcohol before smothering them, presumably to both make the murder easier and to avoid any physical damage to the body. Traveller Geordie Stewart tells a Burker story that he informs us happened to his 'mother's great-great-granny' (TAD 3817); with Stewart being born in 1930 (TAD ID 4842), this places the chronology of the story around the first half of the nineteenth century, or contemporaneous with the Burkean anxiety being felt throughout Scotland. Stewart begins his story by introducing us to a Traveller couple living on the West Coast of Scotland; 'he wis a real Tinker, he mended tin', Stewart begins, 'and she was a pedlar, she peddled with a basket' (TAD 3817). Finding themselves in a strange part of the country where they had never been before, the couple are at a loss for a place to camp for the night. With the weather turning and darkness falling, and the couple becoming desperate for a safe place to sleep, they see a farmhouse's lights in the distance and make their way towards it. In Geordie Stewart's account, we again find the familiar Burkean structure; Travellers going about their everyday business suddenly find themselves in a precarious situation and seek respite. The Traveller couple approach the house and ask for lodgings for the night. The farmer and his red-headed daughter, after some persuasion, offer the couple food and drink, and then allow them to sleep in a barn for the night. Again, the antagonist is red-headed, anticipating the theme of betrayal that can be found throughout the Travellers' Burker tradition. When the Traveller couple are led to the barn, the farmer tells them, "'dinnae worry yer heid nane'", he says, "'if ye hear a noise through the night'", he says, "'because there a coo ready to calf anytime' [...] "and we might be the go [be called into action]"' (ibid.).

So that the couple are 'not disturbed' during the night, the farmer explains that he will lock the door from the outside. At this point, the Traveller women's suspicions are aroused, and she becomes aware of a table in the barn with a small bottle and a cloth on it. The

farmer retires and the Traveller couple are left alone in the barn. Presently, the couple hear ‘scufflin’ on the roof [...] so they look up tae the skylight an’ they see a young lad’s face’ (ibid.). The young lad gives them a warning in the form of a song:

Ochane, lads, I darena tell,  
 But if I was you, I’d rise and run.  
 Do you see that bottle o’ chloroform?  
 It will be your death, oh, before the morn.

(ibid.)

After hearing the song, the Traveller woman is left in no doubt that the couple are among Burkers. Their fear is intensified when the Traveller woman notices blood stains on the floor of the barn and the couple flee through the skylight, leaving all their possessions behind. The blood on the floor of the barn – coupled with the chloroform and the lad’s warning – is worthy of note: if the farmer and his household are indeed in the business of Burking, why would their trap be stained with the blood of their victims? Surely the anatomists were paying for complete and unspoiled corpses. One plausible explanation for this is a practical one; after the victims had been incapacitated and smothered, the Burkers and Resurrectionists would have the grisly task of dismembering or re-arranging the corpses to facilitate the smuggling of the bodies to the metropolitan schools.

Evidence of such practices comes from Doctor Knox’s biographer, Henry Lonsdale: ‘all sorts of schemes were resorted to for the carriage of bodies’, Lonsdale writes, ‘the Resurrectionists personified dry-salters, pork-curers, purveyors of animals for museums [...] nothing was too base for them to do’ (1870: 60-61). John Stewart relates an experience that his grandfather had involving dismembered bodies; lodging in a barn for the night, Stewart’s grandfather came across a rainwater barrel and ‘he lifted the top off the barrel and in there it was parts of human bodies [...] and it wasn’t water that was in the barrel – it was vinegar’

(cited in Douglas 1985: 258). Happily, the Travellers in Geordie Stewart's account escape and hide up a tree where they hear the voice of the Burker-farmer in pursuit, "they cannae be far, they must be here aboot somewey'", complains the Burker-farmer (TAD 3817). Despite their searches, the Traveller couple escape from the Burker-farmer and his daughter, safely hidden in the branches of the tree. In the morning, the couple ask for help at a house they find on the roadside. The house is that of the keeper of the estate and the couple relate their story. The keeper is troubled as his son works on the farm in question and immediately calls the police; the Burker-farmer and his daughter deny any incident and no action is taken. However, sometime later, the estate keeper searches around the Burker farm and finds the dead body of his son. The police return and the Burker-farmer and his daughter are imprisoned for murder. Here again, the conclusion of Stewart's Burker account involves the Travellers engaged in a social relationship that stands in direct opposition to their encounters with the Burkers.

The motif of intoxication – in Stewart's account above embodied by the chloroform – also speaks to the sense of betrayal that underpins the Burker accounts under discussion throughout this chapter. As we have seen, the Burker accounts employ ironically cast characters that amplify this sense of betrayal; the red-headed hosts, for instance, where the ultimate saviour becomes the ultimate betrayer. For Edwards, the 'murderous host is the most terrifying tale there is' (cited in McCracken-Flesher 2012: 19) and this is doubly so in the case of Burking, where the victims are first intoxicated then smothered. Stewart's account intensifies the Burker experience with the inclusion of the visceral details of the criminals' methods: first, the barn door locked from the outside; then the discovery of the chloroform and the lad's warning from above; finally, the previous victims' blood nonchalantly left for the ensuing victims to contemplate. In a recent interview with the author, Davie Donaldson shared a Burker account that explores the very same themes

encountered throughout this chapter. Donaldson's account begins with the recollection of the roadman's house that once existed in the Sma' Glen in central Perthshire; 'there's a story aboot my Great-Grandfather, Willie, he wis oot hackin [hawking]', begins Donaldson, 'like many Burker stories they start with someone hackin [...] ye wouldnae hack the road if you were telt these stories' (Interview 2019: 33m 30s).<sup>16</sup>

From the outset, Donaldson situates his account in reality through his reference to his kin and is clearly aware of the tradition to which his account belongs. Moreover, Donaldson continues to contextualise his account with topographical details; his Great-Grandfather and two companions were hawking in the Sma' Glen, which was 'the main road to the Highlands for a very long time, so that was the main route for Traivellers' (ibid.: 33m 38s). This description of the road through the Sma' Glen – now the modern A822 – has indeed been the preferred route for some centuries, being the route favoured by General Wade for his military road in the first half of the eighteenth century, and earlier still by the northern cattle drovers heading south to market in the Scottish Lowlands (Haldane 1952: 32, 103). As we have seen previously, the richness of context in the Burker accounts firmly roots the narratives in a reality that is both recognisable and meaningful. Donaldson's protagonists are situated on familiar ground, but soon find themselves in a precarious situation when 'it's getting kinda dark, and they've no got nothin wi them' (Interview 2019: 34m 13s). The company approach a farmhouse to seek lodgings for the night and are welcomed by the farmer and his wife. The Travellers are then given food and whisky and enjoy a pleasant evening with their hosts. When it is time to sleep, the farmer offers the Travellers a space in his barn for the night and Donaldson's account takes a sinister turn. Under a dubious pretence of fire safety, the farmer insists on taking his guests' cigarettes, candles and lighters, so 'the boys all hand over their things' (ibid.: 35m 32s).

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<sup>16</sup> Recordings of the fieldwork carried out as part of this project are available to the reader digitally on the SharePoint site associated with this thesis.

However, a member of the company, Duncan Newlands, ‘never trusted country-folk [non-Travellers]’ (ibid.: 35m 43s) so has kept a candle, the means to light it and a deck of cards. The captives soon discover they are not alone in the barn when Donaldson’s grandfather finds a dead body and piles of the previous victims’ clothing. At this point, the grandfather realises their danger when he ‘kens, right there and then, ken aa these stories o Burkers comes right intae his heid’ (ibid.: 36m 25s); the Travellers then hear the voice of the farmer, assuming the captives are asleep after their food and whisky, “‘they’re up there boys””, the farmer whispers, “‘gimme the payment noo and yis can take them”” (ibid.: 36m 45s). After hearing this, the company flee for their lives, suspecting that their antagonists are ‘medical students, because Glenalmond College is just doon the road from Sma’ Glen’ (ibid.: 37m 04s). Eventually, the companions come to the roadman’s house where ‘they don’t have to say anything. The roadman’s like, “right boys, I ken exactly, come here an I’ll hide yis [you]”’ (ibid.: 37m 23s).

As with the previous examples explored above, Donaldson’s account shares the fundamental Burkean structure: an everyday situation evolves into a precarious one; the protagonists seek refuge and are subsequently held captive by malevolent hosts; and finally, the captives escape and find true refuge with a benevolent host. Similarly, Donaldson frames his account in a reality that is at once socially, historically and geographically situated. During Donaldson’s contextual introduction to his Burker account, he explains that ‘in those days, you could go an chap a door of a fairmhoose and they’d let ye in because fermers relied on Traivellers so much, they were quite good to us’ (ibid.: 34m 00s). Here again, the premise that the Travellers’ Burker accounts are predicated on a persecution complex is undermined. In Donaldson’s account, the protagonists have no reason to suspect that the farmers mean to murder them and sell their bodies. The poignancy of Donaldson’s account lies in the very opposite, where the weary Travellers place their trust in their hosts and are

betrayed. When Duncan Newlands anticipates some trickery and smuggles the candle and light into the barn, by virtue of his willingness to sleep in the barn anyway, Newlands' sleight is better read as insubordination. Following the previous examples examined above, Donaldson's contemporary Burker account is further evidence of the social reality that these narratives negotiate.

The Travellers' relationship with the settled community is what is at stake, and the relationship is far from one-sided. Consider Jock Stewart's escape from the turnip shed with his pocketknife, or Jess Smith's grandmother hoodwinking the would-be child-snatcher, or Newlands smuggling a candle and card game into his captivity. What is consistently being undermined is the inequitable social relationship between the Travellers and the, ironically, unaccommodating settled population. As I have demonstrated, the Travellers' Burker accounts often end with a new sense of equilibrium that challenges entrenched misunderstandings of the Travellers' deeds and intentions. Moreover, the use of intoxicants brings the Burker accounts to their most menacing zenith; the idea that your host will render you insensible, commit murder, then commodify your dead body is a universally unconscionable taboo. As McCracken-Flesher observes, many mainstream narrative re-imaginings intimated by the activities of Burke and Knox speak to deep human anxieties (2012: 19). The Travellers' Burker tradition is no exception. What *is* exceptional is the way that this national trauma continues to manifest itself in meaningful resonances among Scotland's Travellers.

## **Summary**

This chapter has provided an outline of Burke's activities and the way that his crimes penetrated the imaginations of the Scottish population. We also saw the way that the medical

establishment has been implicated in the use of corpses as far back as 1506 with James IV's recognition and patronage of the *Edinburgh Guild of Surgeons and Barbers*. By the first half of the nineteenth century, the relationship between the anatomists and illegally sourced corpses for dissection was forever cemented in Scotland's history by the activities of Burke and his associates. After Burke was executed, the complicit Knox was never held accountable and this engendered both mistrust of the medical establishment and what McCracken-Flesher characterises as an unresolvable social trauma for Scotland (2012: 23).

Through detailed analysis of examples of the Travellers' Burker storytelling tradition, one hypothesis has been problematised while another more significant finding has been revealed. The hypothesis that the Burker accounts represent a deep-seated persecution complex, propounded by Henderson and others, has been shown to be only a single element of this pervasive tradition. As we have seen, many Burker accounts can certainly be read in this way due to the very nature of the narratives; a powerful establishment preying on marginalised members of the community to further their own ends is, ultimately, the theme of the accounts. If the Burker accounts are indeed simply a negotiation of this anxiety, why do they manifest themselves in this very specific way? This is the question that this chapter has addressed. Consequentially, I have demonstrated how the dynamism of my methodological approach can uncover more significant meanings below the surface of the narratives. The captivity and escape are symbolic of an inherent ideological difference between Travellers and the settled population. The structure, or pattern, of the Burker stories thereby reflects an immanent *ideological* pattern; the precariousness, captivity and liberation reflects the central importance of these three factors in the lives of the protagonists. In the same way that Lévi-Strauss' structural analysis recognised a sociological dimension to the myth of Asdiwal, the Travellers' Burker stories represent a narrative negotiation of their lived experiences and an affirmation of their chosen lifestyles. Jameson's insights into the

efficacy of the structural analysis of narrative are informative here; the ideology of the social group being studied – ‘ideology’ being understood, broadly, as a system of values and beliefs – is not wholly responsible for the cultural expressions of the group (2010: 1829). Instead, cultural expressions, such as narratives, are ideological acts in themselves because they function as reactions or solutions to unresolvable social circumstances. Consider Douglas’ observation that the pattern of the Travellers’ Burker stories ‘caused them [tellers and listeners] to live through the kind of experience they dreaded, thereby defusing it of its terror’ (1985: 262). The latent function, from this perspective, is indeed the symbolic resolution of a real contradiction; the contradiction lies in the fact that the Travellers will never be able to validate their lifestyles to the settled population. In this sense, the Burker tradition is a symbolic arena that is based on real contradictions and where ideological differences are mediated.

The Travellers’ Burker stories are often presented as having actually happened to the narrator, or to someone they know, and take on the aspect of legends. Again, the way that the Travellers’ narrative negotiations manifest are hardly surprising given their relative vulnerability as a minority social group. The fact that the Travellers’ stories are recounted as reality is the crucial point. What cannot be disputed is the *social* reality in which the stories were conceived and where they continue to be shared. The underlying social contradiction that is being resolved is the narrative affirmation of a fundamental ideological differentiation with the settled population. As we have witnessed throughout this thesis, the Travellers’ stories are permeated with themes that, under close examination, challenge mainstream doctrines and ways of interacting with the world. The sense of insecurity that is deeply embedded within the Burker tradition stems from an ongoing differentiation with the ideologies of the *dominant* institutions. What is at stake within the Burker tradition is the fragility of the Travellers and their chosen lifestyles. From this perspective, the overarching

function of the Burkean narratives becomes more than an unsatisfactory negotiation between the Travellers and an antagonistic ‘outside world’. The binary antagonism between Travellers and the outside world certainly exists, both in reality and in the stories. However, by mapping the structure of these narratives, it has been demonstrated that these cultural expressions embody a more deeply felt imperative toward existential freedom and the ideological decision to favour a lifestyle that is at odds with mainstream sensibilities. Stanley Robertson’s Burker warning, sung in Cant, sums up this position more effectively:

Hah aa the hantle's habben,

[...]

But dinnae sloch the hantle's slab.<sup>17</sup>

(TAD 65216)

Robertson’s verse here evokes a sentiment that goes a long way to encapsulate how the Travellers’ oral traditions engage with mainstream discourses; the central sustenance is the same and palatable, but the nuances that wash it down can be none but their own. Or as Douglas concludes of the Burkean tradition, ‘the function these stories have or had in the Traveller’s life, can be summed up by saying they helped the Traveller to preserve his identity’ (1984: 120). From these perspectives, the Travellers’ Burker tradition functions as resistance to form of contamination that reaches its monstrous apotheosis in the crimes of William Burke and Robert Knox.

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Eat all the non-Travellers’ food / But do not drink the non-Travellers’ tea’.

## Chapter 5

### *Super-empirical* Story Spaces

‘A train of thought, which leads at last to a wild weird story’.

– John Francis Campbell (1860-62 vol. I: xvii)

So far, I have demonstrated how beliefs, values and cultural identities manifest and are negotiated within the folklore of the Travellers. I have argued that the function of the stories within Traveller storytelling traditions is to express and transmit complex Traveller-centric themes between the people who share them. What is also becoming clear is the distinctive Nackian idiom that this thesis set out to reveal in detail. During my corpus-building activities for the present research, I identified many narratives that display an overt engagement with supernatural actors and/or locations. Building on my insights from the previous two analytical chapters, the present chapter makes a more detailed examination of narratives that utilise supernaturalism when negotiating worldview and ideology. I consider narratives where supernatural elements appear within empirical reality and argue that supernatural narratives serve a crucial social function within the storytelling traditions of the Travellers. To do this, I reconceptualise the nomenclature in describing such stories, accounting for their status within the Travellers’ traditions and advocating the term *super-empirical* to describe fantastical story spaces. I go on to present further detailed evidence of the way that super-empirical stories function within Traveller traditions. The ubiquity of the fantastic in international traditions speaks to its universal relevance to social life, while its local manifestations are ideal subjects for interrogations of the social life of discrete communities.

The super-empirical world is an exemplary conduit for the sense of cultural continuity that we have encountered time and again throughout this thesis. In this chapter, I provide a brief summary of historical attitudes toward the supernatural in Scotland and how these attitudes affected later folkloric scholarship. This summary illuminates conceptualisations of the supernatural in Scotland's folklore to place the Travellers' traditions within the context of the wider Scottish tradition. I do not intend for this summary to be comprehensive, but to invoke specific collectors of Scottish folklore, arguing that their contributions continue to shape the way we understand storytelling to this day. I go on to provide an overview of the supernatural in the Travellers' traditions using extant examples from the SSS Archives and related literature. I then deliver a theoretical justification for my examinations of specific stories, where interdisciplinary insights from critical analyses of the fantastic are brought to bear on the super-empirical narratives of the Travellers. My purpose here is to reinforce the conclusions of the preceding chapters with further detailed evidence. I contend that the super-empirical story spaces of Traveller storytellers represent an antidote to perceptions of otherness whilst showcasing their distinctive ideological makeup. Tobler has suggested recently that the Travellers' 'stories and ballads helped hold their communities together', because 'without a specific location to refer to as their neighborhood, their literary culture is what helped them share their histories, their morals, and their beliefs' (2012: 83). I expand on this concept to demonstrate *how* super-empirical story spaces function as ideological locations. Throughout this chapter, I retain the term 'supernatural' in keeping with the literature with which I engage and to describe certain characters. The term super-empirical is reserved for the definition of the story spaces as a genre.

## 5.1 Supernatural Scotland

The association between folklore and the supernatural can be traced back to the earliest proponents of folkloric research. The publication of William Camden's *Britannia* in 1586 sparked an interest in 'antiquities', the study of the past which initially focused on physical remains but later recognised the value of folk memory when trying to understand the past. One such antiquarian, inspired by Camden's work, was John Aubrey (1626–97) who perceived that the lore of the folk was closely bound up with the supernatural (Dorson 1968: 9). In his survey of early folklore research in Britain, Dorson notes that Aubrey's *Miscellanies*, published in 1696, represents a record of conceptualisations of the supernatural that would not be out of place in the notebook of a modern folklorist (ibid.: 5). By conducting collections in the field during 'walking trips', early folklorists such as Aubrey realised that a central thread in the 'miscellanies' of the folk was supernatural in aspect. Aubrey also makes a penetrating insight into the behaviour of oral folklore when he remarks that 'the divine art of printing and gunpowder have frightened away Robin-goodfellow [Puck, hobgoblin] and the fayries' (cited in Dorson 1968: 6). From the outset, then, those interested in the study of folklore realised that the supernatural played a central role in the material they encountered, but more significantly, that social conditions impact the way that supernatural beliefs manifest themselves within folkloric expressions. These two characteristics of the supernatural in folklore feed directly into my primary research question as I continue to examine how the Travellers' storytelling traditions condition and represent their distinctive worldviews. To situate and better understand Traveller expressions of fantastical happenings, I gather a selection of pertinent discourses around the supernatural in Scotland's intellectual history.

As early as 1575 in Scotland, customs and rituals that exist outside of organised religion were already being condemned by the learned classes as 'fantastical imaginations' and

‘abused science’ (*Records of the Parliament of Scotland to 1707*: March 1575, online).

Within the context of such fantastic imaginations – as perceived by the *Records of the Parliament of Scotland to 1707* – those specifically admonished were the ‘idle people calling themselves Egyptians’ and ‘strong and idle beggars’ (ibid.). The *Records* mention of Gypsies and Travellers in this context is telling. Marginalised communities are viewed as particularly susceptible to such flights of fancy, ostracising them further through their association with irrational belief systems. Legislation followed throughout the sixteenth century in Scotland, specifically targeting those regarded as the custodians of folklore. By suppressing tradition-bearers, officialdom aimed to change the meaning and context of folk beliefs, a process that Max Weber termed the ‘disenchantment of the world’ (Henderson and Cowan 2001: 115-116). Outside of *officially sanctioned* belief systems then, the supernatural in Scotland is relegated to the very fringes of society. Henderson and Cowan put this down to the suppression of folk belief during the Scottish Reformation (c. 1530-60), where ‘pagan’ superstitions and supernatural events were reconceptualised under the auspices of Calvinistic Christianity (2001: 116).

The tide begins to turn around a hundred years later with Robert Kirk’s *The Secret Commonwealth*, written around 1691 and distributed in manuscript form. Kirk was a church minister and accomplished scholar and his short book amounts to a defence of supernatural folk belief that aims to ‘supress the impudent and growing atheism of this age’ (1893 [1691]: 3). Kirk fused first-hand accounts of supernatural experiences with biblical evidence, arguing that belief in fairies did not contradict Christian theology. Instead, supernatural beings, such as fairies and fauns, are merely a part of God’s creation and ultimately must ‘bow to the name of Jesus’ (Kirk 1893 [1691]: 69). Kirk’s career as a minister in Highland parishes, along with his knowledge of Gaelic language and beliefs, resulted in what Hunter calls ‘a slightly strange book, which combines what is effectively reportage of folklore with erudite

speculation and biblical exegesis' (2001: 12). *The Secret Commonwealth* is an unparalleled account of supernatural belief systems in Reformation Scotland and its legacy represents a milestone in our understanding of supernatural folk beliefs. For instance, in an edition of 1893, Andrew Lang introduces *The Secret Commonwealth* by commenting that 'as to the Fairy belief, we conceive it to be a complex matter, from which tradition, with its memory of earth-dwellers, is not wholly absent' (1893: lxxv). Lang goes on to suggest that folk beliefs in the supernatural are in part due to the 'survival of the pre-Christian Hades, and to the belief in local spirits' (ibid.).

Kirk's book reconceptualises the supernatural in folklore because it highlights the fact that esoteric belief systems do not necessarily have to contradict dominant ontologies. Such beliefs are better understood as complex, localised negotiations of traditions that symbolically represent alternative worldviews. Another significant commentator writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century was Martin Martin. Born on Skye and a native Gaelic speaker, Martin was one of the first writers to capture the lives and culture of the Gaelic-speaking population in the Western Isles of Scotland (Cowan 2009: 20). Martin introduces his seminal work – *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* – by explaining that 'there are several instances of heathenism and pagan superstition among the inhabitants of the islands [but] only a few of the oldest and most ignorant of the vulgar are guilty' (1716: xiv). His introductory remarks are unsurprising, given the second edition from which I quote is dedicated to the reigning protestant monarch, George I (ibid.: iii). 'These practices are only to be found where the reformed religion has not prevailed', Martin continues, 'for 'tis to the progress of that alone, that the banishment of evil spirits, as well as of evil customs, is owing, when all other methods proved ineffectual' (ibid.: xiv). Martin's book goes on to cover a range of topics from mackerel running ashore with the spring tide, to the longevity and charity of 'the natives', to his famous account of second sight. Here, despite his pious preface

and dedication, Martin informs us that if ‘everything for which the learned are not able to give a satisfying account be condemned as impossible, we may find many other things generally believed, that must be rejected as false by this rule’ (ibid.: 308). Like Kirk, Martin’s conceptualisations recognise that ostensibly ‘impossible’ phenomena do not necessarily have to contradict observable empirical reality. It is only that, from Martin’s eighteenth-century perspective, we do not fully understand the phenomena and their role in human culture: ‘if we know so little of natural causes, how much less can we pretend to things that are supernatural?’ (ibid.: 309).

During the Scottish Enlightenment, the scepticism of David Hume highlighted the debate around the role of the supernatural; it was not only esoteric folk beliefs that were being challenged by rationalism and scepticism. In ‘On Miracles’, Hume asks us to consider the miraculous incidents within ‘a book [the Bible], presented to us by a barbarous and ignorant people’, concluding that the Christian religion ‘cannot be believed by any reasonable person’ (2007 [1748]: 94) without the person also believing in the miracles that Hume undermines. Hume’s commentary gets to the core of the debate around the role of the supernatural in human societies by challenging the merits of one supernatural belief system over others. For Kidd, such challenges to the Church’s authority placed the supernatural at the ‘forefront of public discourse in the age of Enlightenment’, because ‘church and state were inextricably intertwined’ (2009: 91). One effect of Enlightenment debate around religious belief systems was that conceptualisations of the supernatural were fundamentally altered in the Scottish public’s consciousness. ‘Belief, or unbelief, in supernatural phenomena’, says Henderson, ‘was just one of the realms of Scottish intellectual, social and political life’ (2009: xx) affected by Enlightenment discourses. These effects are still being felt to this day, where Kidd points out that ‘the unofficial folkloric supernaturalism of the wider public is perceived as a quaint, but marginal, curiosity in a high technology-driven consumer society’ (2009: 91).

My forthcoming analyses showcase how supernaturalism manifests in the Travellers' storytelling traditions and how it functions to negotiate some of the central principles of consumer society, setting out challenges to dominant ideological constructs.

## **5.2 (Re)Conceptualising the 'Supernatural' – Towards the Super-empirical**

To get at such traditions, early students of folklore like Kirk relied on the collection of evidence from the folk, and it is to such methodologies that I now turn. I argued in Chapter 3 above – concurring with Zipes (1997: 42) – that the Grimms' and others' versions of international tales were moulded by their authors to suit their own sensibilities and those of their elite readership. To a large extent in Scotland, James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and Translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language* (1760) represents a similar motivation by its author. Macpherson – an aspiring poet, schoolmaster and latterly MP for Camelford in Cornwall – claimed that his collection of prose-poems was the work of an ancient Scottish bard, the eponymous 'Ossian' (Moore 2017: 2-5; West 2012: 48). The *Fragments* were indeed collected in the Highlands by Macpherson, and others, and based on Gaelic oral traditions. However, their antiquity and ascription to a single poet was a fabrication by Macpherson: the texts were composed from the twelfth century onwards by professional poets working in Classical Common Gaelic, then were absorbed into Gaelic tradition and adapted to vernacular Gaelic (Gunderloch 2013: 75-76). During his own lifetime, Macpherson was maligned over his editorial and marketing practices. Shaw, for instance, commented in 1781 that 'the whole machinery is nothing but the superstition of the Highlands, poetically embellished' (1781: 25). Modern scholarship is similarly aware of Macpherson's collection that was in fact 'based on oral and manuscript traditions, common to Scotland and Ireland, which were woven into a new and polished

narrative to suit the modern tastes of the 18th century' (West 2012: 51). The supernatural aspects of Macpherson's *Fragments* – along with his subsequent Ossianic publications *Fingal* (1762) and *Temora* (1763) – were relegated during his 'translation'. Macpherson's Celtic world 'was one of noble warriors, not a quaint fairyland of giants and magicians', so 'the witches and monsters which feature in the popular Highland ballads had to be condemned as interpolations and stripped away' (Stafford 1988: 83). Although Macpherson's poetry cannot be viewed as folkloric, it worked to stimulate interest in Scotland's national folklore and had a tangible effect on the way folklore was perceived.

For instance, writing in *The Edinburgh Review*, Walter Scott's admiration is clear when he remarks that 'Macpherson may have collected and used many original poems now lost', and that 'perhaps more than one half was authorised by an authentic original' (1805: 445, 461). Scott's own preoccupation with folk narrative appears throughout his published works and personal correspondence; *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-3), *Introductions and Notes and Illustrations to the Novels, Tales, and Romances of the Author of Waverley* (1833) and Scott's letters, to the likes of Jacob Grimm, are testament to his lifelong fascination with Scotland's oral traditions (West 2012: 51-52; Dorson 1968: 109). Scott's *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, first published in 1830, was another landmark elucidation of supernatural narratives recorded in Scotland. Within the *Letters*, Scott recounts and reflects on a multitude of accounts of supernatural occurrences, some from persons of 'sense and estimation' (1830: 34). Scott's *Letters* can be read as a rational treatment of witches, fairies, ghosts and the generally uncanny as experienced by a broad range of individuals from various sectors of British society. Within his treatments of anecdotes and memorates, Scott anticipates the value that we now see in folkloric expressions because he does not dismiss them immediately as mere 'fantastical imaginations'. However, Scott laments that 'the present fashion of the world seems to be ill suited for studies of this fantastic nature', and that

‘the most ordinary mechanic has learning sufficient to laugh at the figments which in former times were believed by persons far advanced in the deepest knowledge of the age’ (ibid.: 401).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the concept that latent meanings exist within oral storytelling was recognised by Campbell while compiling his *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860-62). In his introduction, Campbell observes that he became aware of many tales whose defining characteristics are sagacity and hidden meaning (1860-62 vol. I: xliii). Moreover, Campbell appreciated that not only do popular stories have specific meanings, but that the stories are conditioned by the cultural context in which they exist. Describing one international tale he had heard, Campbell remarks that ‘it bore the stamp of the mind of the class, and of the man, who told it in his own peculiar dialect, and who dressed the actors in his own ideas’ (ibid.: xlvii).<sup>18</sup> Not only this, but the supernatural nature of many of the tales Campbell and his fieldworkers collected is clear. For example, the second volume of *Popular Tales* includes a selection of ‘Twenty-nine Fairy Tales’ (1860-62 vol. II: vi), on which Campbell comments, ‘I am quite sure that the fairy creed of the peasantry [...] is not a whit more unreasonable than the bodily appearance of the hand of Napoleon the First to Napoleon the Third in 1860’ (ibid.: 72). Campbell understood that supernatural beliefs do not necessarily have to be taken literally and that fantastical stories can convey ideologically significant information using symbolism. As Campbell so eloquently expressed after first encountering the storytelling traditions of Scotland’s Travellers, we will begin ‘a train of thought, which leads at last to a wild weird story’ (1860-62 vol. I: xvii).

Based on Campbell’s commentary throughout *Popular Tales*, his understanding of the material he and his colleagues collected in Scotland is lucid and ground-breaking. That the

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<sup>18</sup> Campbell somewhat anticipates Von Sydow’s concept of the ‘ecotype’ (1934: 349) here, a concept that I introduced in Chapter 4 and one that I continue to advocate as a means to get at the meaning within localised folkloric expressions.

‘mind of the class’ and their ‘own ideas’ are intrinsic to the stories they tell is a penetrating insight into the nature of folklore. That these ideas are often cloaked in the fantastic, and not unreasonably, is further testament to the importance of Campbell’s collection to our understanding of folklore and tradition. To put this in perspective, Campbell’s contemporary Robert Chambers viewed the folkloric material that he collected differently. Chambers’ 1841 preface to the third edition of *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* explains to his readers that the *Rhymes* constitute ‘the production of rustic wits, in some the whimsies of mere children’, and that we should not therefore ‘expect here anything profound, or sublime, or elegant, or affecting’ (1858 [1826]: vi). For Chambers, supernatural belief in Scotland was something that ‘was universally acknowledged amongst the unenlightened’ (ibid.: 110). Similarly, Hugh Miller’s voluminous *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland* (1835) was motivated by the preservation of local ‘histories’, with little attention being paid to the substance of the material itself.

Of his *Scenes and Legends*, Miller remarks in his dedication that ‘some of them seem to have sprung out of minds darkened by ignorance and superstition’, while others ‘may be considered as the fragments of codes of belief that have long since fallen into desuetude’ (1835: ix). In this sense, ‘Campbell broke new ground’, notes Dorson, ‘focusing attention on the tellers and the way in which they manipulated their texts’ (1968: 400). Mention must be made here of John Francis Campbell’s contemporary and correspondent, John Gregorson Campbell. Gregorson Campbell’s *Superstitions of the Highlands & Islands of Scotland*, published in 1900, is a collection of what Gregorson Campbell called ‘Gaelic lore’ that he hoped would ‘prove of some scientific value’ (cited in Black 2005 [1900]: lxxxiii). Gregorson Campbell’s book captures a variety of narratives, collected from across Scotland, relating the attributes and activities of fairies, ghosts, second sight, witchcraft and the Devil. Like his contemporary John Francis Campbell, Gregorson Campbell understood that

supernatural belief can provide insights into the social life of its proponents; ‘the fairy creed’, says Gregorson Campbell, ‘is a polished and amusing satire on the vanity of human pleasures and the emptiness of what is commonly called “life”’ (ibid.: xcii). By the beginning of the twentieth century then, the understanding that ‘supernatural’ phenomena within folklore reflect real social concerns had crystallised. Black states it plainly: the supernatural in folklore is ‘a psychological and metaphorical construct designed to help ordinary people struggle through a difficult life from day to day [...] by the power of oral narrative’ (2005: lxxviii).

My overarching point here is that so-called *super-natural* narratives allow narrators to resolve real anxieties and contradictions in imaginary story spaces (cf. Jameson 2010: 1828), spaces that can therefore be regarded as *super-empirical* rather than *super-natural*. There is a subtle distinction between the two terms, supernatural and super-empirical, but it has significant implications when it comes to addressing my research question about ideological discourses within Traveller storytelling. I unpack this distinction and its relevance in the next section. That fact that fantastical narratives continue to be collected, scrutinised, collated and published in Scotland, and beyond, is testament to their relevance in understanding storytelling and the social life of their narrators. When it comes to the symbolism inherent in supernatural narratives, Black suggests that when we use these symbols to inquire into the social significance of a given story, the answer can be startling (2005: lxxviii). For my purposes, the social aspect of super-empirical storytelling can be taken further to include ideological negotiations that get to the heart of how our societies are organised.

### 5.3 Super-empirical Story Spaces in the Travellers' Traditions

I argued in my opening chapter above that the inner consistency of the Travellers' storytelling traditions is based on the concept of filiation; filiation being defined as an individual's conviction in the veracity and reliability of transmitted traditional material. Under these conditions, 'secondary belief' is engendered by what Braid describes as an interpretive frame (2002: 155). Within this frame, the transmitted traditional material – supernaturally-themed or otherwise – creates fictive narrative spaces that are based on concrete social realities. Consequentially, the term 'supernatural' itself is understood here not in theological terms that imply a hierarchical world where the divine transcends biological reality (Valk and Sävborg 2018: 16), but as a socio-cultural phenomenon, where the 'super-' prefix does not indicate something which is 'beyond natural'. Instead, stories that include a fantastical, miraculous or magical element are considered within a cognitive category, where Raverty sees 'human metaphorical and analogical capabilities, especially in imaginatively enlarging upon sense data and empirical reality, are given free rein' (2003: 118).

Similarly, Walker remarks that 'aspects of the supernatural act as an integral part of belief constructions and behaviour patterns, and, in many instances, have significant cultural function and effect' (1995: 1). For Walker, these aspects are the pervasiveness of the supernatural in the everyday lives of a range of cultures, and the notion that the 'supernatural' is not necessarily synonymous with the 'miraculous' (ibid.). Talmont-Kaminski voices similar concerns when it comes to using the term 'supernatural' to describe apparently magical phenomena; the 'concept of the supernatural, understood as that which is beyond scientific investigation', says Talmont-Kaminski, 'does not provide us with an adequate description of either magic or religion' (2014: 52). Talmont-Kaminski puts this inadequacy down to common definitions of what supernatural phenomena *are*, that is, whatever science cannot investigate or explain (ibid.: 47). In other words, that which is deemed beyond our

current scientific capabilities to comprehend is ‘supernatural’; ‘super-empirical’ phenomena, on the other hand, are cognitive and cultural belief systems where empirical investigation is redundant because their contents do not require evidence in order to function (ibid.: 73).

In practice, I use the term super-empirical to argue that narrative worlds are social realities in their own right because, despite their intangibility, they do the work of engendering social relationships and discourses. This is the key differentiator that I use to define the narratives under discussion here; the stories are not super-*natural* per se because the themes they engage with are based firmly on ‘natural’ social relations. From an anthropological perspective, Jindra argues that “‘Supernatural’ as a term does seem to allow people, especially in the West, to communicate some things about their experience of the world’ (2003: 159). This is because, according to Jindra, in their search for meaning, people incorporate diverse practices that resist categorisation as either natural or supernatural (ibid.: 164). Although Jindra focuses on institutional faiths, the concept is relevant here because the narratives that I focus on relate to real social conditions. Smith agrees, citing an elementary sociological principle; with humans as narrating beings, super-empirical narratives function ‘to make sense of the meaning of self, life, history, and the world’, because ‘one *has* to get outside of them, to “transcend” them, and interpret them within horizons and frameworks of perspective derived from beyond the object of interpretation’ (2003: 120, italics and emphasis in original). Smith continues: individual humans cannot self-define without the ability to locate themselves ‘within stories and cultural orders outside and beyond themselves’ (ibid.). Narratives thereby allow us to ‘inhabit orders that are not only moral but also super-empirical in their sources’ (ibid.).

In the same way that institutional faiths use narrative to deliver meaning, I argue, concurring with Black cited above, that fantastical episodes within traditional narratives function as metaphorical constructs; these constructs serve to communicate nuanced

experiences of the world. The term *super-empirical* is therefore deployed to describe a category of storytelling that reflexively *uses* ‘supernatural’ occurrences as rhetorical devices. For example, religious narratives can be termed super-empirical because their pro-social function does not rely on empirical evidence, but on faith. Or as Smith puts it, ‘this approach intentionally emphasises the super-empirical rather than the more commonly referenced supernatural’, this because the term ‘supernatural implies that the unseen order is not a part of nature, and that nature consists only of physical matter’ (ibid.: 95). The stories I examine below similarly rely on the awareness of their allegorical function. Moreover, the distinction between what is ‘natural’ and what is ‘supernatural’ can be conceptualised as a cultural one. Ní Fhloinn has pointed this out already, noting that the ‘distinction between the natural world and the supernatural is often a subjective one, determined largely by culture’ (1999: 223). In this sense, although the events and characters within the cultural expressions that the present thesis examines are outside of the consensus of ‘reality’, they are by no means beyond what is natural.

An incisive example of such cultural definition comes from Conall Ó Beirn – a tradition-bearer from County Donegal in Ireland – who gives an account of belief in fairies while he was growing up. Discussing his grandfather’s beliefs in fairies, Ó Beirn remarks that ‘he himself was a firm believer in them, and he never went to the bog for a creel of turf without expecting to see them’ (1977: 35). Within this belief system, the ‘supernatural’ fairies are viewed as part of the natural order. The quotidian aspect of Ó Beirn’s description, his grandfather out gathering peat, precisely captures the cultural conceptualisation of fairy belief. The idea that an encounter with fairies in the natural environment was to be considered an everyday possibility separates them from the supernatural world, placing them instead within a super-empirical reality that has culturally significant meaning. Ó Beirn goes on to explain that the fairies ‘rarely harmed people, but it is true that anyone who interfered with

them or failed to follow their advice was unlikely to thrive' (ibid.: 37). When it comes to narratives involving fairies in the context of Donegal traditions, Ní Néill points out that cultural information about 'fairy ways' is usually communicated through legends (1977: 21). By sharing such stories about the deeds, and misdeeds, of fairies, tradition-bearers like Ó Beirn incorporate fairies into a cultural reality that does not rely on conceptualisations of things that are 'outside' of nature to function.

In short, the 'reality' of the narratives might be outside of some empirically defined consensus, however the *culturally defined* narrative coheres and is consistent with the inner reality of the story space. Under these conditions a *truly* supernatural narrative is difficult to conceive of because all fictional narrative has a purpose, in one way or another. Herein lies the subtle distinction I alluded to in section 5.2 above; the difference between supernatural and super-empirical narratives is that super-empiricist readings do not require evidence for the conclusions to be valid, whereas a supernaturalist reading implies that the narrative is somehow 'beyond' our ability to understand. The *function* of super-empirical story spaces is based on the argument that the 'construction of meaning is basic to humanity, and the cold rationalism of naturalistic philosophies can rarely be satisfactory in this endeavour' (Jindra 2003: 165). Moreover, within super-empirical story spaces, allegory and symbolism are made explicit by the very contents of the narratives that take place there. The 'cold rationalism' of naturalistic story spaces is dispensed with to allow for different messages to be delivered by the narrative. Allegory, then, is at the heart of super-empirical narratives and Todorov's insight into the function of the fantastic makes this plain; allegory, says Todorov, 'implies the existence of at least two meanings', where meanings are 'indicated in the work in an explicit fashion' (1975: 63). My analyses draw out these explicit meanings based on the principle that the Travellers' super-empirical narratives are inculcated with ideological discourses.

It is important to point out here that the stories under examination in the present chapter are not fairy tales. This is because, although the narratives sometimes share characteristics with international (ATU) tales, they are not literary creations. Literary creations – such as D'Aulnoy's seventeenth-century *Contes des Fées* [Fairy Tales] seen in Chapter 3 above – are useful for comparative purposes because they imply hierarchical distinctions between literary versions of internationally common stories and their supposedly inferior, yet cognate, versions among 'the folk' (Teverson 2019: 11). On the other hand, the stories discussed in the present chapter are primarily oral and could arguably be described as legends. That is to say, the stories report the deeds of human actors and purport to have an historical basis – as opposed to myths, where the actors are often deities and the narratives seek to account for the origin of human and/or natural phenomena. Bascom sees legends as the 'counterpart in verbal tradition of written history' (1965: 5) that deal in hidden treasure and ghosts. Dégh goes further: 'the legend is a story about an extranormal (supernatural or its equivalent) experience', says Dégh, 'attested by situational facts' (1991: 30). Furthermore, the legend's narrative takes place within specific cultural realms, says Dégh, and 'contradicts the accepted norms and values of society at large' (ibid.). The stories under analysis here satisfy Dégh's conceptualisation of legends: the 'situational facts' are the verisimilitudes with Travellers' lived experiences; fantastical experiences are had; and the stories challenge mainstream conventions. For example, Linda Williamson – widow of the Traveller storyteller Duncan Williamson – points out that although some of Duncan's stories engender a fairy tale atmosphere, they are truthful in their portrayal of real life and how Traveller families lived (1983: 152). As we will see, the 'truth', in this sense, is yet another way that super-empirical story spaces function to negotiate social realities that are far from supernatural.

Citing Dégh, Braid agrees that legends function to challenge listeners' understanding of the world and invite them to modify their beliefs and worldviews (2002: 74). Dégh goes

further still, proposing that legends are an ‘ideology-sensitive genre par excellence’, and that, even when not founded on reality, can ‘create reality’ (2001: 5). I expand upon these conceptualisations of legends to account for my own theoretical approach. This expansion is necessary because although the examples that I provide conform to the above conceptualisations of ‘legends’, they also display characteristics that set them apart. For instance, the stories have alignments with ATU magic tales, take place in liminal story spaces, or have direct relationships with place-names. From this perspective, the narratives under examination in this chapter inhabit a particular ‘story space’ that does not necessarily require a label for the stories to be investigable. It is not that these stories *defy* classification, only that my research questions can be sufficiently addressed without engaging in it. At the same time, as I have shown in previous chapters, this thesis is quintessentially ethnological in that it draws comparisons between the Travellers’ stories and other cultures to better understand the former.

Furthermore, I follow Teverson’s position that folk narratives are a means of recovering the worldviews and life experiences of disenfranchised classes of society, whose histories have not been recorded by more conventional means (2013: 126). This perspective is referred to as euhemerism, a perspective that, historically, viewed folk tales as disguised or misremembered history; this after the Greek philosopher Euhemerus of Messene’s notion that the mythological Greek Gods had been real men whose great deeds had transformed them into mythical figures. In modern scholarship, euhemerism focuses on ‘discovering how popular traditional stories reflect the cultural realities of the societies that have shaped them’ (ibid.: 146). The modern euhemerist approach encapsulates the theoretical underpinnings of the present thesis in general. Furthermore, Teverson points out that folk tales can be a means of reconstructing worldviews of marginalised communities that have been unfavourably represented in official records (ibid.: 126). This position on the value of folk tales aligns

similarly well with my overarching research aims, given the ‘official’ representations of Travellers that I have engaged with throughout this thesis.

To get at the Travellers’ cultural realities with their stories, it is useful to consider the approach taken by literary criticism. Discussing what he terms ‘magical narratives’, or ‘romances’, Jameson perceives deeper meanings when it comes to the binary oppositions that are a staple of the genre. ‘The two systems, that of good and evil’, posits Jameson, ‘may indeed prove simply to be different dimensions of the same ideological phenomenon, that of Otherness’ (1975: 141). Jameson’s contention is that the pervasiveness of the supernatural in humanity’s long history of storytelling stems from an innate awareness of difference. Moreover, this sense of otherness expands from the physiological, through the intellectual and eventually into the social. ‘This deep-rooted ideology which has only too clearly the function of drawing the boundaries of a given social order’, provides what Jameson sees as ‘a powerful internal deterrent against deviancy or subversion’ (ibid.: 140). Our perceptions of the other, the alien and the unfamiliar, then, are deeply entrenched in human experience. And when these perceptions interact with complex social structures, the resultant manifestations are equally complex. Perhaps Jameson’s vocabulary of deviance and subversion is a little strong, but the point remains that binary perceptions of otherness are so primordial that they exert an inexorable force on our cultural expressions. For Jameson, this means that the negotiation of difference that ‘magical narratives’ afford performs a crucial social function. The ‘evil forces’ of the supernatural realm are positional, in that they function ‘not by virtue of any particular characteristics of [their] own’ (ibid.: 160), but as relational objects to the position of the ‘good forces’. Jameson’s configuration of good and evil within magical narratives echoes Olrik’s ‘Law of Contrast’ (1992: 50) that I introduced in Chapter 2 above. Like Olrik, Jameson recognises that magical narratives contain explicit dichotomies that

function as mediators. From this perspective, the super-empirical, as a genre, facilitates the negotiation of otherness by allowing the narrator to interrogate their *own* ideologies.

Considering the status of the communities under examination here – and their associated storytellers – this conceptualisation of the function of the super-empirical in storytelling is valuable. Consider the journey of Williamson's Hedgehurst explored in Chapter 4 above; the Hedgehurst's story expressed a self-awareness that transcends social hierarchies, allowing the protagonist to negotiate his own experience of the world. It is not that Otherness cannot be perceived, expressed or negotiated in storytelling genres, only that the super-empirical represents a space where negotiations of otherness can be at their most precise. Moreover, super-empirical stories can inhabit liminal environments that include elements that are both familiar and extraordinary. The term liminality – from the Latin *limen* meaning 'threshold' – is deployed across a variety of disciplines in many different contexts. Most uses of the term agree that it refers to some sort of passage from one state of being to another, overcoming some threshold or another. For instance, the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep first used the term to refer to the 'rites of passage' that accompany changes of social state or position (cited in Turner et al 1969: 94). More recently, criticism of transnational literature uses the term to refer to the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers during border crossings (Tröger 2021: 45-67). For the purposes of my own discussion, liminality is understood as both a period of transition and a particular space where this transition takes place. I go on to explicate that liminal transitions do not necessarily have to include 'rites of passage' – such as the movement from childhood into adulthood – but can be transitions in understanding and experience. I argue that super-empirical story spaces function within narratives as bridges between differing experiences of real social conditions. For instance, my first example sees Geordie MacPhee's story functioning to negotiate the binary conditions of 'have' and 'have not'. With money/material wealth as the central theme, and liminality as an interpretative

frame, I go on to scrutinise the Travellers' social realities through the lens of the super-empirical. I demonstrate how the values and beliefs that underpin this thesis are negotiated within a storytelling genre that is not fettered by empirical reality. I show that within Traveller storytelling traditions, liminality is used to facilitate entrance into carnivalesque spaces that challenge hierarchical discourses around the value of sedentarism and reveal trenchant mediations on the function of money.

Previous researchers have pointed out that supernaturalism is a pervasive element within the Travellers' traditions. Before going on to detailed analysis, this opening section provides a brief overview of how the supernatural manifests in the Travellers' traditions, remaining cognizant of the broader Scottish context. In their study – having over twenty years' experience with Traveller storytellers – MacColl and Seeger point out that, 'the two most popular story types are those which deal with ghostly encounters and the ones commonly known as *Burkers*' (1986: 57, emphasis in original). More recently, Tobler observes that the supernatural is a 'strong component of the Traveller culture and helps to establish a communal identity among them' (2012: 83). Traveller and author Sheila Douglas also recognises the prevalence of supernaturalism within one Perthshire family's traditions; commenting on her voluminous source material, Douglas explains that 'a large proportion of the stories, both with and without AT [ATU] numbers, involve the supernatural' (1985: 21). Perhaps the most apposite insight comes from Niles. Although elements of the supernatural appear in many of Scotland's cultural traditions, Niles notes that 'the Travellers' easygoing relationship with the numinous seems to have made them especially receptive to narratives that feature uncanny elements' (1999: 168). Testament to this receptiveness among Traveller communities are the many narratives involving the supernatural found in the SSS Archives, many of which have been digitised on TAD (Appendix II). As an indicative sample, stories recorded from Traveller communities deal in fairy belief (TAD 74642; TAD 63936; TAD

38224); ghosts or revenants (TAD 22163; TAD 56100; TAD 50127); supernatural animals (TAD 36568; TAD 91083; TAD 85496); and various manifestations of the Christian Devil (TAD 2327; TAD 91089; TAD 38128). The stories cited above all share characteristics that place the events narrated outside of the consensus of empirical reality.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, these types of stories are by no means unique to the Travellers' traditions; as Douglas points out, many of the stories are recognisably international tales recorded in the ATU catalogue (1985: 21). In the broader Scottish context, I demonstrated above that 'supernatural' narratives have been a staple concern during Scotland's intellectual development over the past few centuries. The Travellers' traditions have been party to that development in that they represent a distinctive idiom of oral tradition, one that has been attracting the attention of folklorists at least since the publication of Campbell's *Popular Tales* (1860-62). The Travellers' traditions contain international tale variants, migratory legends and share motifs collated by Thompson in his *Motif-index of Folk Literature* (1955). For instance, the story of the magical pot I examine below is a variant of ATU 591 – *The Thieving Pot* (Uther 2004 Vol. I: 348). TAD 63936, cited above, is a fairy 'changeling' narrative after motif F321.1 (Thompson 1946: 248) and is also aligned with Christiansen's migratory legend (ML) 5085 – *The Changeling*. Fairy changeling narratives abound across Scotland's storytelling traditions, being examples of what Henderson and Cowan regard as the 'most commonly held and widespread of traditions, found not only throughout Europe but all over the world' (2001: 95). Following Bruford's classification system in the SSS Archive, MacDonald also recognised a vast plethora of narratives found throughout Scotland in the 'area of legend material dealing with various aspects of the supernatural' (1994: 29). It is not my purpose in this thesis to evaluate the wider Scottish traditions in any great detail. However, it must be recognised that that Travellers' stories form part of these wider traditions and that comparative exercises can be fruitful. What makes the

Travellers' versions of the stories idiosyncratic is the way that the plots, themes and characters reflect the distinctive worldviews of their narrators. Most of the commentary, and the examples cited above, involve fairies, the exploits of the Christian Devil and his minions, and a variety of other supernatural characters who also populate international tales. My own analyses focus on stories that *use* the fantastic in different ways to negotiate the real societal concerns faced by their narrators.

For example, toponymy, the study of place names, can be expanded upon to consider the social significance of place-name etymology. Here, I consider the theme of land/wealth relations, and examine an example of place-naming within the super-empirical story spaces. I go on to provide a further example from my own fieldwork that confronts the power relations associated with naming our landscapes and speaks to the cultural differentiation highlighted throughout this thesis. I deploy the principles of socio-onomastics to argue that alternative etymologies for place-names within Traveller traditions function to meaningfully orientate themselves within landscapes. Specifically, I follow Ainiala's framework of 'folk onomastics' which considers people's beliefs and perceptions about the names of places (2016: 106). The way that the user of the name perceives its meaning can be thought of in terms of narrative; a story about the place-name can be invested with attributes that allow for interpretation. Consequentially, alternative conceptualisations of origins of place-names affirm distinctive cultural identity because in so naming, the narrator attaches meaning to a specific way of referring to the place. By reconceptualising the meaning of place-names, I demonstrate how Traveller tradition-bearers situate themselves within their landscape in a way that stands in opposition to received etymologies.

Moreover, when these conceptualisations occur within super-empirical story spaces, the etymological narratives engage with wider storytelling traditions. Meek has already pointed out the close connection between folklore and place-naming (1998: 147). Using Gaelic

ballads, Meek concludes that place-names can be symbolic, ‘representing a point or event in time or place, within the mental and narratological “map” of the composer’ (ibid.: 167). From this perspective, the intersection between folklore and onomastics is fertile ground, where further insights into Traveller worldview can be gleaned. In this section, I turn again to a strong tradition-bearer who has had a pervasive influence on my thesis, Stanley Robertson. I argued above that strong tradition-bearers – like Robertson, or Duncan Williamson – ventriloquise the worldviews embedded within their traditions. By considering his use of place-names, Robertson represents a valuable resource against which to gauge Traveller tradition-bearers’ relationships with landscapes.

The town of Rosehearty lies on the Moray Firth coast, four miles to the west of Fraserburgh in Aberdeenshire. Several onomastic sources agree that the ‘Rose’ in the name is the Anglicised Gaelic *ros*, signifying a cape, headland, point or promontory (Blackie 1887: 168; Johnston 1892: 211; Milne 1912: 278; Watson 1926: 496; James & Taylor 2017: 197; Ainmean-Àite: ‘Rosehearty Research Notes’, online). This corresponds to the physical appearance of Rosehearty, it being a slightly elevated settlement where the land juts out into the Moray Forth. However, these sources disagree on the significance of the ‘Hearty’ element: Blackie and Milne see a dwelling or sheiling (1887: 168; 1912: 278), whereas Milne translates *ros cheartach* as a guiding or directing promontory (1892: 211). Linguistic etymologies are useful in that they provide topographic information that has the potential to reveal historical land, or language, use. For instance, Nicolaisen gives the example of Hawick in the Scottish Borders; the old English *haga wīc* [hedge farm] no longer has ‘word meaning’ because it is no longer an accurate description of the town (2001: 5). Armed with this linguistic knowledge, however, the onomastician considers what the name Hawick can tell them about historical farming practices, or early Anglian settlement in Scotland (ibid.: 6).

However, folk etymologies can go beyond pure description and language use to provide social insights.

As I suggested above, this approach can be taken further in terms of folk onomastics. In the case of Rosehearty, James and Taylor align ‘hearty’, and the suffix *-averty*, with the Irish personal name *Ábhartach* (2017: 132), but the authors provide no clarification of its significance. *Ábhartach* is a figure associated with the Fenian Cycle, but who also appears elsewhere in Irish folklore and mythology (Monaghan 2004: 1). Mackenzie agrees, noting that Rosehearty may represent a personal name, that of *Ábartach*, which in Irish is ‘a name for a dwarf’; Mackenzie goes on to speculate that the dwarf appellation might have topographical significance, given the relative scale of Rosehearty as a promontory (1931: 151; 161). From the folk perspective, Joyce’s fieldwork in the early twentieth century in Londonderry revealed that a certain *Ábhartach* [modern Irish for *Ábartach*] existed in local folklore as a powerful dwarf-magician, who had tyrannised the community with great cruelties (1910: 331).

In the Fenian Cycle, *Ábhartach* first appears as *Giolla Deacair* [Hard Gilly] and his name is also applied to *Céadach* (McKillop 1990: 1). *Céadach* is what Bruford refers to as an anomalous character, and the episode appears to be a retelling of an international folktale wherein the end of the story sees *Céadach* return from the dead (1969: 123, 126). Joyce alludes to a connection with the Fenian Cycle in his folkloric account when he records that *Ábhartach* ‘was at last vanquished and slain by a neighbouring chieftain; some say by Finn Mac Cumhail’ (1910: 331). Beforehand, however, using his powers, *Ábhartach* resurrected himself on two occasions, inflicting further cruelties on the community, before being finally contained in his grave with the help of a druid (ibid.: 331-332). At the time of publication in 1910, Joyce remarks that *Ábhartach*’s sepulchre exists as a monument and that the legend is well known among the local population (ibid.: 332). Outside of the Fenian Cycle, the story of

*Ábhartach* is recognisably a revenant legend, international examples of which abound. Thompson cites a multitude of examples involving various scenarios and circumstances, ubiquitous throughout the world (1946: 254-258). In folk onomastics, the area in modern County Derry named *Sleacht Ábhartaigh* [Eng. Slaghtaverty] translates to ‘Ábhartach’s Sepulchre’. The folk association with the revenant *Ábhartach* is thereby inscribed on the landscape, both symbolically in the place-name and tangibly through the cist grave that remains in the area to this day. The place-name suffix ‘Hearty’ – or *-averty* in the case of Dunaverty on the southern tip of Scotland’s Kintyre peninsula – is therefore the personal name of the revenant *Ábhartach*. This yields ‘Ábhartach’s Fort’ for Dunaverty, and ‘Ábhartach’s Point’ for Rosehearty.

Returning to Rosehearty in Aberdeenshire, Stanley Robertson tells a story about how Rosehearty got its name (TAD 64475). ‘There wis this young Traveller man’, begins Robertson, ‘and he wis awfy tired and he was seeking lodgings’ (ibid.). The Traveller is allowed to sleep in the barn of a friendly farmer and beds down for the night. During the night, the lad is woken by the presence of a young man asking for his help. ““Many, many years ago, I wis murdered here””, the young man explains, “and my body wis buried under this barn and I can’t get no rest”” (ibid.). The young man asks the Traveller to recover his bones and give him a proper Christian burial so that he can rest in peace. The Traveller takes this vision for a dream and goes back to sleep, but tells the farmer of his experience in the morning. The farmer thinks nothing of it, but after the apparition appears to the Traveller a second time, the farmer, a religious man, tells him that they will seek the local minister on the apparition’s third appearance.

When the apparition dutifully appears a third time, the trio ‘dug up underneath the barn and they found the bones ay the laddie’ (ibid.) and gave the boy a proper burial. That night, when the Traveller went to sleep, the murdered boy’s apparition reappears and says ““thank

you, I can now get rest” (ibid.). Robertson concludes his narrative with his folk etymology, ‘in the morning, the young man [Traveller] “rose hearty”, and that’s how the name Rosehearty came’ (ibid.). Note the parallel with the story of *Ábhartach*: Robertson’s narrative also includes a revenant that requires three burials, and a religious figure is required to finally put them to rest. However, Robertson’s narrative ultimately inverts the premise of the story: instead of a cruel tyrant being removed from power, we find a young man murdered and hastily buried; in place of the disturbing folktale giving Slaghtaverty its name, we have an act of compassion and an emotional reward for the protagonist; instead of a druid confining *Ábhartach* to his grave, Robertson’s narrative invokes a Christian minister to emancipate the murdered boy’s soul. Moreover, because the Traveller protagonist arises ‘heartily’, Robertson’s narrative evokes a sense of ebullience that is absent from the naming of Slaghtaverty. By considering onomastics from the folk perspective, I have demonstrated an aspect of Traveller tradition-bearers’ conceptualisation of their place in the landscape. Robertson’s story affirms the Travellers’ awareness of their heritage and sense of belonging to the landscape, going so far as to ascribe the naming of places to the experience of a single Traveller. Furthermore, Robertson’s metanarrative extends this cultural awareness to the settled population; ‘that man Bob Strachan that telt me that story isnae a Traveller’, Robertson says, ‘but he wis brought up wi Travellers [...] he kens aa the Travellers’ weys [habits]’ (ibid.).

In this way, Robertson invites understanding from the settled community at the same time as affirming the long and distinguished heritage of the Travellers. The fact that his folk etymology challenges received topographical etymologies betrays the underlying ideological imperatives of these divergent positions. Topographical place-names are motivated by the desire to exert control over the landscape; they are conceived of ‘word meaning’ that is underpinned by possession and stratification – *haga wīc* [hedge farm] and ‘Ábhartach’s Fort’

being telling examples. On the other hand, Robertson's etymology transcends word meaning because it draws its meaning from the intangible cultural heritage of the Travellers. After he concludes his story about Rosehearty, Robertson remarks that 'it's interesting to ken if there's ony truth in the legend' (ibid.). When delivered as a story, Robertson's folk etymology for Rosehearty embodies an ideology that is not based on power or control, but one that is based on compassion, understanding and positive connections with our landscapes. Or as Reith puts it, concealed etymologies such as the above mean that 'Stanley Robertson has found an illustrative way to tell the story of his people's unique knowledge and cultural contribution' (2008a: 82).

In an interview with the author, Shamus McPhee provides a further example of folk onomastics at work in his community. Using the same principles deployed above, analysis of Shamus' folk etymology provides a contemporary example of the way modern Travellers conceptualise their landscape. Shamus' explanation not only corresponds with modern toponomy but provides an alternative, culturally specific meaning for Balquhidder. The village of Balquhidder is situated in Stirlingshire, on the shores of Loch Voil, approximately 32 miles to the north-west of Stirling. The name Balquhidder is Gaelic in origin – *Both Chuidir* or *Both Phuidir* – although the full meaning is unclear: in Gaelic, *Both* translates to 'hut' or 'sheiling', but the '*Chuidir / Phuidir* referent is obscure (Taylor 2003: 16; McNiven 2011: 106). For example, writing for TSAS, Reverend Duncan Stewart has Balquhidder in 'the Celtic language' as a 'village in the centre of five Glens' (1793: 88), whereas the later account by Reverend MacGregor has the Gaelic root '*baile-chul-tir*' signifying 'the town or territory at the back of the country' (TSAS 1845: 344). Later, MacGregor also suggests 'the land lying behind the country', 'land of the five glens' or 'town or land of joint occupancy', noting that 'none of these ways of accounting for the name Balquhidder is satisfactory' (1886: 11). It has also been suggested that the *Phuidir* element refers to a Neolithic standing

stone called *Puidrac* that lies a few hundred metres to the east of Balquhidder (ibid.; Watson 2002: 36, 101). For Watson, the ‘stone’s supposed great antiquity and its siting at an ancient pagan and, later, Christian centre indicate that it had considerable significance in the early ritual life of the district’ (2002: 101). Residents of the area around Balquhidder have taken the appellation, often as a surname, *Puidireach* from as early as 1594 and the name persists in Gaelic into the twenty-first century (Black 1962: 674; Watson 2002: 101). From this perspective, Watson contends that the *Puidrac* stone was somehow linked to the identity of the area and its people (2002: 101). The alternative onomastics I examine reveal a tangential perspective on the origin of the name Balquhidder, and one that is characteristically Traveller in aspect. Notably, this example from Shamus is couched in the same super-empirical story space used by Stanley Robertson in his folk onomastics for Rosehearty.

In Shamus’ folk onomastics for Balquhidder, he begins with a story about when ‘some of my mother’s people, the old Johnstones, were comin back from huvin worked the fermes [farms]’ (Interview 2021: 57m 20s). The party stop at what Shamus describes as a sheiling, at Balquhidder, where they approach a nearby house to ask for victuals. ‘They went an chapped the door and this old woman came to the door’, Shamus continues, ““excuse me missus, would you mind givin us lodgings for the night?”” (ibid.: 57m 37s). The Traveller party are refused entry to the house proper, instead being offered the use of the sheiling to spend the night. When the party are settled in the sheiling, the old woman arranges tea and sandwiches, after which the Travellers bed down for the night. ‘It started rainin, didn’t it, during the night’, Shamus goes on, ‘and they felt aw the rain drops comin in in the early mornin’ (ibid.: 58m 13s). When the party are woken by the dripping rain, they realise that the sheiling was ‘just an old ruin and the rafters hud aw been razed, it was burnt to the ground’ (ibid.: 58m 19s). On venturing out, the Travellers find that the friendly house where they had been given sustenance the night before is similarly ruined. Perturbed, the Travellers ask at a nearby

house, “‘what’s the crack wi that kain [Cant: ‘house’] doon there, you know, that hoose?’” (ibid.: 58m 42s). The inhabitants are surprised when they find out that the Travellers had received hospitality from the razed house; according to the inhabitants, the house “‘burnt to the ground thirty years ago’”, and the occupants were “‘both burnt alive’” (ibid.: 58m 52s).

Shamus concludes his story by adding that ‘in a way it’s a ghost story, but it’s also linked to the name o the place and the fact that they went there for bread and sustenance’ (ibid.: 58m 58s). Shamus’ folk onomastics for Balquhiddier are, like Stanley Robertson’s, couched in narrative. I have argued that super-empirical story spaces enable narrators to negotiate real-world concerns using narrative environments defined by symbolism. This practice is of course not unique to Scotland’s Travellers, but the details within the stories yield insights into their distinctive ideological perspective. For instance, Shamus’ explanation for Balquhiddier shares the *Both* element with mainstream onomastics; the two explanations align the initial element *both* with a rudimentary individual dwelling, not a collection of the same, as in a town or village. Watson points out that earlier fifteenth-century forms of the name ‘suggest that the ‘P-Celtic *Puidir* was re-interpreted as if it were a Q-Celtic *Cuidir*’, concluding that the ‘first syllable *both* became assimilated to the more common *baile* [Gaelic: ‘town/village’]’ (2002: 37). This etymological reanalysis of the place-name elements may account for the ‘town/village’ explanations given in TSAS (1793: 88; 1845: 344) and similarly by MacGregor (1886: 10), cited above.

In his metanarrative, Shamus explains that ‘Balquhiddier is a word we use in Cant for bread’ (Interview 2021: 57m 05s). Shamus clarifies this etymology, explaining that ‘in Cant, ‘perram’ or ‘perm’ is ‘bread’, as are ‘brunston’ and ‘balwhiddier/balwhuddier’, since these lexemes form part of an oral and, concomitantly, evolutionary process’ (2021a: Appendix D). At first glance, this etymology does not appear to correspond with the *-quhiddier* element in Balquhiddier. However, as Shamus points out, the reference forms part of a specific linguistic

continuum where the meaning of the words is not dictated by their formal attributes. Nicolaisen realised the same, noting that ‘semantic transparency is not required, indeed not expected, once a linguistic item has crossed the transforming threshold from lexicon to onomasticon’ (1992: 2). Thus, for Shamus, Balquhidder as a place–name means ‘shieling of the bread’ and represents an *idea* rather than a description of the landscape. The cultural specificity is clear through the use of Cant and the narrative space where the symbolic etymology of Balquhidder crystallises. Shamus immediately links the place–name to his forebears, the Johnstones, signalling the cultural heritage revered by Traveller communities. When the Johnstones move through the landscape as part of their itinerant working lives, Shamus’ story encompasses not only their chosen lifestyle but their relationship with the settled community. The fact that the Travellers are fed by revenants ironically positions their providers in a super-empirical space that negotiates their experience in the ‘real world’. When the Travellers of the story are initially refused entry to the house proper, the revenant offers them the sheiling, ‘where aa the cattle hud been, in among aa the coo shite’ (Interview 2021: 57m 53s). The Travellers are at once rejected and sustained by the settled homesteaders, speaking to an ambivalent relationship with society at large. The association between Balquhidder and its Cant etymology transforms its compound meaning into a culturally significant expression.

In telling this story, Shamus transmits a codified intergenerational meaning that encapsulates the lived experiences of Travellers. Again, my analysis here demonstrates that deceptively simple narratives, when viewed in context, represent sophisticated cultural expressions that are infused with meaning. Shamus goes on to say that he thinks ‘a lot o the place names huv become corrupted’, pointing out that ‘we huv here names that were imposed by people in wider society like *Baile nan Ceàrd* [Balnaguard] which is ‘Township of the Tinkers’ (ibid.: 62m 04s). The example of Balnaguard – located a few miles south of

Shamus' home at Bobbin Mill – is an explicit illustration of how place-names can be construed in different ways. For instance, *Ceàrdair* in Gaelic literally translates to craftsperson, or artisan (LearnGaelic 'Dictionary': online), but the contextual meaning of the word is synonymous with Scottish Travellers, or the historic 'Tinkers'. *Baile nan Ceàrd*, then, could also mean 'Township of the Craftspeople'. However, the socio-cultural context in which Balnaguard exists means that its translation from the Gaelic signifies a place in the landscape that is explicitly associated with Travellers. This distinction captures Nicolaisen's observation around the uses of place-name analyses, where onomastics are 'able to throw considerable light on the concepts and frames of mind of their namers' (1992: 13). Shamus' folk onomastics bear this observation out; his explanation for Balquhidder – like Stanley Robertson's alternative naming of Roseheart – challenges accepted toponymies from the mainstream and provides an insight into alternative conceptualisations of the landscape.

In its Anglicised form, for instance, Balnaguard's etymology might signify an historic military site on account of the Anglicisation of *Ceàrd* to *-guard*. More significantly, Watson's authoritative place-name study, *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland*, lists Balnaguard as the 'stead of the artificers' (1926: 242). However, as early as 1869 it was realised that the *-guard* element bears no relationship to the meaning of the name; in the 'county of Perth, there appears a hamlet, called in English "Balnaguard"', writes Robertson, 'but the spelling in ancient writings is *Balnakaird*, which is nearly the pronunciation for the proper Gaelic for the name "Baile-nan-ceard", or "the tinker or smith's town"' (1869: 189). More modern etymologies agree, with Taylor giving Balnaguard as 'The Tinkers' Farm' (2003: 16). The corruption that Shamus refers to is clear because the Anglicisation of *Balnaguard* effectively eliminates the *-ceàrd* element and transforms the cultural significance of the name. Elsewhere in Scotland, Anglicisation of Gaelic place-names associated with historic Travellers has not taken place. A few miles north of Balnaguard, for

example, sits Creag nan Ceàrd, meaning ‘Tinker’s Rock or Hill’; at the mouth of the Lussa river in Argyll and Bute exists Bruach nan Ceàrd, ‘Tinker’s Brae’; and in Glen Urquhart, to the south-west of Inverness, lies Cnoc nan Ceàrd, ‘Tinker’s Knoll’.

The fact that these place-names have *not* changed highlights my point here; in reclaiming the names that *have* changed, the cultural significance of those places within the landscape is recognised. A more explicit example of this reclamation is the case of the *Tinkers’ Heart*, a scheduled monument overlooking the north-eastern tip of Loch Fyne, Argyll & Bute. The *Tinkers’ Heart* is a pattern of quartz stones that marks a specific location in the landscape; it is a ‘a space sacred to Scotland’s Travelling people [...] where marriages were made, where children were named and where those Travelling men who lost their lives in wars were remembered’ (*Heart of the Travellers* ‘Home’ 2020: online). After a petition to The Scottish Parliament in 2014, Historic Scotland agreed that the site should be recognised as such, noting that:

the place clearly holds a high spiritual meaning for many Travellers and in this regard the significance the Heart holds for this community is in the intangible significance of the ceremonies and meetings conducted there. The stones serve, however, as a tangible symbol of the deep relationship of Travellers and their heritage with this location.

(Historic Scotland ‘Scheduling Recommendation’ 2015: online)

This recognition of the cultural significance of the *Tinkers’ Heart* site is a watershed in ‘official’ representations of the Travellers’ relationship with the landscape. The fact that the site is now a State-mandated, and therefore protected, monument speaks to the importance of terminology when it comes to place-naming. My preceding examples of folk onomastics go further, amounting to critical toponymies that have their motivations in a distinctively Traveller worldview; simply because the retention of the original meanings exist outside of

dominant ideological frameworks and have culturally specific meanings that do not necessarily correspond with mainstream etymologies. Massey makes an important point from this perspective: ‘places do not have single, unique “identities”; they are full of internal conflicts’ (1994: 155). I showed that Balquhiddy has multiple identities and how close examination of its naming reveals an intersection of social relations. On one hand, its name is literally possessed by those inhabitants who choose to take the appellation *Puidireach*; on the other, the naming of Balquhiddy encompasses an experience that is infused with culturally specific meaning. The case of Balnaguard and the *Tinkers’ Heart* demonstrated the wider implications of folk onomastics when it comes to recognising the cultural significance of the landscapes we share. The internal conflicts of our place-naming practices are clear when considered under the conditions that I have presented. What is at stake is the history and culture of marginalised communities being overwritten by arbitrary changes to meaningful places within our shared landscape. Seemingly inconsequential changes have the potential to undermine both the historical and contemporary contributions that such communities make to Scottish society. Moreover, my discussions above problematise Tobler’s view that Scotland’s Travellers somehow lack a specific ‘neighbourhood’ of their own (2012: 83).

For instance, Davie Donaldson discusses how the Travellers’ engagement with local communities has gone on for centuries, an engagement that is intimately connected to the landscape (Interview 2019: 2m 09s). ‘We know all of the local folklore, we know all of the local history’, Davie reports, ‘we have ingrained family histories within these pieces of land and within these communities’ (ibid.: 2m 20s; 3m 37s). At the same time, Davie points out that ‘often the local communities won’t perceive us as being a local, with any connection to that piece of ground’ (ibid.: 3m 45s). ‘How we see ourselves’, Davie concludes, ‘as a local of Scotland I think is quite an interesting and unique sort of thing for Travellers’ (ibid.: 4m 00s). In the next section, my examinations extend the scope of the ‘supernatural’ to include

manifestations that diverge from stereotypical characters, focusing on super-empirical sources of wealth. In this way, my analyses provide original insights into the function of the super-empirical in the Travellers' traditions, deliberately drawing on material that has been neglected in previous studies. As noted above, the following examples can be viewed as legends; however, my purpose remains to divorce the narratives from simple taxonomy to critically analyse the deeper themes with which the stories engage.

#### **5.4 Magical Money - Geordie in Liminality and a Magic Pot**

One way that the social world of Traveller storytellers interacts with the super-empirical is when it comes to money. During the introductory chapter of the present work, a story from Andrew Stewart introduced us to a Traveller named Geordie MacPhee. MacPhee became wealthy after a ghostly helper told him of buried treasure, but MacPhee quickly squandered the money and was eventually ruined (TAD 13847). Stewart's story and a few other passing mentions aside, money and/or material wealth as a theme has been latent during my discussions. Given its central importance to capitalist society, I examine here narratives that feature money and/or material wealth as a theme. In the Traveller traditions, the theme of money appears in several tales within the super-empirical genre. Stewart's cautionary tale of the virtues of discretion serves as an opening example of how super-empirical tales address my research question around values and beliefs within Traveller storytelling. Furthermore, based on the detailed theoretical approach described above, Stewart's story becomes more than just a warning about the vicissitudes of wealth.

The first stage in Stewart's story sees the protagonist, Geordie MacPhee, and his family on the road during a winter storm. The family's lack of material wealth is clear from the outset; with no permanent winter residence, the MacPhees take shelter in an abandoned blacksmith's

forge. Stewart describes the scene: ‘There were no windaes in the smiddy [smithy], just bits a bags’ (TAD 13847) to keep the weather out, and Geordie complains, “‘I’ve nae straw”” (ibid.) to make a bed. To warm some alms and heat the smithy, Geordie resorts to ‘breakin bits o sticks off the rafters’ (ibid). As I have shown in my preceding chapters, the framing of the narrative plays a key role during interpretations of the story. In this case, the frame functions to situate the protagonist in a state of dearth. However, as we will see, this frame functions on a separate level as the narrative concludes. According to Turner, the separation phase in liminality ‘comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, [or] from a set of cultural conditions’ (1969: 94). Geordie’s separation phase begins when an unusual character approaches the smithy and bids Geordie to follow him. The uncanniness of the character is engendered by his attire, given the freezing conditions outside. Stewart describes the uncanny visitor appearing in ‘his stocking soles, no jacket on or nothing, and he’s got galluses [braces], over his shoulder, hanging down at his side’ (TAD 13847).

At first, Geordie refuses to follow, but when the stranger returns to the smithy the following night, Geordie acquiesces. The stranger promises Geordie a reward if he should follow him and the pair ‘come doon to the seaside and rocks’ (ibid.). Within a cave on the shoreline – a symbolically liminal space, the shore being between the land and the sea – is where Geordie receives his reward in the form of ‘a heap of gold sovereigns [...] a fortune in gold there fir ye’ (ibid.). It becomes clear that the stranger is a supernatural agent when Geordie refers to him as a ‘spirit or whatever it was’ and takes care only to visit the cave at night so as not to ‘spoil the whole enchantment’ (ibid.). The stranger promptly disappears as soon as Geordie discovers the hidden gold. Geordie fills his pockets with the gold and his separation from his fixed point in the social structure happens overnight. The next day, Geordie ‘wisnae very well dressed, the toes were stickin oot his boots [and] his backside wis

oot his troosers' (ibid.). We also discover that Geordie cannot read or write and is therefore unable to record the value of his new wealth. The intangibility of the wealth is an important point to note here, the significance of which becomes clear at the conclusion of Geordie's journey through liminality. Unperturbed, Geordie sees an estate for sale and engages the solicitor who is managing the sale. At first the solicitor is dismissive, but after Geordie produces his gold, the solicitor addresses Geordie as 'my lord' (ibid.) and immediately arranges a new suit of clothes for Geordie. By this point, Geordie's separation is complete; he is moneyed, landed and well-dressed, a far cry from the penury of the previous day in the smithy.

According to Turner's framework, the next stage in the transition through liminality is the 'margin', or *limen* proper. Geordie's margin phase consists of his experience with his wealth, an experience that stands in direct opposition to his previous state. The removal from a set of 'cultural conditions' alluded to above is a useful description of this section of Stewart's narrative. For instance, Geordie's newly purchased estate includes the use of several vehicles and Geordie now has members of staff. When Geordie asks the solicitor how he might retrieve his family from the smithy, the solicitor replies, "'well", he says, "the only thing we can do is go up and get the chauffeur to take you out in the Rolls [Royce]"' (ibid.). The cultural conditions in which we found Geordie and his family have been removed. The family's itinerancy, Geordie 'begging pennies' (ibid.) as a travelling piper, and the material dearth of their smithy dwelling, have all been replaced by the norms of the opposite end of the social hierarchy. Geordie's transition from one social state to another is, for him, another state of being. The symbols of success that Geordie has acquired – facilitated by the 'spirit' – engender a carnivalesque episode within the narrative. According to Bakhtin, carnival festivities within communities in the past 'built a second world and a second life outside officialdom' (1984: 6). Within the carnival world, Bakhtin observes that hierarchical

relationships are put to one side and that the carnival spirit encouraged ‘purely human relations’ (ibid.: 10). Discussing Bakhtin’s conceptualisation of carnival, Dentith perceives ‘an attitude in which the high, the elevated, the official, even the sacred, is degraded and debased, but as a condition of popular renewal and regeneration’ (1995: 66). As we will see, it is no accident that the pivotal episode in Stewart’s narrative takes place during market day and in a carnivalesque environment. But first, Geordie heads to the local public house where he ‘wis in haein a drink and enjoying a drink wi the men, he’s got half o the pub [...] he’s got the pub man [publican] drunk an everything, with his gold sovereigns’ (TAD 13847). Even the chauffeur is ordered a drink; when his chauffeured car arrives, Geordie ‘shoves a bottle ay beer in his hand, “take a slug [drink] ootay that”, Geordie says’ (ibid.).

By the time Geordie and his family – who are also newly clad in fine clothes – arrive at their new estate, Geordie is singing drunk and decides to double all his staff’s wages. The carnival atmosphere of Geordie’s liminal experience continues the next day when he and his family head into town to attend the market. ‘He went and got himsel drunk at the market day’, explains Stewart, ‘and he has all the men drunk, an they’re dealin in horses’ (ibid.). The normal run of horse dealing is subverted at the market because, before Geordie was finished, ‘they were handing the horses to each other for nothing, they were a drunk. They had plenty a money, ye see, Geordie wis gien them plenty a money and gien thum a good treat’ (ibid.). The festivities continue until the local police become involved and attempt to arrest some revellers. However, Geordie, with his new status, intervenes; ““where are you takin these men, these Tinker men?”” (ibid.), demands Geordie, at which point the police sergeant explains that the men are being arrested for disturbing the peace. ““Ye’ll dae nothing of the kind”, says Geordie, “jist leave them away”” (ibid.). ““Alright m’lord””, responds the sergeant, ‘so the police jist left them away’ (ibid.). Stewart explains that Geordie was in fact ‘Laird o this village tae, he bought the village too, it was an estate this village, ye see’ (ibid.).

The story world where Geordie's experiences in liminality take place is entire. Geordie's new social status makes him lord of all he surveys and allows him to behave as he sees fit. As the market day ends, the Travellers from the market are given camping equipment and invited by Geordie to camp on his estate. But Geordie's carnival generosity soon takes its toll, and his solicitor tells him, "You've no more money left and you've nothing in the bank, m'lord" (ibid.). The narrator, Stewart, tells us that 'with him [Geordie] goin back and forward to the cave, the gold's beginning a sink [...] Geordie's gettin some money in but he's spending more [...] he's ruinin hisself' (ibid.).

As the carnival atmosphere subsides and Geordie's fortune dwindles, the narrative shifts into Turner's third phase of liminality, aggregation. Geordie's aggregation is intimated by an arrival that breaks the enchantment. One day, 'a big car comes up to the door, and here wis the man fae London and this other lady' (ibid.). The arrival of the couple from London signals the conclusion of Geordie's experience in liminality when they refuse the hospitality of his house. "Are ye fir a cup o tea, wuman?", enquires Geordie's wife, 'but the lady shrugs her shoodirs [shoulders] and she's lookin at her, an she says, "my word, this terrible woman" (ibid.). Geordie has a similar experience when he offers the London man a drink of low-quality whisky; "oh no", he says, "this is disgraceful, I'm going away" (ibid.). During Geordie's liminal experience, he has managed not only to squander his wealth, but also to physically ruin his house and the surrounding landscape. Stewart's narrative concludes when he resituates Geordie MacPhee outside of his experience of liminality, 'still campin in a barricade [Traveller tent] to this day, way up the other side o Dunkeld there' (ibid.). Geordie's aggregation, using Turner's term cited above, comes when he returns to his previous way of life. For Turner, aggregation involves the return to a relatively stable state, where the subject of the liminal experience is expected to adhere to 'customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions'

(1969: 95). Aggregation, from this perspective, is somewhat deterministic and Geordie's experience in liminality is testament to this determinism when his social position is restored at the conclusion of the story. Turner's framework is useful in interpreting Geordie's journey inasmuch as it reaffirms a perceptible class division that is based purely on material wealth.

Yet, Geordie's journey through liminality can be interpreted in other ways. Considering Geordie's experience in liminality in terms of Jameson's binary conceptualisation of magical narratives, invoked above, the dichotomy of 'good' and 'evil' can be mapped onto Geordie's behaviour in each of his social positions. As we have seen, Geordie's humble existence in penury before his encounter with the supernatural agent is juxtaposed with his debauchery and neglect during his liminal experience. From this perspective, Geordie's journey through the three phases of liminality described above encompasses a cautionary tale: easy come, easy go. However, Jameson's proposition also asks us to consider the inherent otherness that is engendered by such stories. This otherness is embodied within Stewart's story by the social position of the protagonist. Geordie's social position – an illiterate, itinerant piper, with no fixed abode – is contrasted with solicitors, police officers and landed gentry, who exist at the opposite end of the social spectrum. Geordie's self-awareness of his position is clear throughout the narrative; “whit are ye saying *m'lord* for?”, Geordie asks the solicitor, “they cry [call] me Geordie MacPhee”, he says, “no *m'lord* they cry me, it's Geordie MacPhee they cry me” (TAD 13847). Later, Geordie informs his subservient chauffeur, “don't cry me *m'lord*, cry me Geordie MacPhee, I'm Geordie MacPhee the Tinkerman” (ibid.). This is an important distinction, considering Turner's framework of liminality; Geordie is *not* aggregated into the world of the landed gentry, where he would be bound by the incumbents of his social position. For instance, the morning after the purchase of his estate, Geordie refuses to be driven into town, telling his chauffeur: “naw”, says Geordie, “me an the wife's

gonnae walk doon” (ibid.). And where he wore a suit of tailored clothes the day before, Stewart tells us that Geordie ‘was in rags the next day’ (ibid.).

Jameson contends that because otherness is a constitutive element of magical narratives, any analysis of such a genre must come to terms with the boundaries that it sets (1975: 140). The function of otherness in the context of the supernatural, says Jameson, is to set up these boundaries between social orders – within a fictive environment – to act as a deterrent against subversion (ibid.: 141). For Geordie MacPhee, what is at stake are the values and beliefs that he recognises in himself as he occupies the status of the ‘Tinkerman’. By super-empirical means, Geordie transgresses a social boundary by occupying a position in the social hierarchy to which he does not belong. The impetus for Geordie’s subversion is the courage that he displays when confronted with the uncanny visitor at the beginning of the narrative; the narrator, Stewart, describes Geordie as ‘a big wild man [...] he wisnae feared ay nothing like that’ (TAD 13847). The supernatural agent himself tells Geordie, “‘you’re the only man that [has] risen and followed me, none of the rest would follow me, for years”, so he says, “‘you’re a brave man”” (ibid.). Geordie’s movement into liminality, viewed from this perspective, is volitional, rather than something which just happens to him or is forced upon him during some ‘rite of passage’. To confront his own desires and impulses, Geordie willingly enters the liminal space, as if he is somehow aware that this altered reality will provide him with an experience not to be had elsewhere. By *becoming* the ‘other’, Geordie can scrutinise his own ideological constitution and imperatives. Within the liminal space that Geordie experiences, the ‘other’ is a relational concept, a concept that is available for scrutiny in a consequence-free story space.

As Geordie enters the liminal space, the atmosphere of the narrative changes and Geordie’s daily piping activities are replaced by frivolity. The first thing that Geordie does after filling his pockets with gold is to go for a drink. Although this seems something of an

obvious reaction to newfound wealth after penury, its function within the narrative is to fundamentally suspend the everyday reality in which the story began. The subversion engendered by Geordie's entry into the liminal space is operating on more than one level, then; a cautionary tale about the vicissitudes of wealth is plain, but this reading is augmented when we reconsider Geordie's experience as carnivalesque. The carnival atmosphere of the narrative amounts to a series of symbolic inversions: consider Geordie's dismissal of the police officers who attempt to subdue the drunken revellers; or the authority that Geordie wields, despite his appearance in rags; and then there is the gold that flows freely during the horse trading, upending the very nature of the trade itself; and finally, the 'big hoose' is converted into a Traveller camp as the festivities come to a close, inverting the distinction between immovable property and an itinerant lifestyle.

When Geordie takes his values with him into the carnivalesque environment – recall his return to his familiar rags and his refusal of his chauffeur – I argue that his experience of inhabiting the status of the 'other' sheds light on these very values. Part of this attitude functions to enact inversions of hierarchical discourses; Bakhtin saw such inversions as a sort of mask, where the wearer enacts a 'gay relativity' (1984: 40) and violates natural boundaries during a period of transition. In Geordie's case, the concept of carnival, as an arena for inversions of this sort, is thereby linked to the relativity of 'good' and 'evil', explicated above. Good and evil, viewed as positional notions, are representations of absolute otherness that function to present mirror images of opposing ideological characteristics (Jameson 1975: 161). In Stewart's narrative, the mirror is erected by super-empirical means when Geordie encounters the uncanny man and becomes the opposing image of his initial status as a poor, itinerant piper with no property or expendable means. 'Magical narrative' or super-empirical story spaces, when viewed as a genre, makes Geordie's experience possible because the genre sets up a set of social antagonisms that would be problematic in more realist genres.

For instance, if Geordie had won a lottery or robbed a bank, his transformation into an unquestioningly influential landowner would be less plausible. This is because such *empirical* sources of wealth would engender different narrative trajectories: a lottery win may very well result in the protagonist squandering their fortune, but their *experience* would be wholly different because their contrition would be felt in the *real world*. The robbing a bank scenario would condemn the protagonist to illicit spending and the perpetual fear of prosecution by the authorities.

Instead, Geordie's experience in liminality is necessarily predicated on the super-empirical and his experience of lordship is enacted within the carnivalesque. It is here again that we witness the sophistication of the narratives within the Travellers' storytelling traditions. Geordie's own carnival mask is embodied by his magical wealth and status within the defined carnival space of 'his estate', which includes the village and therefore its market. However, Geordie's mask is not physical; he rejects the trappings of a gentleman-of-means and enters the market in his familiar rags. It is in this way that Geordie's experience is a symbolic negotiation of the ideological imperatives that underpin his Traveller identity. By assuming the status, but not the appearance, of his ultimate ideological other, Geordie's experience within Stewart's narrative is a reaction to the sedentarism that underpins *the other's* ideological imperatives. Bear in mind the premise of the narrative as a whole: Geordie MacPhee represents the archetypal travelling 'Tinkerman', piping his living door-to-door, propertyless, gaining shelter through his knowledge of his environment. During his liminal experience, Geordie encapsulates the opposite of this lifestyle, acquiring immovable property, land and staff. By the conclusion of Stewart's story, Geordie returns to his original status.

Given the analysis furnished above and considering my central research question – which examines how Travellers' values and beliefs, or ideologies, are embedded within their

storytelling traditions – Stewart’s narrative is further evidence of how such ideologies manifest themselves. To elucidate my contention that Stewart’s narrative engages with sedentarism as an ideological position, it is useful to consider the way that this term is being deployed. MacLaughlin has pointed out that, beginning with Enlightenment theorists such as John Locke, and Hugo Grotius before him, sedentarism came to be viewed as the abandonment of ‘primitive’ lifestyles associated with nomadism (1995: 23-24). Respect for private property and the rights of the individual, prioritising industry and expansionism over pastoralism, were all viewed as hallmarks of a superior civilisation. As these ideas percolated into nineteenth century nationalist ideologies, MacLaughlin asserts that ‘there was literally no room for Gypsies and Travellers in nation-building Europe’ (ibid.: 26). This discourse contributed to the racialisation of Gypsies and Travellers throughout twentieth century Europe and persists largely to the present day. The contextual chapters of the present thesis provided an abundance of evidence supporting the marginalisation of Scotland’s Travellers in this respect.

I have shown in preceding chapters – as have others elsewhere (Douglas 1985; Braid 2002; Marcus 2019) – that Traveller storytelling is sensitive to continually changing socio-economic landscapes and cultural conditions. Moreover, I have made it clear that a central function of the stories under examination is to negotiate these changes using expressions of distinctive ideological imperatives. For Geordie, the fact that this ideological negotiation takes place within a carnivalesque, super-empirical space is telling. Geordie’s generosity and flippant attitude within this space follows Bakhtin’s conceptualisation of a violation of ‘natural’ boundaries, with Geordie transgressing the rigid, inequitable social hierarchy and proceeding to flout all conventions therein. Jameson’s binary of ‘good and evil’, evoked here as an expression of innate otherness, takes on significant meaning from this perspective. Stewart’s story places sedent and nomad in a carnival atmosphere where the former is

parodied by the latter. These lifestyle choices represent deep-seated, oppositional ideologies where the dominant institutions regard sedentarism as the developmental zenith of Western society. Sedentary values and beliefs are predicated on the appropriation and utilisation of territory and natural resources. MacLaughlin argues that the prioritisation of sedentarism throughout the Enlightenment period in Europe meant that lifestyles associated with nomadism were delegitimised (1995: 24). For Europe's Travellers and Gypsies – who MacLaughlin observes 'made no claims on property and did not "accumulate" wealth' (ibid.) – this meant that their lifestyle choices denied them social and political agency. Not only were peripatetic lifestyles delegitimised during the Enlightenment period, and beyond, they were also demonised to a demonstrable extent. Consider the evidence I presented from TSAS and elsewhere in earlier chapters; Scotland's Travellers were regarded as parasitical, even 'criminal by nature', on account of their favouring alternative economic strategies.

Throughout this thesis, I have shown how the Travellers' lifestyle choices and cultural identities manifest themselves and are negotiated within their storytelling traditions. A further example of how this happens is Geordie's negotiation of his extraordinary experience. Geordie at once inhabits and rejects the trappings of a sedentary lifestyle in a non-confrontational story space, a space that is accommodated by the super-empirical genre. I described a similar story pattern in Williamson's 'The Hedgehurst' (TAD 36536). In Williamson's story, the protagonist refused to forsake his identity, preferring instead to return to his life in his native forest after his transformative experience. The same can be said of Geordie, when at the end of the story he returns to his piping and an itinerant lifestyle. Geordie's renewal is embodied by his return to his life on the road; his experience in carnivalesque liminality represents a resistance to sedentary ideologies that prioritise the domination of landscapes and people. From this perspective, Geordie does not foolishly squander the gift of wealth and security, rather his story rejects the very premise on which

such ideologies are based. By viewing Geordie's story from certain critical perspectives – notably Bakhtin's insights into carnival spaces – I have shown that Traveller storytelling embodies a negotiation of social relationships. Within Andrew Stewart's narrative, the society that Geordie keeps is brought face-to-face with its contrasting 'Other' in the form of the landed gentry. 'Otherness', in this sense, is projected not on to the marginalised Travellers, but on to the sectors of society that view sedentarism as the zenith of human society. McKean recognises a similar sentiment in the Travellers' balladry when he notes that 'Travellers use tradition to mediate their relationship with mainstream society' (2015: 208). Under these conditions, the stories being examined here represent a dialogue between the Traveller storytellers' ideologies and that of the settled population. The storytellers do this by placing their protagonists within the social world of mainstream society, thereby incorporating mainstream values into the narrated events. In this way, the Traveller protagonists vicariously experience mainstream social conditions and enact their own value systems upon them. McKean concludes that contextualising stories in this way creates 'meaning and a richer depth of understanding, a more complete picture of human frailty and nobility' (ibid.: 222). Close examinations that expand on McKean's insights have been, and remain, the central impetus of the present thesis.

Consider Geordie's story from the perspective of the arrivals from London; "my word", says the lady', when she sees the Travellers ensconced in the mansion house, "what a terrible mess" (TAD 13847). The arrivals from London go on to eschew Geordie and his wife's offers of hospitality and beat a hasty retreat. The Londoners' revulsion at what they find is indicative of their own ideological imperatives. Rather than squander such fortuitous wealth, listeners to the story imagine the Londoners making tidy investments and consciously advancing their material position. In this way, the Othering that takes place in Stewart's narrative is a dialogical critique of ideologies that stand in opposition to 'Travelling', or

nomadic, lifestyles. As I argued in Chapter 4 above, and continue to propound here, purely capitalist, sedentarist social systems are not being rejected wholesale. Instead, storytelling genres such as the super-empirical are used as arenas in which these value systems can be interrogated. Geordie's 'rags-to-riches (to rags)' story is yet another example of how Traveller storytellers engage with familiar tale-types to create specialised narrative expressions of worldview.

Further examples of this type of ideological negotiation can be found in the Travellers' storytelling traditions. Duncan Williamson – a strong tradition-bearer who we have encountered throughout this thesis – tells a story about a magic pot (TAD 33627). Here, we find the Traveller protagonists in circumstances similar to those of Geordie and his family; Williamson frames his narrative by explaining that 'we [he and his family] wur nae very well off in these days and we nivir hud very much tae eat sometimes, like the family in the story [...] they had very little tae eat' (ibid.). As I have shown in previous chapters, situations of dearth and/or precariousness often frame Traveller storytelling. Here again we find Olrik's 'Law of Contrast' (1992: 50) at work, intimating a dichotomy that the story means to address. Hungry and struggling for a place to rest for the night, the family eventually manage to trade one of their artisanal baskets for some raw potatoes, eggs and milk. They then come across a ruined house, where they make camp for the night. Out collecting firewood from a dilapidated shed attached to the ruined house, the husband finds an old pot, meticulously cleans it and the family boil their potatoes for supper. After supper, the pot is 'cleaned as clean could be' (TAD 33627) and set outside the camp when the family bed down for the night. Williamson then explains that the house used to belong to a witch, and that the pot is enchanted; 'before the witch deid [died], she pit a spell on the pot', continues Williamson, adding, 'that whoever looked aftir the pot, wid always huv plenty luck' (ibid.).

As Williamson's narrative progresses, we discover that the true protagonist of the story is the enchanted pot. During the night, the pot springs to life and finds its way to the castle of a local laird. 'He was a big landowner, but he was a miser, he wis awfy mean', Williamson tells us of the laird, '[he] taxed the folk on his land fir every penny they were worth and he saved all up his money' (ibid.). The laird was so miserly that he neglected even furnishing his cook with a pot to cook in. The laird's cook finds the enchanted pot and fills it with roast potatoes and beef. When the cook's back is turned, the filled pot escapes and makes its way back to the Travellers' camp; 'whaur did that come fi?', exclaims the husband, 'some kind creature [person] has takin it away durin the night an filled it [...] and feels sorry fir us' (ibid.). The spell that was cast on the pot means that it returns to the Travellers who took care of it, and therein lies the essence of the story. The pot returns to the castle of the laird, this time being discovered by the laird himself. The miserly laird covets money to the extent that he waits until his castle is asleep before he counts his money of an evening. This night, the laird discovers that there has 'been a moose [mouse] at the bags' (ibid.) and his money rattles to the floor as he lifts them to make account of his wealth. Espying the enchanted pot, the laird proceeds to decant his gold into it and hides the pot in his cupboard, before retiring. Of course, the pot flits during the night, returning to the Travellers' camp.

When the Travellers discover the pot – brimming with gold – in the morning, they realise that they will never want for anything again and vow never to speak of what happened. Fearful of accusations of theft, the husband empties the pot and buries the gold. The next day, the pot is nowhere to be found, and the Traveller family 'have plenty money that they could ask for, for the rest o their days' (ibid.). Williamson concludes by adding that the Travellers 'growed up their family, and the man went, and he bought a wee property tae hissel and he pit his weans [children] tae school' (ibid.). What this story demonstrates, as I intimated above, is not the wholesale rejection of lifestyles associated with sedentarism. Instead, Williamson's

story is a negotiation of the values that Geordie resisted in my previous example. That these events take place in a supernatural story space enables the symbolic function of the pot. Within this space, fantastic events are taken for granted, allowing the meaning to be delivered. The agency given to the pot functions to highlight an ideological negotiation; central to this negotiation is the dichotomy between the Travellers' treatment of the pot – where the pot represents abundance and security – and the laird's. Where the Travellers took care of the pot and were rewarded, the greedy laird's actions meant that the pot abandoned him. As I have shown throughout my interpretations, value systems based on sagacity and moral rectitude are ingrained within the Travellers' storytelling traditions. In terms of the relationship with ATU 591 – *The Thieving Pot*, Williamson's story again demonstrates the Nackian folk idiom. The narrative trajectory of the Travellers' wealth-giving pot aligns with ATU 591: in Uther's description of the international tale, a poor man makes some sort of exchange for a magic pot that goes on to steal food and money from his neighbours (2004 Vol. I: 348). When the aggrieved parties attempt to catch the magic pot, it takes them back to the poor man and the thefts are forgiven (or the pot takes the poor man to hell). The plots are broadly the same, but the nuances and contextual information mean that Williamson's version is steeped in culturally significant meanings.

As a further example of the ideological negotiations under discussion in this section, I turn to a story from Betsy Whyte. In the same vein as Stewart's and Williamson's stories examined above, Whyte's story involves a supernatural source of wealth. 'A Traveller man', Whyte begins, 'wis gan awa intae the wuid [woodland] fir tae see a sloosh [urinate]' (TAD 76412). The Traveller comes across a ha'penny under a tree, picks it up, is thankful for his good fortune and returns to his camp without thinking of mentioning his find to his peers. The next day, the man goes out to the same tree 'and there wis a penny!' (ibid.); this pattern continues, with the amount doubling each day, until the Traveller finds a one pound note

under the tree. At this point, the Traveller tells someone at the camp about his good fortune, who exclaims “‘awa!”, he says, “I widnae believe ye’ (ibid.). To prove the source of his pound note, the Traveller takes the sceptic to his money tree the following morning.

Predictably, there is no money under the tree. Whyte explains: ‘my mother says, “if he haudnae a telt naebody about this”, that “it would a went on doublin itsel like that until he would’a had a fortune”’ (ibid). Whyte concludes, ‘the minute he telt, that wis the thing broken and he got nae mair aftir that’ (ibid.).

Whyte’s short narrative is further evidence of how Traveller storytellers negotiate attitudes towards conspicuous wealth. Again, the central theme of the story is the fortuitous acquisition of wealth by supernatural means. The surface meaning of the tale is plain; be thankful for what you have and/or resist boastful behaviour. However, as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, the Travellers’ stories have further, more complex, meanings that are negotiated below the surface. For instance, in Whyte’s story, money is defined as an abstract concept in the way that the Traveller protagonist accumulates wealth. The ‘doubling’ pattern means that the growth of his wealth would be exponential. This means that after only 60 days, the Traveller would have  $£5.76 \times 10^{17}$ , an astronomical number, expressed in cardinal terms as over five hundred and seventy-six *quadrillion*. The concept being interrogated here is one that also vexed Marx and Engels: ‘whence arouse the illusions of the monetary system?’ (2010: 670). And a system it is, as ‘money’ has no intrinsic value. Rather it is a social *process* predicated on exchange. Where a system of direct barter is no longer possible – on account of the non-coincidence of interests in modern society (Harvey 2014: 25) – money as we know it functions as a relative measure of exchange value, simultaneously storing that value.

It is not my purpose here to enter into an in-depth economic debate on capital, only to recognise that the stories under examination confront pervasive issues about material wealth that affect us all. In Whyte’s story, the Traveller protagonist fluctuates between opposing

ends of the money-spectrum: at one end, he has nothing and is simply answering the call of nature; on the other, the money tree represents the *potential* to acquire an unlimited source of exchange value. In both cases, there is an element of freedom because each state represents the subject no longer participating in any system of exchange in a meaningful way. Where the subject has no ‘money’, they have nothing to exchange and therefore cannot participate in the social process of exchange. Where the subject has unlimited ‘money’, any exchange is meaningless because the unlimited-money subject is effectively exchanging nothing for something. Another way of putting this would be as Harvey does: ‘endless compound growth [is] an extremely dangerous but largely unrecognised and unanalysed contradiction’ (2014: 222). Compound interest is akin to exponential growth in that the cumulative effects of both begin modestly then accelerate rapidly after a certain point. The accumulation of wealth within the capitalist system is supposedly all fair and well, yet elements such as compound interest represent stark contradictions within the system. The maxim that ‘money makes money’ springs to mind and this phrase encapsulates the contradiction; if a single economic entity was allowed to possess unlimited ‘money’, the exchange value system would be unable to function because the social process that is money would cease to be meaningful.<sup>19</sup> As a social process, Douglas sees money as a singular form of ritual: ‘Money is only an extreme and specialised type of ritual’, says Douglas, ‘money can only perform its role of intensifying economic interaction if the public has faith in it. If faith in it is shaken, the currency is useless. So too with ritual’ (2003: 70). Viewed as a ritualistic practice, the efficacy of money is scrutinised with a startling degree of insight in Whyte’s story.

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<sup>19</sup> Perhaps more realistically, such a scenario would undermine the power of whatever financial status quo existed at the time. Harvey provides the example of Peter Thelluson. On his death in 1797, Thelluson stipulated that a £600,000 trust fund – yielding 7.5% compound interest – could not be accessed until 100 years after his death. Given the compound interest, this would result in a fund of £19 million in 1897. This was unacceptable to the British State because it would mean immense financial power for Thelluson’s heirs. Legislation was passed in 1800 limiting trusts to twenty-one years (2014: 225-226).

The contradiction perceived by Harvey is the very same contradiction that Whyte's narrative evokes when her Traveller protagonist is presented with the potential to possess unlimited wealth. Within the context of the Travellers' ideological imperatives, the focus of my interpretations here, the distinction between these two states of 'wealth' acquires symbolism. Complementing my previous chapters' findings, the rural and the urban are again juxtaposed: the rural identity of the Traveller protagonist is made clear by Whyte's jocose introduction involving his 'sloosh' in the woods; the urban becomes the potential 'fortune' that the money tree represents. I demonstrated in both Stewart's and Williamson's narratives above that material wealth is associated with immovable property, or urbanity, in the Travellers' traditions. In his study of Traveller culture, Niles also perceived negative connotations associated with the accumulation of wealth; for Niles, the Travellers 'firmly believe that hoarding invites nemesis [...] in the view of the travelling [sic] people, life is as regular as the classic ballads in seeing that nemesis haunts greed' (1999: 167). The same can be perceived in Whyte's narrative, where the concept of material wealth is forced into abstraction and an inherent contradiction is laid bare. When the Traveller protagonist reveals the source of his wealth to his society, the spell is broken and the potential for unlimited wealth disappears. 'Money', then, is cast in Whyte's story as a *social* rather than an *economic* process, a process that relies on equitability for its very existence. Of course, our social reality is markedly different and I do not mean to suggest that the Traveller storytellers are somehow immune to the attractions of material wealth. This reality was also recognised by Niles when he pointed out that 'some people persist in the delusion that travellers [sic] live in rural isolation, uncorrupted by the dominant society and its industrial or post-industrial economy' (ibid.: 164). For instance, Traveller Jeannie Robertson's correspondence with Hamish Henderson in the 1950-60s is revealing. In one letter dated 25/11/1957, Robertson complains that the *Workers' Music Association* have offered '22£s [sic] 9 shillings for my

whole record, they must think I am a fool’, levelling the claim of ‘daylight robbery. I don’t like to make records for sweetie [insignificant] money’ (*Centre for Research Collections* E89.92). A further letter dated 24/02/1964, relating to a performance in London, sees Robertson exclaim that ‘they have offered me £25 but I told them I would need £50, plus all expenses and a further £10 for Donald [her husband]’ (*ibid.*).

To highlight the distinctiveness of the Traveller negotiations of magical wealth, a comparable narrative from elsewhere in Scotland is useful. John Elliot tells the story of a soldier who has an encounter with a mysterious old woman (TAD 14182). Elliot’s story is a version of Hans Christian Andersen’s *Fyrthøjet* [The Tinderbox] which Thompson aligns with *The Spirit in the Blue Light*, which in turn is linked to Aladdin and his magical lamp (1946: 71–72). Uther records the tale-type as ATU 562, where a discharged or deserter soldier acquires wealth, power and a princess using a magical tinderbox that he steals from an old woman (2004 Vol. I: 330). In Elliot’s version, under the instructions of the old woman, an impoverished soldier acquires a fortune in gold from under a tree. The old woman stipulates that she wants a tinderbox, also under the tree, in return for telling the soldier of the gold that was hidden there. When the old woman refuses to tell the soldier why the tinderbox is so valuable, he murders her with his sword and heads into town to flaunt his wealth. After spending all his ill-gotten gold, the soldier realises that striking the tinderbox summons magical dogs that can bring him anything that he wants. In Andersen’s version, the soldier, predictably, asks the dogs for more wealth and then commands them to kidnap a local princess whom he covets (1899: 365–366). The King discovers the kidnapping and sentences the soldier to hang, whereupon his last request for his tinderbox allows him to escape while he instructs the dogs to kill the King. Andersen’s soldier then marries the now willing princess and becomes King himself. Elliot’s version follows the same narrative trajectory,

except that the soldier does not kill the King at the conclusion of the story; the King begs mercy, and the soldier is satisfied with a marriage to the princess (TAD 14182).

The fact that Andersen's literary fairy tale, first published in serial form in the 1830s, appears in an oral tradition is no surprise; in his metanarration, Elliot explains that he first heard the story during his days at school at the beginning of the twentieth century (ibid.). The characteristics of Elliot's story stand in stark contrast to the Traveller versions examined above. Its appearance in a non-Traveller oral tradition illustrates my overarching point about the stories that we chose to tell. Writing about Scottish Travellers and folklore, Traveller Willie Reid captures this point succinctly; 'we need to consider how far', says Reid, 'selectively taking and rejecting cultural elements from others, the re-presentation of European folklore was the legitimate assertion of their [Travellers] own culture' (1997: 37). From the outset, the soldier's material wealth is blood-soaked, and his greed is plain and irrational. The fact that the soldier murders a presumably defenceless old woman over something as trivial as a tinderbox is telling. The motivation of the protagonist in Elliot's story goes beyond mere avarice when he, again, victimises a female character in his kidnapping of the princess. Consider the contrast with Geordie's miraculous wealth; yes, Geordie flaunts his wealth, but his motivation is beneficent and carnivalesque when he shares his good fortune with his peers. Furthermore, Elliot's soldier is not satisfied with wealth and a desirable female companion, he must also usurp the social order and become monarch. Zipes propounds that *The Tinderbox* has close ties to the 'peasant oral tradition and can be regarded ideologically and aesthetically as Andersen's challenge to the ruling notions of how such tales should be transformed' (2006: 227). That is, Andersen's literary version champions the downtrodden in society and functions to inspire compassion in its readers for the lowly soldier. The overall impetus of the narrative is again a desire for power; in Chapter 4 above, I showed how Williamson's Hedgehurst – in a version of ATU 441 – undermined such desires

and returned to his life in the forest. We see the same contradistinction when it comes to Elliot's story, where the ideological imperatives of the protagonist exist in fundamental opposition to the examples I have provided from the Travellers' traditions. The way that wealth is presented and *used* is what is being scrutinised in these story spaces, Traveller or otherwise.

Under close analysis, the above examples have revealed underlying ideological imperatives around material wealth and its implications. Material gain is not to be shunned wholesale, rather it should be predicated on equitable exchange and so retain its function as a social process. However, this somewhat facile interpretation of 'money' gathers significance when orientated within the context of the tradition to which it belongs. Considering what he terms the 'urbanisation of consciousness', Harvey points out that the city is both the high point of human achievement and 'the lightning rod of the profoundest discontents, and the arena of often savage social and political conflict' (1985: 250). The urban is defined as a social landscape that is representative of capitalism's transformation of space relations (ibid.: xviii). The concept of an 'urban consciousness' is useful here because it represents a set of ideas that want to dominate landscapes, usually in the form of built environments, as sources of social power. As Harvey points out, urban experience can provide untold opportunities, but it can also lead to alienation and violence. In Chapter 2 above, I indicated how Scotland's Travellers have suffered persecution from the authorities over the preceding centuries from a multitude of perspectives. I argued that, until recently, government policy around land use, education and welfare failed to accommodate itinerant lifestyles. Moreover, legislation such as the Trespass (Scotland) Act of 1865, the Caravan Sites Act (1968) and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) effectively made it a criminal offence to be nomadic (Kendrick and Clark 1999: 57).

I have also argued that Traveller storytellers negotiate real world anxieties in imaginary story spaces and continue to contend that ideological negotiation is a central function of the narratives under examination here. In the case of Whyte's story about a money-producing tree, the rural and the urban are juxtaposed to create a striking profile of a social system that contradicts itself. 'Money', as proxy for 'the city/metropolis', is thereby interrogated in a super-empirical story space. The social process that should stand for equitable exchange of goods is portrayed as a system that produces inequality and suffering. This message is particularly relevant when viewed as the product of a community of tradition that has been persecuted for many centuries in Scotland. Moreover, a challenge is being made to the persecutors who demonstrably attempted the cultural assimilation of practitioners of divergent ideologies. Whyte's simple story therefore presents urban consciousness with a question, one that highlights the tension inherent to the dominant ideologies of capitalism. 'Money', viewed from this perspective, has the potential to undo social relationships, a scenario that is unnervingly close to home as the twenty-first century continues. For example, the UK Parliament's *Economic Affairs Committee's* recent inquiry into the risks of 'quantitative easing' – a monetary policy tool where the Bank of England creates new money to purchase Government or corporate bonds – reported that 'while we recognise that quantitative easing has prevented economic crises from spiralling downwards, its effect on inflation and output is uncertain' (2021: 53). The *Committee's* report goes on to suggest that quantitative easing 'may also have increased wealth inequality by raising the price of certain assets, benefitting those who own them (ibid.)'. The *Committee* concludes that 'The Bank of England and HM Treasury must do more to acknowledge this uncertainty and to understand these effects' (ibid.).

I do not mean to suggest that such stories deliberately embody systematic critiques of monetary policy, only that they recognise that certain money systems have inherent flaws.

For instance, the current system of *fiat* money – from the Latin ‘let it be done’ – is what Keynes refers to as a form of representative money that is created and issued by the State, having no intrinsic value, like gold or silver (1930: 7). Critique of such systems has one modern economic commentator asking why ‘public opinion accepts adherence to an economically and socially destructive fiat money regime’, concluding that ‘under a fiat money regime, people will be corrupted on the grandest scale’ (Polleit 2011: 397).

Elsewhere, Schlichter envisions a ‘paper money collapse’ where addressing the ‘terminal flaws inherent in the present elastic [*fiat*] money system [...] would require some profound ideological changes’ (2014: 299-300). Both Polleit and Schlichter follow Ludwig von Mises’ advocacy of a return to ‘sound’ money principles, where the units of exchange have intrinsic value. As Mises put it as early as the 1930s, ‘the idea of sound money [...] was devised as an instrument for the protection of civil liberties against despotic inroads on the part of governments’; this means, for Mises, that ‘ideologically it belongs in the same class with political constitutions and bills of rights’ (1981 [1934]: 454). The point here is that Traveller storytellers engage with issues that transcend their status as members of marginalised communities, tackling economic practices that affect our society more generally. Note the fact that in Whyte’s story, the magical source of material wealth is *specifically* State sanctioned *fiat* currency, as opposed to a commodity with intrinsic value. The comment here is that of a deep ideological tension between what someone tells you has value and what you yourself value; the supernatural source of wealth facilitates the agency of the protagonist in challenging power relations within a social system that is demonstrably flawed. Perhaps at an even deeper level, such stories contribute to the sense that a ‘proliferation of magical stories [...] is correlated to a growing awareness of human separateness from the wild and the natural world’ (Bernheimer 2010: xix), a sense that we have experienced repeatedly as I elucidate meaning within the Travellers’ storytelling traditions.

## Summary

My examinations of Traveller storytelling continue to reveal that the storytellers' distinctive cultural identities are expressed within their narratives. As this thesis progresses, it is becoming clear that the 'cultural identities' of the Traveller storytellers are linked to underlying ideological imperatives. What makes the narratives 'Traveller', or *Nackian*, are the values and beliefs that underpin the stories as necessities. To elucidate the way that these necessities perform this function, my critical analyses demonstrate that complex ideological negotiations are taking place within the Travellers' storytelling traditions. These conclusions chime well with the results from my preceding chapters; advocacy of an equitable relationship with the natural environment and its resources is a pronounced theme within the several examples I have provided. In the present chapter, I demonstrated how such themes were negotiated in super-empirical story spaces. These spaces, liminal and otherwise, function to allow the narrators the freedom to symbolically negotiate sometimes dichotomous ideological imperatives. In Geordie's case, the 'Other', from his perspective, was lampooned in a carnivalesque liminality. Furthermore, Geordie's own values and beliefs were interrogated during the narrative. I showed how Andrew Stewart's story portrayed an ironically naïve protagonist who challenges deeply entrenched social hierarchies by flouting conventions and sedentarist attitudes towards conspicuous wealth. Braid draws similar conclusions when discussing Traveller storytelling when he sees the narratives expressing 'the absurdity of settled worldview' while 'vindicating Traveller worldview' (1997: 116).

Williamson's story about the magic pot developed my interpretations further and problematises the binary opposition advocated by Braid. In Williamson's story, I demonstrated how super-empirical story spaces can be used to deliver symbolic meanings about wealth that are closer to lived experience. Whyte's story about the tree that produced money is perhaps the most lucid example of the way that money, or material wealth, has been

conceptualised throughout this chapter. Here, the social process that is money is being interrogated in a story space that imagines dystopian realities where social relationships have lost meaning. I invoked Harvey's ideas around how urban spaces affect the consciousness of their inhabitants to better understand the way that super-empirical story spaces negotiate alternative or underrepresented worldviews. Accessing worldviews is the central concern of this thesis. A variety of interpretational frames, such as Harvey's historicism, are being deployed to gain this access.

Furthermore, I have revealed that super-empirical story spaces do not necessarily have to involve the familiar agents of 'supernatural' tales – fairies, dragons, ogres – to function as carriers of symbolic meaning. If the Burkers represent the quintessential existential threat to the Travellers' lifestyles, then the super-empiricism of the present chapter casts the net further. The stories and story spaces examined above encapsulate wider concerns about society itself. Super-empirical story spaces are ideal locations for Traveller storytellers to interrogate dominant ideologies and therein reconceptualise received modes of thought. The present chapter has shown how divergent ideological imperatives are contested within super-empirical story spaces to reveal worldviews that are underpinned by an optimistic social awareness and utopian outlook. Moreover, my folk-centred onomastic analyses revealed that stories around place-names shared a similar function to the stories in my preceding chapters. Responding to my interpretations of his folk onomastics, Shamus McPhee commented that 'you demonstrate a sensitivity for and understanding of the subject matter which I, as a Nacker, or Scottish Gypsy Traveller, seldom encounter in work produced by members of the "settled" community. It goes far beyond the normal conception' (2021c: Appendix I). My forthcoming conclusion draws my various threads of enquiry together, articulating how my manifold examples enrich our understanding and address the underrepresentation of this iconic sector of Scottish society. Beforehand, my final analytical chapter introduces voices

from Scotland's contemporary Traveller communities, engaging with their perspectives and examining more recent versions of stories that will by now be familiar to the reader.

## Chapter 6

### Nackian Narratives in Contemporary Scotland

Feek the neddies tae yer naggin,

Dinnae sloch the hantle's slab.

– Davie Donaldson (Interview 2019: 45m 05s)

Until now, this thesis has engaged, for the most part, with testimony and narratives from the second half of the twentieth century. Through close examination, my chapters have shown that archives such as *Tobar an Dualchais* (TAD) represent an immense resource for understanding the storytelling traditions of the Travellers. Before I present my conclusions, this chapter incorporates the voices and lived experiences of contemporary Travellers. Throughout the present chapter, I use the term ‘contemporary’ to refer to living individuals from within the communities. My preceding chapters have shown that the title of this thesis, *Nackian Narratives*, refers to a specific folkloric idiom that belongs to the Travellers. At their heart, Nackian narratives are characterised by sophisticated negotiations of distinctive Traveller worldviews. I have been referring to these negotiations in terms of ideological imperatives being scrutinised within recognisably ‘Traveller’ story spaces. I have shown how these imperatives represent worldviews that stand in contradistinction to mainstream attitudes around how a society should work. Crucially, these interrogations are not characterised by antagonism or hostility. Instead, I have shown how Traveller storytelling traditions are underpinned by a sagacity around alternative worldviews and a self-awareness that is utopian in outlook. Moreover, I have expanded on previous research in this field by providing

concrete examples of *how* these negotiations take place, as opposed to simply stating that they *do*.

My purpose in the present chapter is to assess my conclusions from preceding chapters with evidence from contemporary Travellers. To understand contemporary Traveller storytelling, this introduction presents examples from the current discourse around Travellers' experiences in modern Scotland. I continue to propound that social realities are embedded and negotiated within the storytelling traditions. Before going on to engage with contemporary Travellers' perspectives, I comment briefly on the perspectives of several key organisations to illustrate modern conceptualisations of the communities and to make clear how the present thesis expands upon these perspectives. For example, in Chapter 1 I introduced governmental groups such as the *Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers* (MWGGT). MWGGT aim to 'drive forward cross-government actions which will improve the lives of Scottish Gypsy/Traveller communities' (Scottish Government, online). For the MWGGT, this involves the practicalities of everyday life; housing, education, healthcare and employment are, understandably, the central concerns of the group. The group's remit also includes 'cross-cutting issues, i.e., community cohesion' (ibid.), evidence that the Travellers' distinctive cultural identities are at least being acknowledged. Elsewhere, the *Scottish Traveller Education Review Group* (STERG) aim to help 'develop and promote guidance on the education of young people from travelling families in Scotland' (Scottish Government, online). Although, STERG's aims are admirable, as of July 2021 the group itself is in its infancy and has produced no publications.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> An earlier report of 2018 from The Scottish Government's *Learning Directorate* shares similar, more detailed aims with STERG: 'Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures: guidance' (2018: Scottish Government, online).

The perspectives of these sorts of governmental groups are understandable, their foremost concerns being the provision of basic necessities, aligning themselves with the principles of the United Nations. However, Sullivan has suggested recently:

Instead of only looking at the poor outcomes experienced by this population in health or education, the government might engage in a genuine re-examination of the history between government and Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers. Such an examination might then expose historically overt discriminatory ideas and policies which have morphed into more covert forms of discrimination today. In other words, how have discriminatory ideas against Gypsy/Travellers been maintained in the groundwater? Understanding and acknowledging the deep-rooted structural nature of discrimination against this population would also necessitate participatory engagement to understand Gypsy/Travellers' perspectives. In addition to providing insight into the past, these actions might also facilitate the development of sustainable solutions for the future.

(2020: 8)

Sullivan's points go a long way to anticipating the impetus of the present chapter. Although I do not claim to have the antidote for the discriminatory ideas in the 'groundwater', understanding the perspectives of the communities at the receiving end of these ideas is a central concern of my thesis. In the context of Sullivan's points above, my own use of 'worldview' and 'cultural identity' throughout this thesis are synonymous with her evocation of 'Gypsy/Travellers' *perspectives*' (ibid., my italics). Both recognise the underrepresentation of Scotland's Travellers and that this underrepresentation must be considered outside of strictly quotidian necessities. For instance, many governmental groups, and their concomitant publications, allude to attempts to 'understand and respect Gypsy/Travellers' rights and culture' (MWGGT 2019: Scottish Government, online). However, these attempts amount to a recognition that the said 'culture' exists; there is little or no engagement with what the culture *actually is*, outside of characterisations like 'semi-nomadic' or 'mobile communities'.

Organisations like STEP – formerly an acronym for ‘Scottish Traveller Education Programme’ – on the other hand, aim to ‘ensure that the values, lifestyles and educational needs of mobile communities, whether settled or nomadic, are reflected in national policy and curriculum development’ (2020: online). STEP also publish research regularly. A recent article calls for Scotland’s education sector to ‘scrutinize how the characteristics of a sedentary education system contribute to a Traveller’s identity and sense of belonging’, concluding that, ‘teachers must facilitate processes, value pupils’ ideas, and challenge them so that they understand their own views in relation to others’ (Duncan and Finn 2018: 4-5). The work and ethos of organisations like STEP challenge assimilation and discriminatory practices, an overarching motivation shared by my own research and the stories that I examine. To take these examinations further, I first engage with contemporary Traveller voices that demonstrate a continuing sense of distinctive cultural identity within the communities. I go on provide further commentary on the Scottish Government’s perspectives of the Traveller communities living in Scotland today. To do this, I provide the reader with a chronological account – dating back to the end of the nineteenth century – because the impact of the earlier documentary evidence provides context that remains relevant to this day. I continue by engaging with my own fieldwork results to reinforce my conclusions from my preceding chapters: here, I revisit a familiar Burkean narrative in a fresh context, then demonstrate how a contemporary strong tradition-bearer conceptualises and presents her tradition.

## **6.1 Twenty-First Century Perspectives**

I have argued throughout this thesis that close engagement with the Travellers’ storytelling traditions addresses the underrepresentation and misunderstanding that is evident in

mainstream media and politics. Happily, within an academic context, it is an *underrepresentation* of the Travellers' stories that I address here, not any misunderstandings. Scotland's Travellers continue to attract the attention of scholars from across the globe who have also perceived this underrepresentation. For example, writing for the *National Museum of Ethnology* in Osaka, Japan, Yamasaki recently examined how 'Traveller characters communicate their distinct worldview and value system by telling stories' (2020: 535). Yamasaki drew upon Stanley Robertson's published work, *Exodus to Alford* (1998), to conclude that Traveller storytelling has the power to 'relativise the mainstream, non-Traveller worldview and value system, thereby helping to raise awareness of presenting cultural diversity within Scottish society' (ibid.: 553). In Robertson's work, says Yamasaki, the urban and the rural are juxtaposed to highlight the discrimination that Travellers faced in built-up environments (ibid.: 547). Like Yamasaki, the examinations and contextual details of my previous chapters revealed a Traveller identity that negotiated conceptualisations of the urban and the rural. This binary is perhaps unsurprising considering what we know about the Travellers' chosen lifestyles in the past. However, I provided detailed arguments contending that such binaries functioned within the stories to symbolise sustainable relationships with the environment and its resources.

Despite lifestyle changes, these values persist to the present day. *Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month* (GRTHM) is an annual event that 'recognises the history and celebrates the cultures, traditions and contributions of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK' (2020: online). GRTHM is a national event – endorsed by The Scottish Government – that involves a variety of collaborations between advocacy organisations and members of the communities. Using the testimonies from GRTHM, this section provides examples of twenty-first century Travellers' voices and perspectives. Due to the spread of COVID-19, 2020 saw GRTHM take place in an online environment. Minority

Ethnic Carers of People Project's (MECOPP) Community Arts Worker, Peter Ross, curates a series of podcasts entitled 'No Less a Traveller' in which Travellers talk about their lives and experiences. In the first podcast of the series, 'My Gypsy/Traveller Identity with Lucinda and Samantha', we hear from two female Travellers discussing their identities (GRTHM 2020: online). Although the speakers are not individually identified, their comments are pertinent to my discussion here. When asked what culture means to her, one speaker responds that 'it means shared values, knowledge, experience. Just your place in a society' (ibid.). It is clear from the speakers' discussion that part of their place in society is the recognition that they are different; 'the real problem that Travellers face today is acceptance from the wider society', we are told, 'because in their world, we're so different [...] because we act a certain way or think a certain way' (ibid.). The concept of a distinctive Traveller ideology is revealed here in that these twenty-first century Travellers recognise that their very thinking sets them apart from mainstream Scottish society. Moreover, the speakers suggest that 'perceptions, obviously, things like stereotypes' (ibid.) need to be challenged so that Traveller culture in Scotland is better understood. A core aim of the present thesis has been to do just that by highlighting the values and beliefs that many Travellers share through their storytelling traditions.

In another podcast from the series titled 'Sustainable Living with John and Edith', Edith and John discuss their experiences growing up. 'What a lot of the Travellers I would say use, is anything they could about them', reports John; for example, John remembers that his 'great-great grandparents made wooden flowers from elderberry' (GRTHM 2020: online). Regarding her family's trade, Edith tells us, 'my father, he used to make a lot of baskets for my mother to sell at the door, cause I used to be the basket carrier' (ibid.). Edith's father made baskets to order and, 'nothing was ever wasted', Edith explains, 'he knew where to cut the trees and how to cut them so that they wouldnae die' (ibid.). Perhaps the most evocative

recollections from John are his reminisces about ‘Sally’s Well’. ‘Where Dumbarton site is, there was a camp just over fi that’, John recalls, ‘it had a wee spring well on it’ (ibid.). John continues, ‘it was always looked after, they called it Sally’s Well and the water bubbled out and it was lovely. Just a spring, it just bubbled up from the ground and it was always kept clean’ (ibid.). Water, the very stuff of life that is often taken for granted, is given reverence by John, evoking a respectful, and indeed grateful, relationship with the natural landscape. The curator of the podcast series, Peter Ross, comments that Travellers have been ‘finely tuned to their environment’ (ibid.) and that their activities in previous centuries amount to conscientious recycling of materials *before* it became political policy. The testimonies of Edith and John also contain an element of nostalgia for a lifestyle that has seen dramatic changes over the last 100 years. However, the fact that contemporary Travellers choose to express these details is a clear indication of their meaningfulness in contemporary Traveller culture. These expressions also reinforce my interpretations of the stories that have populated this thesis.

One such expression that continues to resurface is the story of James MacPherson, hanged at Banff in 1700. In a modern retelling for 2021’s GRTHM celebration, Maggie McPhee’s version negotiates the same deep-seated anxieties about the systemic injustice perceived by contemporary Travellers. In ‘Heartbreak Through Her Eyes’, Maggie McPhee recounts the story as a first-person narrative that nullifies the temporal gap between generations. ‘I want to tell you about my son, Jamie Macpherson’, Maggie begins, ‘back then I was a young Traveller girl’ (GRTHM 2021: online). Maggie goes on to describe how she has a son, Jamie, with a Highland laird and how the boy is taken from her and raised in Invereshie House, near Kingussie in the Scottish Highlands. After his father’s untimely death, the narrator explains that Jamie ‘came looking for me and my people’, and ‘we took Jamie into our clan and he fitted just right’ (ibid.). Unfortunately, Jamie fell in with a ‘puckle of nae yoosers [a bad

crowd]’, eventually attracting the scorn of ‘the sleekit [deceitful] Lord Braco’ (ibid.). Maggie is referring to Alexander Duff of Braco, born around 1650, who is described by one chronicler as ‘certainly a good countryman in all national concerns, and a very useful member of society in the North of Scotland’ (Baird 1869 [1763-73]: 52). Braco was further distinguished by the ‘care he took to have all the Highland robbers [sic] and thieves who pestered the low Country at that time, apprehended and brought to justice’ (ibid.).

This much is true of Maggie’s Jamie, who the same chronicler regards as belonging to a band of ‘notorious breakers of the peace in all sort of villainy’ (ibid.). In Maggie’s narrative, Braco and his men eventually catch Jamie at a market in Keith, and he is imprisoned at Banff awaiting trial. Soon, Maggie continues, ‘Judge Dunbar, a friend of Lord Braco, sentenced my Jamie to be hung just for being a Traveller’ (GRTHM 2021: online). A record of the trial itself was printed in the *Miscellany of the Spalding Club* in 1846, where the defence claims that the case brought against Macpherson is based on laws that ‘have no coherence, nor contingency, with the pretended crimes’ (Geills and Fraser 1846: 179). The defence goes on to point out that the Sheriff, Nicolas Dunbar, is not a ‘judge competent’ in cases of robbery and reiving, of which Macpherson stands accused (ibid.). Citing several Acts of Parliament, the defence ultimately argues that Macpherson’s ‘villainy’ amounts to petty crime and that execution is therefore excessive. However, the Sheriff and jury disagree, and Macpherson is condemned to death by virtue of his status as an ‘Egyptian [Gypsy, Traveller]’ and person of ‘pessima fama [bad reputation]’ (ibid.). The fact that this narrative appears in contemporary Traveller tradition is testament to its continuing relevance to the communities. More significantly, Maggie’s choice of narrative voice is a poignant evocation of how proximate the story is to her experience; much like Jamie’s renowned fiddle that the narrator ‘locked [...] in the family kist [chest]’ (GRTHM 2021: online), so the story endures.

## 6.2 Modern Perspectives and the State

Much has been written about Travellers and their relationships with the various manifestations of the State in Scotland. It is not my intention to add to this body of grey literature here. I will, however, highlight certain examples, and comment on the present situation, to summarise the salient points and provide an overview of the changing relationship between Travellers and the State. I take a somewhat long view here – incorporating the notorious ‘1895’ report, for instance – because, as I have shown throughout this thesis, historical conceptualisations of Travellers have a demonstrable impact on their storytelling traditions. Furthermore, I include this material at this stage – in keeping with the chapter’s contemporary theme – because it shows how attitudes towards Travellers have evolved over the last hundred years. My purpose here is to elucidate the important interactions between Travellers and the central government to highlight the relevance of such discourses to the contemporary communities. At the same time, my discussion here sheds further light on my interpretations from my preceding chapters and underlines the ideological differentiation that has been at the core of my arguments. Given my overarching focus on how such differentiation manifests in storytelling, sections 6.3 and 6.4 then go on to present the reader with examples from contemporary tradition-bearers within the communities.

Previously, in Chapter 1, I showed how the evidence found in TSAS reveals a distinctly problematic relationship between Travellers and elite members of society in the past. What is clear from the evidence presented is that the Travellers’ alternative lifestyles led to their demonisation in the eyes of the ruling elite during the late eighteenth century, and through to the mid-nineteenth century. The Scottish Government’s *Advisory Committee on Scotland’s Travelling People* (ACSTP) have recently provided a useful chronology of the State’s

interaction with Travellers. The table below represents examples of attempted engagement with the communities, with the intention of gathering information:

<b>1895</b>	'The Report of the Departmental Committee on Habitual Offenders, Vagrants, Beggars, Inebriates and Juvenile Delinquents';
<b>1906</b>	'Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy';
<b>1918</b>	'Report of the Departmental Committee on the Tinkers in Scotland';
<b>1936</b>	'Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy in Scotland'.

Table 2: 'The Information Base' - *Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People*

'Earlier central government initiatives in Scotland, where a search for effective information as a basis for policy either specifically on, or at least including, Travellers', we are told, 'now stretch back more than a century' (ACSTP 2000: Section 10.1, online). The more modern committee's recent aspiration towards the collection of 'robust and objective information' (ibid.) was not always extant. It is apparent from the titles of the historical reports, cited in Table 2 above, that the officials conducting the reporting were not entirely sympathetic to the situations or lifestyles of their subjects. For Travellers in particular, it soon becomes clear that the official line is to attempt to eradicate them by targeting their children. As Roughneen points out, legislation and policy-making often encroach on nomadic peoples' liberty and autonomy (2010: xi). For instance, a 1905 report prepared by Inspector J. Boyd for Education (Scotland) – which is missing from the ACSTP list cited in Table 2 above – contains evidence from a 'Mr Macdonald' regarding 'the problem of tinker children' in the Caithness district during the year 1904 (Boyd 1905: 9). Macdonald reports that 'the children seem to be trained to regard their fellow creatures as natural enemies; they

grow up as outcasts without ambition to rise above the squalor of their surroundings' (ibid.). Given the evidence of the persecution of Traveller from TSAS and elsewhere, the aversion of the Traveller children to officialdom is perhaps understandable. Macdonald goes on to assert of the Traveller children that it is 'impossible with the present *machinery of compulsion* to bring them within the range of the Education Acts [...] even if an educational *net of smaller mesh* be provided' (ibid., my italics). The rhetoric of these governmental reports frequently reduces Traveller communities to unthinking and insidious pariahs.

Within the context of Inspector Boyd's ostensibly objective report, it is clear that Macdonald is vying for additional funds to tackle 'the problem' or attempting to wash his hands of the Travellers altogether. According to Macdonald, the educational authorities in his district cannot be 'reasonably expected to trouble themselves and burden the local rates with the education of a class that contributes nothing to the parish but work for the police' (ibid.).

The earlier 1895 report prepared for the then Scottish Secretary George Otto Trevelyan titled *The Report of the Departmental Committee on Habitual Offenders, Vagrants, Beggars, Inebriates and Juvenile Delinquents* anticipates Macdonald's fiscal concerns. Commenting on the compulsory education of Traveller children, the Committee concludes 'that one of the chief reasons why the law is not enforced is because to do so would entail expenditure on the parish enforcing it' (1895: xxxii). The Committee provide an example from Perthshire where the lack of enthusiasm for the law is obvious, and where the Magistrates presumably did not consider the Traveller child worth the expenditure (ibid.). However, the Committee become insistent and recommends that 'powers should be given to School Board districts and parishes in a county or adjoining counties to unite in enforcing the attendance at school of the children of nomadic parents' (ibid.: xxxiii). The effect of this new power, the Committee explain, would be 'to enable to be borne by an extensive area the expense of contributing to the maintenance of children liable to be sent to Industrial Schools' (ibid.).

In other words, School districts were being officially encouraged to remove what were deemed to be neglected and/or delinquent children to Industrial Schools, regardless of their opinions around whether it would be ‘worth it’. In the *Minutes of Evidence* section of the same 1895 report, William Mitchell – the Vice-Chairman of Glasgow School Board and Juvenile Delinquency Board – when asked how the Committee might deal with the Travellers in his district suggests that the Travellers’ ‘movable dwellings should be registered and brought under the control of the Local Authority for inspection’ (in Cameron et al 1895: 9). Mitchell’s rationale is that such dwellings would be found to be insanitary and therefore uninhabitable, especially for children. In Mitchell’s scheme, when the Travellers’ camps are consequentially struck by the authorities, the families would be offered accommodation in custom made ‘Refuges’. This done, Mitchell believes that the Travellers ‘might gradually be absorbed with the labouring population’, and ‘their children looked after and sent to school, and the whole tinker clan thus gradually brought into association with the other labourer’ (ibid.).

Again, the rhetoric here is that of forced assimilation to eradicate the Travellers and their way of life. Mitchell’s venom is clear when he states that ‘the tinkers I speak of and their children are positively just like cattle. They have no moral training or teaching of any kind whatever’ (ibid.: 10). Similar sentiments are expressed by other witnesses throughout the report’s *Minutes of Evidence* section. For instance, Chief Constable John MacPherson of Perthshire states that ‘the only way of dealing with them is, after having them compulsorily educated, to send them away out of reach of their tribe’ (ibid.: 210). MacPherson explains that he is ‘certain that, if allowed to join their friends, even after spending some years in an Industrial School, they will just relapse into their old habits’ (ibid.). Elsewhere, Colonel Williamson of Crieff puts his feelings bluntly: ‘speaking for myself, as an individual’, says the Colonel, ‘I think the law ought to step in and declare that camping out or living in camps

is an illegal form of life' (ibid.: 214). The vitriol continues in the appendices of the 1895 report where the Committee of the School Board of the Burgh of Wick and Pulteneytown submit that:

The tinker community is composed of a tribe or family quite alien to the local population, among whom they do not mix in social life or intercourse, neither work nor help in any way to alleviate the burden of local taxation, but by their mode of life, their obscene ways and conversation, their squalor and drunken habits, are a menace to our very civilisation.

(ibid., Appendix LXII: 606)

The above submission to the 1895 report is a striking example of the sort of ideological discourses that concern the present thesis. The 'obscenity and menace' that the Traveller communities represent at this time is couched in their alternative lifestyles; the sedentarist ideals of social intercourse with 'the locals', working and paying taxes, are set against what the committee sees as an inherently 'uncivilised' way of life. The Burker tradition I examined in Chapter 4 is a reversal of this misconception, where the 'obscene ways and menace' belong to the coldly avaricious antagonists. Similarly, the implications of the Children Act (1908) meant that the children of parents who led 'alternative' lifestyles could be forcibly removed from their families to promote the children's 'reformation'. The 1918 governmental report is little better in terms of the hostility it displays towards Travellers, suggesting that through the segregation of the 'Tinker' children at school, their teachers may be able to induce them to a desire for a 'settled' occupation, and encourage cleanliness (Taylor 2014: 149-150). My point here is that the blatant and pervasive hostility that Travellers have experienced at the hands of the State has undeniably influenced their storytelling traditions, as observed above by Henderson, and evidenced through my own examples.

As a final example of the way Travellers were being regarded by officialdom during this period, the 1918 report – *The Report of the Departmental Committee on the Tinkers in Scotland* – suggests that through the segregation of the ‘Tinker’ children at school, their teachers may be able to induce them to a desire for a ‘settled’ occupation and encourage cleanliness (Taylor 2014: 149-150). As with TSAS, the details found within the governmental reports cited above are often underpinned by misunderstanding and paternalism. Similarly, the housing scheme at Bobbin Mill, Perthshire established by The Church of Scotland in 1947 was a misguided and poorly executed attempt to ‘socialise’ a select group of Travellers, who had previous connections to the site (Taylor 2008: 172-173). The scheme was taken over by Pitlochry Council, where it was described as an ‘experiment’ with the buildings ‘not in conformity with the Building Bylaws’ (ibid.: 173). An official review of the scheme in 1957 deemed the ‘experiment’ unsuccessful due to ‘constant difficulties with additional members of the clan overcrowding the houses’ (ibid.). In a documentary film titled *The Forgotten Experiment*, Bobbin Mill resident Shamus McPhee described the scheme as ‘a way of normalising people who were regarded as social misfits’ (2008: online). The site exists to this day under the auspices of Perth and Kinross Council. As I have demonstrated, governmental reports and attempts at assimilation by local councils contributed to the marginalisation of Travellers in Scotland and many of the officials involved were openly advocating cultural genocide. As I argued in Chapter 4, the Travellers’ Burker tradition functions as a means to resist such assimilatory intentions by interrogating their existence within Nackian narratives.

There were oases of understanding, however. Discussing approaches to educational reform in Scotland, one author writes in *The Scotsman* that ‘many of them [Travellers] perform a circuit in the year, with more or less regularity, and have their customary halting places’ (1893: 4, online). Armed with this knowledge, the author suggests that rather than

uprooting Traveller children from their families to be educated, an educational reformer might consider sending educators to the families at given times throughout the year. This approach is, however, then deemed untenable by the author as ‘any scheme of appointing teachers with roving commissions [...] is not to be thought of’ (ibid.). The appointees concurred, with one volunteer from a Perthshire welfare committee – designed to ‘engage’ with Travellers during the 1920s – reporting that she was forced into her work and hated it (Taylor 2014: 156-157). *The Scotsman’s* author goes on to wax poetical when he empathises with ‘this much-neglected class’, who represent ‘one of the last relics of the picturesque and the unconventional that has been left to us in a world that, according to some, is only too much bound down with rules and fashion’ (1893: 4, online). In terms of the education of Traveller children, the author ultimately concludes that as ‘important as education is, it is not the only sanative thing in human life’ (ibid.); the implication being that there is merit in ‘the outdoor training and knowledge of nature’ (ibid.) that the Traveller children receive at the hands and minds of their own family groups. The conceptualisation of an organic form of education anticipates what we now understand about Travellers’ upbringing. In one survey, it was found that ‘Traveller parents do not for the most part consider the formal education system to be the prime means of passing on their cultural capital, viewing the family as the arena in which that is achieved’ (Bancroft et al 1996: 14).

Further progress was made later in the twentieth century with the introduction of the policy of toleration and non-harassment of Travelling People in 1977 (ACSTP 2000: Section 5.1, online). Unfortunately, the committee’s choice of terminology, with the use of the term ‘toleration’, further betrays the fundamental misunderstanding of the issues by the State. Specifically, the ACSTP reported that many Travellers resented the implication that they were to be ‘tolerated’, rather than accepted, by society and the State (ibid.: Section 5.6, online). Much of the reporting that has been executed over the years by these State-funded

committees is motivated by gathering statistical information, with little or no regard for the humanitarian aspect of such activities. From this perspective, it is not difficult to conclude that there is an element of control at the core of the various committees' activities.

Gentleman's report on Travellers, submitted to The Scottish Office in 1993, makes this element of control clear when he alludes to 'potential *users of information*' (1993: 3, my italics). Given the nature of the previous committees' involvement with Travellers, it would be safe to assume that the Travellers would not exactly welcome intrusive questioning from representatives of the central government. During his introduction, Gentleman observes that Travellers 'have always been reticent about providing information to officialdom' (ibid.: 5), and that this situation has been exacerbated by the State's focus on collecting information of a fiscal nature. In Gentleman's defence, he does state that the use of the updated information that he collected 'was strongest in the context of community nursing and health visitor services' (ibid.: 4). Gentleman also questions the accuracy of his report when he observes that 'the only way in which this kind of information can be obtained with any degree of reliability is by traditional social anthropological approaches involving spending a lot of time building up trust and acceptance' (ibid.: 5). It is ironic that the very attitudes that the state expects from Travellers are the same ones that the Travellers themselves have been consistently denied.

The most recent engagement between Travellers and central government comes in the form of the recent *Race Equality Action Plan 2017-2021*, in which the Scottish Government has included the *Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers* (MWGGT). As I noted in Chapter 1, the term 'Gypsy/Traveller' represents a conflation between two distinct ethnic groups, Gypsies and Travellers. This compound term was created, Traveller Sheila Stewart explains, 'a good few years ago' (2002: 188) when Stewart and a Member of Parliament from Dundee approached the House of Commons. Stewart goes on to say that their approach

had the intention of updating the Race Relations Act (1976, amended 2000) to replace the derogatory term ‘Tinker’ with the term ‘Traveller’ (Stewart 2002: 188). At this time – presumably sometime after 1976 – Gypsies already had legal rights under the Race Relations Act, and so Stewart and the MP went further. According to Stewart, the term ‘Traveller’ was then recognised by the government as the preferred ethnic descriptor for Stewart’s people – in the same way that Gypsies were recognised as having a distinct ethnicity – and were therefore protected under the Race Relations Act (ibid.). Consequently, The Scottish Executive’s *Equal Opportunities Committee’s* ‘Inquiry into Gypsy Travellers and Public Sector Policies’ (2001) officially sanctioned the compound term, stating that ‘all legislation and policies should be framed on the understanding that Gypsy Travellers have distinct ethnic characteristics and should therefore be regarded as an ethnic group’ (2001: Recommendation 2, online). This recognition was then crystallised in 2008 when an employment appeal tribunal set a legal precedent in Scotland, ruling that Scottish Gypsy / Travellers are to be considered an ethnic minority (Cemlyn et al 2009: 211).

Unfortunately, as Stewart explains, this resulted in Travellers being referred to as Gypsies, and as ‘Gypsy Travellers’. For Stewart, this ‘did a lot of harm in Scotland’ (2002: 188) in terms of the Travellers’ distinctive identities being misrecognised by other members of society. Despite this, the term ‘White - Gypsy / Traveller’ was then deployed as an ethnic category by the National Records of Scotland during their 2011 census (2014: 2). Although, from a grammatical perspective, the punctuation mark ‘/’ can represent ‘or’, its presence in the census implies a homogeneous ethnic category, and has the potential to corrupt the resulting data. For example, McKinney has pointed out that Travellers in Scotland reject any associations with Gypsies, even when the Travellers in question have ties of kinship with Gypsy families (2003: 17). The compound term ‘Gypsy / Traveller’ can cause confusion as it is not used consistently across the board in the Scottish Government’s published literature.

In one document entitled 'Planning for Homes' (2008), the *Scottish Planning Policy* authors separate the terms quite clearly throughout their document simply using the word 'and' (2008: online). From the perspective of both Stewart's testimony and the Scottish Government's attempts at counting Travellers, it is a lamentable conflation of terminology. In an academic context, there is also disagreement around nomenclature when discussing Scotland's Travellers. For McKinney, 'it is not possible to treat Gypsies and indigenous [Scottish] Travellers as entirely separate, or separable, populations' (2003: 16). McKinney's assertion is based on the notion of the supposedly unavoidable 'practicalities of life on the road' (ibid.) resulting in intermarriage between various groups that, historically, shared an itinerant lifestyle. For the purposes of the present discussion, I resist contributing any further to this complex debate and proceed on the Travellers' self-identification as Scottish Travellers. However, it must be noted that 'while the intangible nature of ethnicity may now be taken for granted among present generations of social scientists', McKinney goes on to suggest, 'this understanding has not necessarily filtered down into either the public consciousness or the pragmatic minds of policy-makers' (ibid.: 19).

The example of the MWGGT cited above demonstrates that the conflation between Gypsies and Travellers persists in the government's official literature. The MWGGT state that their 'remit is to drive forward cross-government actions which will improve the lives of Scottish Gypsy/Traveller communities' (2018: online). Despite the rhetoric remaining somewhat paternalistic, further reading into the ethos of the group reveals a movement towards a more equitable relationship between Travellers and the State. For example, the MWGGT state that they will 'consider how to improve engagement with Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller community and their participation influencing and shaping policy' (ibid.). Such engagement with the communities echoes Gentleman's earlier suggestion of a more socio-anthropological approach, and demonstrates a significant step forward by the Scottish

Government. The modern media has unprecedented reach and influence through the internet and, unfortunately, most people's only experience with Travelling communities or Travellers is what they see in the media. A further crucial step forward, therefore, comes from the MWGGT's commitment 'to tackle discriminatory portrayals of the [Traveller] community by the media' (ibid.).

### **6.3 Contemporary Conceptualisations of Storytelling**

During fieldwork interviews conducted by the author, I asked contemporary Scottish Travellers reflect on what part storytelling plays in their lives. Here, I include contextual details of the lives and experiences of three contemporary Travellers, then introduce narratives from the same individuals to reinforce my critical perspective using further examples and analyses of storytelling. The individuals are contemporary Nacken/Nawken/Scottish Traveller tradition-bearers and are therefore important representatives against which to test the assertions I make in my preceding chapters. A key figure in the Traveller communities of Scotland at present is Davie Donaldson. I introduced Donaldson in earlier chapters as an activist interested in raising public awareness around Traveller life and culture. On his website, 'Conyach.scot', Donaldson describes himself as 'a Nawken – Scottish Traveller – advocate and social justice campaigner', who uses lived experience to support 'decision-makers at a local, national and international level to increase inclusivity of policy and practice towards Gypsy/Traveller people' ('Conyach – Home' 2021: online). From a conceptual perspective, Donaldson's motivation intersects with the principles that underpin the present thesis. For instance, drawing on evidence from a multitude of sources, my preceding chapters show how centuries of misunderstanding from settled populations continues to influence public perceptions of Scotland's Travellers. Donaldson

himself articulates this principle succinctly: ‘one of the issues that we have as Travellers and as Traveller advocates’, Donaldson explains, ‘is that everyone knows about our crisis, but they don’t know about our culture’ (2020a: online). Moreover, Donaldson’s self-identification as ‘Nawken’ speaks to a unique cultural identity that is defined linguistically from the *inside*. Donaldson asserts that self-defining as Nawken represents a reclamation of cultural identity in the face of marginalisation and cultural trauma (‘Conyach – Cultural Trauma’ 2020: online). Cultural trauma is understood here as the subjective re-experiencing of traumatic events, as experienced by both communities and individuals, in the past. Phipps and Degges-White explain that such trauma is incorporated into the cultural memory of communities and is transmitted intergenerationally, in the same way as more positive aspects of culture (2014: 177). The contextual evidence I presented in my opening chapters attests to the transmission of historic traumas and I have shown how such experiences manifest themselves in the Travellers’ diverse storytelling traditions. For example, the Burkean narratives examined in Chapter 5 are one explicit example of the ways that cultural trauma moves through generations in the form of narrative. A forthcoming further example highlights the continuing relevance of the Burkean masterplot in contemporary Traveller storytelling.

Beforehand, Donaldson offers some contextual details about his lived experience being a Traveller in twenty-first century Scotland. In an interview with the author, Donaldson – in his early 20s at the time of recording – tells how he and his family eventually settled in Angus but would ‘go on the road every summer [and] we lived on the road as well for a while’ (Interview 2019: 1m 2sec). Donaldson highlights the importance of the family’s route when he explains that ‘I’ve been goin’ to the same camps every single year for my whole life. And my faither went to the same camps, and his faither, my grandfaither, and my great-grandfaither, on and on, right back sometimes up to 400 years ago’ (ibid.: 1m 52sec).

Donaldson goes on to reflect on the ways that he has engaged with the settled communities over the years. The sense of social differentiation between the communities is clear when Donaldson reports that stereotypical equations between Travellers and poor personal hygiene can still be found in modern Scotland (ibid.: 9m 45s). Such misconceptions are ill-informed and misleading, much the same as the historical misconceptions that resulted in several forced assimilation attempts and the removal of Traveller children from their families. Outside of academia, the Travellers' otherness and marginalisation has long been perpetuated by such activities, instead of being embraced and celebrated. However, 'we've taken that marginalisation from some of those stereotypes', says Donaldson, 'and actually used them to propagate our own culture and our own people, as a protective mechanism' (ibid.: 10m 32s). This statement from Donaldson encapsulates much of what has been argued during my thesis when it comes to the underlying imperatives of the narratives being examined. Although the awareness of a distinctive cultural identity is couched in negative vocabulary, the dominant impetus transforms into self-awareness, positivity and growth. I return to a story from Donaldson in the following section to expand and illustrate this point in more detail.

The website *Rajpot* is a collaborative enterprise that brings together individuals from a variety of backgrounds with a view to establishing an inter-cultural space for performance art and other artistic expression, such as craft-making ('About' 2019: online). On the website, artist Shamus McPhee – who self-identifies as 'Nacken' [variously spelled, equivalent to 'Nawken'] – tells us that he 'was born at Bobbin Mill, a Gypsy Traveller site in Perthshire, Scotland where he still lives today' ('About Shamus McPhee' 2019a: online). Shamus goes on to explain that Bobbin Mill 'was part of an assimilatory<sup>21</sup> experiment carried out by the Scottish authorities from the mid-1950s, which sought to quash the Scottish Gypsy Traveller community through a process of cultural denial' and states that the modern site has come to

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<sup>21</sup> I updated the word 'assimilationist' to 'assimilatory' here at the request of Shamus McPhee, the author of the quote.

stand for ‘the negotiation of cultural difference’ (ibid.). The recognition of cultural difference at the core of the present thesis is unmistakable when it comes to the conceptualisation of endeavours such as *Rajpot*. To provide further contextual information, it is useful to consider the significance of the term ‘Rajpot’. Shamus explains on the website that Rajpot is an acronym representing ‘Refuge for Allies of Justice and Persons from Oppressed Tribes’ (‘About’ 2019: online). The loaded terminology deployed within this acronym speaks not only to import of what is at stake, but to the conviction of the website’s creators. However, the gravity is defused when Shamus provides an alternative jocular etymology; “‘Rajpot’ derives from the Scottish Gypsy Traveller language of Cant’, we are informed, ‘and usually refers to someone considered to be “mad”’ (ibid.). Shamus goes on, ‘the symbolic value should be apparent to any Gypsy Traveller’, because historically many families chose ‘to cook in a large pot on an open fire, hence incorporation of the word “pot”’ (ibid.). Last, and by no means least, Rajpot is defined as a wordplay on ‘Rajput’ – an historically powerful military, landowning group residing in central and northern India (Freitag 2009: 25) – who are ‘thought to be the progenitors of European Gypsy Travellers. Thus, the name of the centre actually embodies the ultimate respect and deference toward ancestral forebears (*Rajpot* ‘About’ 2019: online). My point is that the language being used here encapsulates cultural differentiation; a differentiation that necessarily eludes the, ostensibly benign, policy-makers and arbiters of officialdom.

Terminology, language and their significance play an important role in the conceptualisation of cultural otherness. Shamus attests to his understanding of cultural differentiation further when he refers to the ‘significance and the consequences of terminology relating to Nackens’ (2021: Appendix I). For Shamus, ‘it is imperative, in my view, that we be regarded as an ethnic minority, and not as a social group, merely linked to a nomadic bent. That could carry dire consequences, indeed’ (ibid.). This evidence from the

field supports my arguments from my opening chapters about the relationship between ‘ethnicity’ and intangible cultural heritage (ICH). I argued that the ethnicity judgement set by Lord Fraser of Tullybelton – in the 1983 *Mandla vs Dowell Lee* case – represents an important socio-legal precedent but does not capture the nuances of what any given ethnicity *actually is*. I continue to demonstrate how ICH is crucial in advancing our understanding of ethnicity in the context of Scotland’s Traveller communities. My detailed analyses show that assiduous scrutiny of storytelling is an effective means of revealing the complex nuances of the cultural differentiation on which Lord Fraser based his judgement. Moreover, I propounded that state-sanctioned legal protection is a welcome yet incomplete realisation of the issues at stake here. The Traveller communities’ cultural confidence, autonomy and right to self-determination are the issues being negotiated within their stories. Merely stating that they are ethnically ‘different’ does nothing to facilitate meaningful understandings of what makes them so. Shamus captures this position neatly, stating that his motivation is to ‘give voice to their [Nackens’] experiences and allow their stories to resonate across cultural boundaries [...] which supports their empowerment and seeks to generate a means of self-sustainability in the long term’ (*Rajpot ‘About’* 2019: online).

In terms of storytelling, Shamus explains that ‘storytelling affords an escapist, cultural safety net, where Nackens can drop their guard and relate instinctively to the content’ (2021: Appendix I). This statement accords with my conceptualisation of the nature of intergenerational transmission in Traveller communities, described in Chapter 1 above. I invoked Shils’ concept of filiation (1971: 127), which describes the passing on of values and beliefs in such a way that their successful integration into subsequent generations rests on the receiver’s belief in the veracity of the information. ‘Instinctively’ relating to the content of stories, as Shamus frames it, is another way of describing filiation and captures the intangibility of oral transmission at the community level. Shamus goes on to describe his own

relationship with storytelling; ‘I would use art as a form of storytelling’, says Shamus, ‘in the same as you would huv your storytellers within Nacken culture’ (Interview 2021: 2m 02s).

For Shamus, his pictorial artworks are his way ‘of representing the culture and making it more visible because invisibility is one of the main things I wish to address within the culture’ (ibid.: 2m 22s).

Shamus’ points here get to the heart of the motivation behind the present thesis; illuminating and examining the narrative traditions, pictorial or otherwise, of Traveller communities deepens our understanding of an underrepresented sector of Scottish society. Shamus crystallises this motivation in terms of storytelling when he comments:

For me, when you’re faced with the cultural trauma of day-to-day existence and all the crap that people are dumping at your doorstep, it offers a retreat. And, in a way, you can crawl into that cultural cocoon and re-connect with who you are, where you come from and try to rationalise what’s happening in wider society.

(ibid.: 3m 04s)

I have shown throughout this thesis that the Travellers’ culture is, in a very real sense, hidden from the wider society that Shamus refers to. Outside of the academic context, meaningful engagement with Traveller culture is generally restricted to members of the communities themselves or is negatively cast by mass media outlets. For Shamus, recognising the value of his culture is all ‘part of this desire tae celebrate somethin which is unique within Scottish society. We want to celebrate our difference rather than have to forget about it’ (ibid.: 21m 45s). The celebratory aspect that Shamus cites here is commensurate with my earlier points about the nature of the narratives I analyse. I argued in Chapter 4 that inner Traveller identities are positively represented within story spaces; for instance, Williamson’s Hedgehurst elevated his own values and beliefs to challenge mainstream expectations. Under the potentially lethal circumstances of the Burker tales I examined in Chapter 5, the

experiences of the Traveller protagonists were shown to function as reversals of stereotypical representations and to extol alternative ideologies. When I asked Shamus about ironically cast characters, he responded that ‘that’s entirely in keeping with the Nacken tradition, whereas if you’re viewing that from outside [...] as an independent observer then that’ll seem utterly singular’ (ibid.: 27m 40s). Shamus goes on to clarify his position, ‘sumdae [somebody] that occupies an extraneous lens, they don’t get it at all [...] I think it’s down tae a basic lack of understandin and a lack of decent education programmes’ (ibid.: 29m 19s). This evidence from the field supports my overarching contention that there are culturally significant meanings below the surface of the Travellers’ storytelling traditions.

Moreover, with his emphasis on the cultural significance of place in his statements about Bobbin Mill above, Shamus’ testimony represents an opportunity to learn more about place–naming within Traveller tradition. My preceding chapters demonstrated the importance of place in Traveller storytelling by highlighting negotiations between urban and rural identity strategies. In Chapter 6, my analyses around material wealth showed how fictional portrayals of rural identity were far from nostalgic re-imaginings of a ‘simpler life’; instead, such portrayals revealed that the narratives are sophisticated negotiations of how our societies are organised and the social processes that underpin this organisation. At this point, I return to Davie Donaldson to reaffirm the key concepts on which this thesis is based, that Traveller storytelling functions to condition and represent distinctive Traveller identities. For Davie, an example from lived experience serves to illustrate his point about identity and contemporary storytelling; ‘Quite often when we’re gettin told stories, our stories sort of propagate a sense of Traveller identity’, explains Davie, ‘our stories and our songs almost try to make sense of bullying’ (Interview 2019: 12m 55s). In 2016, the *United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child* reported that bullying among children from minority groups, such as Travellers, is a serious and widespread problem (cited in Marcus 2019: 3). In Scotland, the same UN

committee voiced concerns that the educational needs of Scotland's ethnic minorities are not being met (ibid.). One publication by *The Equality and Human Rights Commission* goes further 'Prejudice-based Bullying in Scottish Schools: A Research Report' revealed that 'although they are protected by the Equality Act 2010 under the definition of race, they [Scottish Travellers] face manifestations of prejudice that are distinct from those faced by other ethnic groups' (Dennell and Logan 2015: 2). This represents a keen insight from the report's authors because it captures both the gravity of the situation and the unique set of social circumstances facing Scotland's Traveller communities. Namely that their ethnicity and cultural identities are often misunderstood right down to the level of terminology.

For instance, a recent graphic novel – published under the auspices of STEP and inspired by the accounts of young Travellers – highlights the ongoing issue of discrimination and bullying in Scotland's educational system. *Shifting: A Tale of Bullying and Discrimination* (2020) tells of a Traveller brother and sister who experience racism and bullying at school:

IT WAS JOE'S FIRST DAY AT SECONDARY AND HE WAS VERY NERVOUS... BUT TILLIE WOULD BE BY HIS SIDE.



AND ALMOST EVERY DAY SOMEONE SAID SOMETHING HURTFUL.



SARAH DIDN'T LIKE BEING TOLD OFF. IT WAS THE SECOND TIME IN TWO DAYS.

DIRTY GYPOS. I'LL SHOW THEM.

The conclusion of the short story sees the Traveller girl hospitalised after an attack by Sarah and her friends. STEP use this graphic novel as a teaching resource, where the schoolchildren are asked to imagine what happens next ‘to make sure that everyone knows that bullying should never be tolerated’ (ibid.: 19). By deploying the racial slurs ‘Tinks’ and ‘Gypos’ – while the antagonistic Sarah swears vengeance on the ‘dirty’ Traveller children – the above scenes are examples of terminological misunderstandings, or ignorance, and the stereotypical conceptualisations already mentioned by Davie Donaldson above. Perhaps the demonic cast of the “Tinks” vocaliser is excessive, but the message is clear: that that kind of language is wholly unacceptable and inaccurate. I argued in Chapter 2 above – using historical sources such as TSAS and more modern mainstream media – that the term ‘Tinker’ acquired pejorative connotations sometime during Scotland’s rapid industrialisation, from around the 1750s onward. Beforehand, evidence suggested that the term had referred to a valued and trusted sector of Scottish society. In the current socio-political climate, the term is universally condemned, when used in improper contexts, and furthermore represents a malevolent homogenisation of Scotland’s Traveller communities.

In Donaldson’s experience, terminology is important; ‘it’s almost like young country folk have homogenised all Travellers into one group of anonymous, sort of faceless, people’, says Donaldson, ‘with no connection to the land or anything’ (Interview 2019: 6m 38s). My point here is that the issues at the core of this thesis are being contested; cultural identity is being aligned at a fundamental level with terminology and is interacting with Travellers’ views of the world. For Donaldson, growing up experiencing discrimination ‘makes you have this big, sort of internal battle with your own identity as to whether you come out as a Traiveller and be a Traiveller and let people know that, or you don’t’ (ibid.: 11m 52s). So, Donaldson continues, ‘when you’re told stories as bairns [children], or nursery rhymes, or you’re sung songs [...] you take the role of oppressor away from country people [non-Travellers]’ and

build ‘resilience through our own oral culture’ (ibid.: 12m 17s; 14m 0s). Donaldson’s perspective here resonates with my own interpretations of the Travellers’ oral culture that constitute the evidence base for my thesis. I have shown how plots and dramatis personae are deployed by Traveller storytellers to interrogate and challenge the dominant ideological apparatuses of non-Travellers. The historical evidence I presented in preceding chapters – such as *The Report of the Departmental Committee on Habitual Offenders* (1895) or the Children Act (1908) – highlighted undeniable acts of persecution against Traveller communities’ chosen lifestyles in the past. I argued that the concomitant ‘persecution complex’, propounded by Henderson (2004: 230), was about more than physical disruptions to Travellers’ lives and that it extended to the suppression of cultural identity. Donaldson’s concept of ‘resilience’ being a function of his own oral culture supports this position, in that it speaks to the integrity of his identity under difficult social conditions. For example, Donaldson tells ‘an auld story, it was actually [...] somethin to dae wi my folk up North, roond about Baff’ (Interview 2019: 40m 35s). The story begins with a young Traveller who has been out hawking for the day and becomes unable to reach his camp before nightfall. The lad comes across a likely house to pass the night and is invited in by an old couple. The inhabitants were ‘lovely folk’, Donaldson goes on, and there was a ‘big roaring fire, a really cosy, bonny wee place’ (ibid.: 42m 44s).

Donaldson’s story follows the Burkean masterplot examined in Chapter 5 above; a wayward Traveller is enticed into supposedly safe accommodation, before becoming aware of a threat to their person in the form of Burkers and hatches their escape with the violence unconsummated. Donaldson’s version aligns with Stanley Robertson’s story – cited in Chapter 5 above (TAD 65216), recorded in 1979 – where the protagonist is saved by an ally within the house who sings a song in Cant to warn him of his peril. In Donaldson’s version, the ally is fleshed out further to include details of how he came to be in the settled house;

‘back in they days’, explains Donaldson, ‘if your mother and faither croaked [passed away], you would go to work for other folk [...] you would either do that or go to a poor hoose, and naebody wanted to go to a poor hoose because it was a shan [bad] place to grow up in’ (Interview 2019: 43m 15s). The ally’s parents had previously perished in a fire and the orphaned boy had been indentured to the settled people’s homestead as a way of ‘earning his keep’. This is an important point in Donaldson’s narrative because it encapsulates the theme of the story. In his metanarrative, Donaldson explains that the point of the story is ‘to teach you the importance of the Cant’ (ibid.: 41m 23s), before going on to disclose that ‘we’re taught from a very early age, whatever way, to protect the Cant and treat it wi a lot a respect. An one of the ways we done that wis through stories’ (ibid.: 42m 06s). The fact that this use of Cant is embedded within a Burker story is telling; although the present thesis is not concerned with linguistic forms, the use of culturally specific language within storytelling becomes significant.

Specifically, I alluded to this aspect of the Travellers’ Burker stories in Chapter 5 above, citing Stanley Robertson’s warning to conceptualise the notion of resistance to ideological contamination: *dinnae sloch the hantle's slab* [do not drink the non-Travellers’ tea] (TAD 65216). There are other examples from international folklore of singing being used as a warning of peril. In ATU 1419H, a woman sings a lullaby to warn her approaching lover that her husband is at home and that he should flee (Uther 2004 Vol. II: 211). Elsewhere, in ATU 958, when a shepherd is accosted by a band of robbers, she plays a trick and manages to sing a song that alerts her friends further along the valley (ibid. Vol. I: 598). In Scotland, the Gaelic song *Aoidh, na Dèan Cadal Idir* [Aodh, do not sleep at all] (TAD 86108), is sung by a young girl being held captive; she sings the song to a man, Aodh, who happens by the house where she is being held, with her assailants planning to murder Aodh in his sleep. Aodh escapes, brings help for the kidnapped girl and they are subsequently married. In Donaldson’s

story, a verse similar to Robertson's is sung by the ally to warn the visiting Traveller of his peril:

Deek how the hashie govells,

Deek how the hashie hah.

Shan cowels, shan pottie,

Bing avree and feck awa.

Ha aa the hantle's habben,

Ha aa the hantle's hah.

Feek the neddies tae yer naggin,

Dinnae sloch the hantle's slab.

(Interview 2019: 45m 05s)

Donaldson offers the following translation of the key elements: 'look how the people live, look how the people eat. Bad people, bad house [...] eat all the people's tatties / do not drink the people's tea' (ibid.: 46m 08s).<sup>22</sup> Discussing cultural differentiation and ethnic origins, Okely points out that the use of a certain language cannot be regarded as a signifier of 'race' or ethnicity (1983: 8). Okely's argument goes that the 'underlying assumption is that language is transmitted or learnt only through biological descent' (ibid.). I do not argue here that the use of Cant in Traveller storytelling indicates an exotic racial lineage, or that Cant encompasses the cultural differentiation between Travellers and the mainstream population. However, in the present context, the *way* that Cant is *used* supports my argument that distinctive cultural identities are being negotiated within the stories. For instance, when the ally finishes his warning song in Donaldson's story, the lady of the house protests: 'ah'll no

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<sup>22</sup> 'Bing avree and feck awa' means 'go away and get away', whereas 'feek the neddies tae yer naggin' means 'take the tatties for yourself, or to your body'. Additional translations provided by Shamus McPhee (2021a), included in Appendix I.

be haen [having] any a that Gaelic song in ma hoose' (Interview 2019: 45m 23s). The settled woman's misapprehension of the language being used announces her role in the narrative. She stands for the basic misunderstanding of Travellers by the settled population and her status as a *Burker* becomes incidental. Moreover, the ally's *Cant* song functions to create a connection between the singer and listener, engendering trust between the two Travellers in the story.

In Chapter 2, I intimated to the reader that Traveller stories share characteristics with stories from other cultural spheres and alluded to a striking example. In Irish oral tradition, the historical figure Daniel O'Connell is surrounded by a wealth and variety of folklore (uí Ógáin 1995: 1). O'Connell was an important figure during the Catholic Emancipation of the early nineteenth century, contributing to a landmark measure that allowed Catholics to sit as Members of Parliament. One of the most prevalent anecdotes about O'Connell's life – with over one hundred and forty versions documented – tells of an unsuccessful attempt to poison him and where he is saved by a warning spoken or sung in Irish (ibid.: 150, 153). The story, 'A Dhónaill Uí Chonaill, an dTuigeann Tú Gaeilge? [Daniel O'Connell, do you understand Irish?]', resembles the pattern of the *Burkean* stories from Robertson and Donaldson I delineate above: the protagonist finds himself in a precarious situation; an unexpected ally warns him of his peril using, relatively, esoteric language; the protagonist then escapes the intended violence unharmed. In the story, O'Connell is usually in London and in the company of Protestants sharing a meal. A serving girl becomes aware of his peril and warns O'Connell, variously, that there is 'something in your dish', or pepper in your porridge', and 'as much in your glass that would kill hundreds' (ibid.: 151). The conclusion of the narrative sees O'Connell's would-be poisoner killed by sleight of hand and O'Connell and the serving girl escape together. The parallels with the Traveller *Burker* story are clear, and the underlying ideological imperatives more so: the protagonist and ally undermine the dominant

language of their hostile hosts while simultaneously embodying a symbolic victory for O'Connell's Catholic cause.<sup>23</sup> The similarities between the anecdote about O'Connell and the Traveller Burker stories are indicative of relationships between cultural spheres: at the same time, such commonalities highlight the unique ways in which common motifs are utilised.

Returning to Donaldson's Burker story, consider the translation of the Cant verse provided above; the first stanza is an overt critique of the lifestyle and habits of the householders. The 'lovely folk' in their 'cosy, bonny wee place' become the antithesis of this when the Cant verse is introduced. Okely writes that 'invariably the Travellers or Gypsies differentiate themselves' from the mainstream in their societies and 'many are found to have pollution beliefs which express and strengthen this separation' (1983: 27). In Donaldson's story, pollution anxiety is ironically expressed because the ally tells the protagonist to 'feek the neddies tae yer naggin' [take the tatties for yourself, or to your body] in the same breath as warning him off the poisoned tea. At this point, the function of the indentured Traveller ally becomes clear; his reliance on the settled couple extends only to his corporeal sustenance and his inner identity is hidden by misunderstanding. From this perspective, the narrative becomes an overarching metaphor for the cultural differentiation between Travellers and mainstream society. The same conclusion was borne out as I focused on the Travellers' Burker tradition in Chapter 5 and the present example advances this conclusion to problematise Okely's point around pollution beliefs. Here, both Traveller protagonists accept the sanctuary and victuals of the settled household in different ways: the singing ally, orphaned in his childhood, chooses the best of a bad lot, whereas the hawking Traveller follows the Burkean narrative pattern, seeking shelter when he finds himself in a precarious

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<sup>23</sup> According to uí Ógáin, O'Connell is 'credited historically with encouraging the use of English', and his 'Parliamentary activity, career and life were quite far removed, both physically and psychologically, from the lives and experiences of the storytellers' (1995: 152, 154-155). From this perspective, 'O'Connell is an example, arguably an archetype, of someone who has an image in oral tradition which differs from the image presented in historical documentation' (ibid.: 1).

situation. The pollution taboo is negotiated and assuaged in a story space that exemplifies the Traveller idiom I have endorsed throughout this thesis.

Using their plots and protagonists, Traveller storytellers negotiate cultural difference by confronting complex issues within narratives. Davie remarks that ‘I’d say that the sort of core characteristics of our whole entire culture, or at least one of them, is respect because most of our traditions and most of our values you can take back to that one thing, respect’ (Interview 2019a: 8m 33s). In the context of the interview, Davie is discussing the portrayal of Traveller culture in the mass media, such as the series of television programmes *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (Channel 4, 2011–2015). Channel 4 describe the series as ‘warm, intelligent, engrossing and funny [...] *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* will tell intimate stories on an epic scale, laying bare an exotic unseen Britain’ (2011: online). For Donaldson, such portrayals are the opposite of Traveller culture in that they paint a picture of lavish, bragging individuals that flaunt their wealth uncouthly (Interview 2019a: 9m 18s). Although the protagonists of the Channel 4 series are not necessarily Scottish Travellers, the point remains that such representations colour the viewing public’s perceptions of the communities. Donaldson explains that ‘because we’re so passionate and we have a lot of respect for our culture, very few country folk ever get to see a deep level to our storytelling’ (ibid.: 7m 30s). As opposed to the overtly exoticised ambitions of the Channel 4 series, my own analyses address ‘unseen’ Traveller culture by seeking deeper meanings within their storytelling traditions. I have shown, as Donaldson suggests, that there are culturally significant meanings below the surface. The above Burker example from Donaldson, for instance, evokes an impulse toward benign coexistence between cultural identities. Only to then see such an existence usurped by fundamental misunderstanding and then by cultural obliteration, embodied symbolically by the Burkean structure of the narrative.

Not only this, but Donaldson's version of this story evokes a clear sense of fraternity between the two Traveller protagonists at the individual level. Their linguistic recognition serves to defuse the tension in the ally's indentured status because it gives the ally emancipatory agency when he finds his compatriot in peril. Donaldson's testimony and story represents further evidence that the personal autonomy prized by Travellers is negotiated within their Burker tradition. The present example demonstrates that this negotiation is achieved by linking autonomy with a shared cultural identity using Cant. The ally's autonomy is symbolically removed by his indenture with the settled people, only to be validated *in extremis* when he frees his cultural relative from the existential threat of the Burkers. Moreover, the cultural continuity between generations of Travellers is evident in the relationship between Stanley Robertson's version and Donaldson's version of the same Burker narrative. My research questions ask how Traveller storytellers condition and represent worldview and cultural identity through intergenerational transmission of narrative. When Donaldson says his participation in Traveller storytelling traditions 'takes the role of oppressor away', as cited above, he anticipates the motivation that underpins my thesis. Not only does Davie's story echo Stanley Robertson's version, but he also deliberately situates his story in the past when he places his narrative 'back in they days'.

Okely realises that 'one aspect common to all groups [Gypsies, Roma and Travellers]', throughout the Western world, 'is that they have had to survive hostility and periods of persecution from the dominant society' (1983: 27). My preceding chapters evince this persecution of Scotland's Traveller communities, from many perspectives, and show how their storytelling traditions confront dominant ideological constructs. Okely goes on to suggest that the form that persecution takes changes depending on the historical context (*ibid.*). Marginalised communities therefore must adapt to new challenges to their chosen lifestyles and worldviews. This example from Donaldson shows that the concept of

ideological contamination by settled worldviews continues to be negotiated within contemporary Traveller storytelling. More specifically, it demonstrates that traditional narratives can adapt themselves to address fresh challenges. Given Donaldson's earlier points about the continuing prevalence of bullying directed at young Travellers, his story can be read as an embodiment of resistance to contemporary forms of oppression. This version from the Burker tradition distils its core meaning by placing esoteric language use at the fulcrum of the protagonist's experience. From this perspective, contemporary Nackian narratives function as codified acts of resistance to perceived ideological domination, using sophisticated intergenerational narrative techniques to do so. Or, as Donaldson puts it, 'our songs and our stories almost try to make sense of bullying [...] to make sense of something that you can't really make sense of' (Interview 2019: 13m 36–53s).

#### **6.4 'Jesus was a Traveller'**

At the beginning of Chapter 3, I introduced Traveller storyteller Jess Smith to highlight the relevance of storytelling to Travellers living in contemporary Scotland. Smith is a prominent Traveller storyteller, performing at storytelling festivals both across the UK and internationally (2013: online). We heard from Smith that 'stories are the way forward for the Travellers to learn about their past', and that, 'many Travelling families have kept these stories, crucially important gems, and they've shared them down through the years [...] stories are so important' (*Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month 2021*: online). In this section, I engage with a contemporary tradition-bearer to present further evidence of the way that ideological commitments are inculcated within Traveller storytelling. First, I present some of Smith's insights into the way she views her tradition, before delivering analysis and interpretation of an example from her repertoire.

Jess Smith is the author of several publications about her experiences as a Traveller in Scotland, many of which contain stories that are pertinent to my research questions. For instance, Smith refers to a ‘cultural awareness through storytelling’ (2013: online) while promoting her books. Such awareness continues to be a key consideration as the present thesis moves toward its conclusion. In a recent interview with the author, Smith explains that she tells ‘stories to my grandchildren, but my children when they were growing up, were too busy growing up, too busy *assimilating*’ (Interview 2021: 10m56s). She goes on to remark that she actively tries to ‘superimpose [...] ideas of the longevity of a story and how a story can help you if you are suffering in any way’ (ibid.: 11m18s). These points succinctly capture the roles of tradition-bearers and the concept of filiation, introduced above in Chapter 1. Smith’s storytelling activities make her a strong tradition-bearer – as defined by Niles (1999: 180) – because she acquires, retains and tells her stories within her community, and beyond. In terms of filiation, what becomes clear from Smith’s testimony is that members of the most recent generations of Travellers do not necessarily have the desire to engage with the storytelling traditions of their forebears. However, I focus on Smith’s conceptualisations here because, in Smith’s experience, the cultural significance of the narratives has not been lost. ‘Sometimes a story’, explains Smith, ‘if it’s laid out in front of you, in word visions, you can see yourself in it, you know, you can see a way out of it’ (Interview 2021: 11m41s). I have argued in previous chapters that, within the Nackian storytelling idiom, the protagonists and antagonists embody certain traits and function to interrogate ideological positions. Smith’s point here, eloquently expressed as ‘word visions’, is further evidence of negotiations taking place within her stories.

Describing her experience of storytelling, Smith goes on, ‘you can see the hope in it, or the despair in it, so you can avoid certain issues in your life [...] it’s very old-fashioned, it’s ancient’ (ibid.: 11m50s). That narrative, oral or otherwise, has functioned for eons past to

negotiate social and economic issues is certain, and ‘no body of lore can exist apart from its social environment’ (Niles 1999: 165). In terms of Smith’s storytelling, this social environment extends to the national level and encompasses the distinctive ideological position that I have highlighted throughout this thesis. ‘Someone once said to me, “what’s more important to you, your culture or your country?”’ reports Smith, to which she replies, “my country [...] because my culture goes so far back” (Interview 2021: 1hr09m46s). The distinction Smith makes here, between culture and country, is an important point to consider before I present an example from Smith’s storytelling repertoire. The sense of belonging to Scotland *as a landscape* is a concept that I have examined in previous chapters: Duncan Williamson’s Hedgehurst, for instance, who was unwilling to forsake his home in the forest, or Stanley Robertson’s folk etymology for Rosehearty, where the town’s name was explicitly linked to the experience of a Traveller. Similarly, Shamus McPhee’s esoteric etymology for Balquhiddy aligned the landscape with the experiences of Travellers in the past. Smith extends this concept further: ‘I think Scotland herself is the story’, she says, ‘and so far, nobody’s actually told it’ (ibid.: 1hr10m45s).

There is a broader perspective in Smith’s storytelling and a palpable assertion of cultural legitimacy. She asks, ‘who are we [Scottish Travellers] really? You know, those stories are [maybe?] all we have in this land’ (ibid.: 1hr11m25s). Smith’s point here speaks to the central importance of traditional storytelling to her as a contemporary Scottish Traveller; her identity is intrinsically linked to storytelling and the landscape in which both exist. Elsewhere, she describes how her motivation comes from ‘old tales of the Travelling people’, re-telling them so ‘that they should never die but live on as part of Scotland’s oldest culture’ (2013a: online). These few lines from Smith encompass the central tenets of my arguments in that they speak to both retention and creativity within the contemporary Traveller tradition. I have shown this process at work in section 6.3 above, where Davie Donaldson’s modern take

on the Burkean tradition reflects his own experience as a young Nawken. Before my concluding chapter, I draw on Smith's printed work to examine further the stories that contemporary Traveller storytellers choose to share, considering them in terms of the material I have already presented.<sup>24</sup> I provide further evidence that, like the examples from my preceding chapters, the contemporary Traveller storytelling tradition continues to embody complex ideological negotiation. 'And maybe they're [the stories] different because Scotland had to dance to another tune after a while', Smith explains, and 'had to start doin what the Church demanded, and the state demanded, and the schools taught us' (ibid.: 1hr11m25s). The title of the present section, 'Jesus was a Traveller', is provocative, but it serves to encompass both the reach of Smith's storytelling and a more significant point about the cultural legitimacy that she promotes in her narrative expressions.

The narratives contained within Smith's published works range from oral histories, to memorates and anecdotes about her upbringing in a large Traveller family, to more complex legends and hagiographical narratives. I have demonstrated throughout this thesis that the interaction between history and lived experience plays an important role in the Nackian folkloric idiom.<sup>25</sup> For instance, in Chapter 4 section 4.4 above, I engaged with a Burkean narrative from Jess Smith that draws the critical attention of Shaw (2006: 168-170). The reader will recall that, according to Shaw's feminist reading, the narrative functions as a 'metonym for the perceived vulnerability of women and children in relation to unfamiliar others' (ibid.: 168). Shaw's reading is plausible and is augmented by my own analyses that demonstrate how creative surface variations in the stories do not necessarily distract from the

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<sup>24</sup> In my foreword to the reader, I explained that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on collection-centred ethnology. Despite this, many of the issues and discourses that I have presented throughout this thesis can be found within alternative primary sources. Although it was never my intention to focus on printed stories, I draw on such material here as an alternative, given the circumstances.

<sup>25</sup> Although Smith identifies as a 'Scottish Traveller', she acknowledges that the terms 'Nawkens, Narken and Nachin are also names associated with Tinker culture' (2012: 35).

central motivation of the Burkean tradition; that is, the structure of the narratives speaks to a resistance to ideological contamination and emancipation from such threats. Again, I stress that my analyses and interpretations are not intended to speak for *all Travellers* but to deliver insights into the way that contemporary tradition-bearers express their own cultural identities as part of a diverse range of Traveller communities.

The subtitle of Smith's most recent book, *Way of the Wanderers: The Story of Travellers in Scotland* (2012), is an important indication of the motivations behind her writing. From the outset, she explains that 'throughout my life I'd been told tales, some of them dating back to Biblical times, and all supposedly fictitious' (ibid.: 14). Smith goes on, 'there were later stories about Irish kings [...] the break-up of the Jacobite clans [and] myths and legends about ancient smiths and the Roman occupation of Britain' (ibid.). Smith explains that her aim is to 'discover as much information about the Scottish Travellers as it was possible to find' (ibid.: 12). Clues from a diverse range of sources are drawn upon and 'most importantly', says Smith, from the 'tales of the Travellers themselves, keepers and carriers of my culture' (ibid.). I have argued throughout this thesis that Traveller tradition-bearers place great store in storytelling and that the narratives themselves should be viewed as complex symbols of the way the communities negotiate their cultural identities. Smith, as a contemporary tradition-bearer, echoes this contention when she explains that her book is 'by no means an exact account of what really happened in history' (ibid.). Instead, Smith's book should be understood as search for deeper meanings, where 'historical facts' are lightened with stories of life on the road (ibid.). Smith's motivation is an ideological position in itself because of her self-awareness of the historicity of her accounts; what the ruling elite would not permit to be taught in schools, surmises Smith, is 'kept alive in the head and shared with the tongue' (ibid.: 18, 32).

In *Way of the Wanderers*, Smith introduces a narrative that she describes as a ‘tale that I was raised on’ (2012: 76). In this origin narrative, based on the details provided above, Smith intimates her story by explaining that the events take place ‘before Christianity had come to Scotland, when the ancient Celts ruled the land’ (ibid.). The story tells of an itinerant preacher who offers an alternative religious message to the polytheistic status quo at the time. One day, near the village of Killin in Perthshire, the preacher encounters a distressed woman who explains to him that her infant son has fallen into a river. The woman, distraught, turns to the local pagan priests who preside in a nearby cave, all the while being followed by the preacher. The priests announce that ‘the river god Rollo has desired a sacrifice. Do not quarrel with the water, it shall not give your baby back’ (ibid.). The woman is then instructed by the priests to gather a cup of water from the river, drink a draft to please Rollo, and in doing so give her child peace. The preacher overhears and counsels otherwise, telling the woman to cut off one of his fingers, somehow allowing him to “bring back your little one” (ibid.: 77). The woman reluctantly acquiesces, and the severed finger is placed in a shroud cut from the preacher’s clothes. The shrouded finger is then handed back to the bereaved woman, at which point ‘a little hand punched the air. The severed finger disappeared, and there in its place lay the tiny infant, very much alive’ (ibid.) The itinerant preacher is then identified as St Fillan, ‘and from that day people gathered within his tiny house in Glen Dochart to listen like innocent babies to tales of the great Jesus and how he was brought back to life’ (ibid.).

Until now, my analyses and interpretations have focused on the secular aspects of the stories under examination. In this case however, given the cast of characters in Smith’s narrative, it is appropriate to discuss the religious significance. The first named character we are introduced to is ‘the river god’, Rollo; within the context of the story, it is plausible that Rollo [Old Norse *Hrólfur*] refers to the pagan leader of Scandinavian rovers who founded the duchy of Normandy in c. 911 (Pohl 2015: 288). The foundation of Normandy – by Rollo and

his followers – in a single event on the banks of the River Epte is contested by modern historians. For instance, Hagger points out that a more nuanced picture has emerged that views the ‘establishment of Normandy as a slow process of confrontation and unification’ (2013: 429). In the foundation myth, Rollo’s role is better understood through Dudo of Saint-Quentin’s eleventh-century *Historia Normannorum*, which sought to legitimise Rollo and his successors as Christian rulers (Pohl 2015: 193, 227-228). In Dudo’s account, Rollo is granted all the land from the River Epte to the sea – as ‘an allod [absolute ownership] and property’ – by the Carolingian king, Charles III (cited in Nelson 2011: 10). More importantly, Dudo’s account disconnects Rollo from his pagan past and ‘strategically weaves this past into a teleological narrative of Providence, conversion and redemption’ (Pohl 2015: 257).

Olrik’s laws are, once again, at work in Smith’s story; ‘The Law of Contrast’ (1992: 50) functions here to create a dichotomous relationship between two opposing ideological positions. From this perspective, Rollo’s casting as the ‘river god’ of the pagan priests in Smith’s narrative becomes significant because it creates a juxtaposition between paganism and the Christianity of St Fillan. According to Taylor, insubstantial evidence and confusing accounts make the study of saints’ lives in Scotland frustrating, and St Fillan is no exception (2001: 176). Despite this, Taylor asserts that the most reliable evidence of St Fillan’s life is his settlement in west-Perthshire (ibid.: 179); the place-names Strath Fillan just west of Glen Dochart, for instance, the River Fillan itself, and St Fillan’s Priory to the south-east of Tyndrum. As noted in my synopsis above, the events of Smith’s narrative take place near the village of Killin, Perthshire, with St Fillan eventually settling in Glen Dochart to deliver his ministry. This accords well with Taylor’s historical study, where ‘there is certainly no doubt that Fillan reigned supreme in Glen Dochart, and the profusion of his relics spread along the thirty kilometres of the glen (ibid.: 194). In terms of Smith’s narrative, another significant detail is found in the *Aberdeen Breviary* (1509-10) where a prayer for St Fillan thanks ‘God

who saved from death the blessed Fillan your confessor and abbot after he had been thrown into the depth of the river' (cited in Taylor 2012: 195). In the same *Breviary*, we are told that soon after his birth, St Fillan's father 'ordered him to be thrown into a near-by loch or pond. Here for a whole year he was divinely looked after by angels, the ministers of God' (ibid.: 196).

The lost baby is thereby aligned with the life of St Fillan from the outset. With these details in mind, Smith's story about the baby, resurrected after being lost to a river, belongs to the 'cult of St Fillan'. In such cults, the life of the saint – apocryphal or otherwise – is expressed in commemorations, place-names and legends of the local population. In the case of St Fillan, his cult has a particular association with water. In the Reverend Patrick Stuart's account of Killin in *TSAS*, for instance, we are told that when 'mad people were brought to be dipped in the Saint's Pool, it was necessary to perform certain ceremonies, in which there was a mixture of Druidism and Popery' (1796: 378). Here, the body of water associated with St Fillan – his pool on the River Fillan – is disapprovingly associated with 'superstitions purposes' (ibid.) intended to cure mental illness. At the highest level, though, the story that Smith was 'raised on' has a logic to it that emphasises Christian ideology over pagan ideology. In the story of the lost child, the pagan god Rollo and St Fillan, the impulse of Smith's narrative is clear: the salvation of the child cannot be achieved by the impotent pagan gods but *can* be achieved by Christianity.

The resurrection of the child by St Fillan – with the shroud echoing Jesus' resurrection of Lazarus – can therefore be viewed simply as an acceptance of the Christian religion over the anachronistic pagan belief system. However, the Nackson aspect of the narrative comes at the conclusion of Smith's story: 'it was believed that St Fillan gathered twelve men to spread the word of the gospel', says Smith, 'he named them Stewards, that is, keepers of the holy word. It is thought that these important figures were the forbears of a great Scottish name – Stewart'

(2012: 77). The Traveller surname of Stewart will be familiar to the reader. We have encountered a multitude of Stewart voices throughout this thesis, and Smith points out that in the ‘Tinker world there are more Stewarts than people of any other name’ (ibid.). Smith’s narrative thereby takes the cult of St Fillan further to align the life of the saint with a prominent Traveller surname. It is notable that Smith deploys the term ‘Tinker’ to refer to Scottish Travellers throughout *Way of the Wanderers* (2012); by doing so she advances the cultural legitimacy of Traveller communities by reclaiming the now pejorative term and using it in such a way that it represents an alternative ‘Tinker world’.

Smith’s story about St Fillan demonstrates that the barrier between the Tinker world and the mainstream world is porous, where the prevalent religion of Christianity is directly linked to a prominent Traveller lineage. Smith goes further still, adding that ‘as far as the Tinker folk were concerned, Jesus was the first Traveller. Born in a lowly stable, he never had a proper home and even from birth was being moved on’ (ibid.: 77). From this perspective, the ideology that underpins the story is a mainstream religious one, but one that is tempered by the inclusion of the ‘Tinker’ identity. To the casual reader, the notion that Jesus was a Traveller might appear absurd. However, by aligning the Biblical figure’s life with the lived experiences of Travellers, the narrative that Smith was ‘raised on’ functions to reassert the cultural legitimacy of Scotland’s Traveller communities. An evocative observation from Smith highlights this perspective and stands for the ideological differentiation at the heart of my argument: ‘the Travellers *not goin* to any school continued to do it the old way, continued to tell the old stories and sing the old songs, and perhaps that’s who we really are’ (Interview 2021: 1hr11m48s). Faith in mainstream ideological commitments, such as Christianity, and an awareness that ‘history’ is an interpretable phenomenon are intertwined within a deeply-rooted sense of Traveller identity. However, instead of opposing one another, these concepts

are complementary in that the religious significance is enhanced by its alignment with Traveller progenitors.

## **Summary**

This chapter has presented several examples of cultural expression that expand on the evidence I presented in my preceding chapters. I have shown how incorporating elements of nomenclature, terminology and language-use enhances our understanding of the communities under examination in this thesis. The voices of contemporary Travellers were cited to provide further support to my overarching argument about the nature of their diverse traditional expressions. I showed that individuals from the communities continue to orient themselves in contradistinction to mainstream Scottish society. During GRTHM, Lucinda and Samantha describe how their identities were predicated on differences from mainstream society, and how they act and think ‘in certain ways’. At a lower level, my arguments around the Travellers’ ongoing reverence for their landscapes were borne out. The testimonies from Edith and John – also as part of GRTHM in 2020 – demonstrated how Travellers in the twenty-first century view their relationships with the natural environment. The example of ‘Sally’s Well’ was an evocative representation of the gratitude and respect afforded to natural resources within Traveller worldview. I went on to furnish the reader with details of recent interactions between Scotland’s Traveller communities and the State. I showed how late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century attitudes towards Travellers remained problematic until relatively recently. My overarching purpose was to argue that the ostracisation of Travellers not only has a tangible effect on their storytelling traditions but represents an ideological confrontation that continues to the present day. Although progress is being made at high levels of the Scottish Government (the MWGGT, for instance), a genuine

acceptance of Traveller communities' cultural legitimacy by policy makers, and the mainstream population, is an ongoing issue.

I presented the reader with further detailed evidence from Traveller communities based on my own fieldwork. Here, I showed how my conceptualisation of Nackian narrative manifests in the expressions of contemporary Travellers. Both Davie Donaldson and Shamus McPhee choose to self-identify as Nawken and Nacken, respectively, which is clear evidence of an impetus towards self-determination. Moreover, the variations in spelling are redolent of the individualism I have highlighted throughout this thesis. At the same time, these self-identifications align both individuals with a broader sense of community that sets them apart from mainstream society. Donaldson's testimony and contemporary Burker story provided fresh insights into continuing perceptions of persecution within the communities' current generation. Donaldson's use of Cant in his story echoed earlier tradition-bearers, which is testament to the filiation taking place as the stories are transmitted intergenerationally. From this perspective, his Burkean narrative encapsulates a central thread of my argument around Nackian narrative: the story is demonstrably intergenerational through its thematic content; the structural integrity is not compromised when Donaldson reimagines the specifics of the plot, relating it to his own lived experiences; and the resistance to ideological contamination is rendered in a unique coded language.

Finally, Smith's story about St Fillan and the resurrected baby ostensibly cooperates with mainstream ideological underpinnings, yet by making apostles of the Travellers her story categorically challenges such a supposition. As noted above, it is clear from Smith's writing that she is a keen reader of history; *Way of the Wanderers* takes in such diverse topics as the Pictish cross-slab at Fowlis, to Agricola's Roman campaign in Britain, to General Wade's eighteenth-century military roads (2012: 54, 18, 126). By Smith's own admission, her narratives do not aspire to an objective account of historical events. I have demonstrated in

preceding chapters that such narratives should be viewed as metaphorical expressions that function to represent specific worldviews. The same can be said here; the acceptance of the Christian creed is relegated to foreground the preeminent Traveller identity. Jess Smith responded to my interpretations of her story about St Fillan, remarking that my analyses ‘journey with the culture and in doing so you have found the respect that many academics ignore or cannot find [...] it is well written and if I may add - spot on’ (2021: Appendix I). In terms of the ideological commitment being expressed, Smith’s hagiographical narrative forms a close connection between the ultimate figure of redemption and a Traveller. Key to understanding the significance of this replacement is the recognition of Smith’s self-awareness as an historian; if history is written by the winners, then her narrative is a concrete example of the way that Nackian narratives reconceptualise ‘historical’ events to imbue the stories with culturally significant meanings.

## Conclusion

In my introduction to this thesis, I quoted the Rehfishes who bemoaned the gallons of ink and effort that have been spent developing theories as to the origin of Scottish Travellers (1975: 272). I began by showing how early writings about Travellers betrayed a fascination with ‘barbarous races’ that emerged during Enlightenment discourses, and beyond (Grellmann 1787; Hoyland 1816; TSAS 1791-2 & 1845; Simson 1865; Macritchie 1984; McCormick 1907). The wasted gallons and sustained fascination with these communities speaks to an inherent curiosity in their perceived ‘otherness’. The beginning of this research introduced the reader to the individuals and communities that are the focus of my thesis – the elusive origins of Scotland’s Traveller communities inspired an investigation into the way that their historical development as a social group has resulted in unique storytelling traditions. Such traditions have been attracting the attention of collectors and folklorists for many generations and the sophistication of the Traveller tradition-bearers’ verbal art did not go unnoticed. The way that the Travellers *use* their stories to express their cultural identities was also elucidated from the outset. It was noted that previous scholarship involving Travellers had identified a sense of shared identity that was deeply entrenched within their stories and songs. This was the platform from which my own research embarked, seeking to expand our understanding of what these unique cultural expressions resemble and how they function.

I devoted a significant portion of my opening chapters to critically engaging with these efforts because my own approach to ‘otherness’ represents an antidote. I showed how the earlier texts and the many subsequent reports commissioned by the State – the 1895 report being the most notorious – seek to measure this ‘otherness’ as means to control and subjugate its presence in Scotland. The Rehfishes might also have pointed out that many authors refer to ‘Traveller culture’ without explaining what this culture resembles within the

communities themselves. I also invoked Lord Fraser of Tullybelton and his judgement on what constitutes ethnicity, where ‘cultural tradition’ and ‘common literature’ are understood as essential characteristics in modern conceptualisations. This thesis has presented detailed examinations of such cultural traditions and (oral) literature to address the lacuna in the scholarship around Scotland’s Traveller communities. My opening chapters also introduced new interdisciplinary uses of critical methods, where I called for closer attention being paid to the symbolic experiences embodied by oral storytelling. Following Niles (1999: 200) and Bauman (1986: 7), I proceeded on the premise that oral narrative as folklore is amenable to the close reading techniques that are usually associated with printed literature. The concept of oral art was then linked to new ways of viewing ‘tradition’, where traditional cultural expressions draw on a set of sophisticated cultural resources. These cultural resources amount to a repository of values and beliefs that function to condition and then represent ideological negotiations within storytelling.

The central purpose of this thesis was to examine how these negotiations manifest and to discover what the stories mean to the communities who share them. This thesis has two interrelated research questions: Firstly, how do traditional narratives – when transmitted orally through generations of storytellers – condition and represent the distinctive values and worldviews of Travellers and their communities? Secondly, what does the Travellers’ traditional culture *actually* resemble? To address these questions, I suggested a conceptual approach that was underpinned by narratological principles. At a high level, these principles amount to the empirical description of the narratives that constitute the primary source materials of this thesis. Specifically, before any detailed analysis takes place, the stories are described in terms of their content, themes and overall structure. This being done makes the narratives accessible for research into their inner workings and meanings (Bal 2009: 3-4). Subsequently, at a low level, a narratological approach begins to consider the minutiae of the

stories and executes a multidisciplinary study that incorporates insights drawn from a multitude of critical discourses. To access these negotiations in new ways, I employed the central tenets of socio-narratology – narratological competence, social location and dialogical analysis – as effective means by which the ethnologist can better understand what stories are doing within their communities. I aligned narratological competence with the concept of tradition-bearers, where discrete individuals from within the communities function to ventriloquise the cultural identities of the wider group. The storytellers' social location became a key contextual factor during my analyses because real social relations are negotiated within the fictional narratives. Finally, my dialogical analyses revealed fresh understandings of the sophistication of the Nackian folkloric idiom. I went on to advocate the principle that analyses of oral narrative can yield the same insights that scholars gain from studies of printed literature. I invoked Holbek's (1987: 190) formulation of description and explanation to offer plausible interpretations of the narratives and Braid's (2002) foundational interpretations of Traveller storytelling were introduced as a platform for my own more detailed examinations.

Again, I devoted a significant portion of this thesis to organising these critical underpinnings and contexts because they represent new ways of looking at traditional narratives. I have shown that a multidisciplinary approach can yield important insights into the worldviews and ideological commitments of communities of storytellers. A key conclusion, then, is that my approach represents a significant step forward in terms of what we can learn about communities from close attention to their oral narrative traditions. During my critical underpinnings in Chapter 1 section 1.4, I cited Kockel and McFadyen who implore modern ethnologists to focus on the 'lived *emic* experience of the people we are studying, rather than in some fashionable *etic* discourse' (2019: 197, italics in original). In practice, such methods ask what my observations mean to Traveller storytellers and so my method involved testing my conclusions with tradition-bearers themselves. To this end, I have

included responses from both the tradition-bearers themselves and other correspondents from the communities.

The central threads of my arguments are the underlying ideological commitments that manifest with Travellers' storytelling tradition and are based on the premise that Traveller storytellers place great cultural value in the stories that they tell. In Chapter 1, I cited Gerring who recognises the 'semantic promiscuity' (1997: 957) of the term 'ideology'. Eagleton reminds us that common usage of the term often has pejorative connotations, where an 'ideological' person or group has a distorted view of the world based on inflexible assumptions (1994: 1). It was not my purpose in this thesis to offer the reader an unproblematic, comprehensive definition of what ideology is and how it functions at a universal level. However, I deploy the term because it is an effective way to address my primary research questions around the values and beliefs that are inculcated with narratives. For instance, during his expansive 'definitional analysis', Gerring notes that most empirical investigations agree that coherence is the key attribute within meaningful conceptualisations of ideology (1997: 984).

At the outset of this thesis, I intimated to the reader that previous scholarship – along with governmental grey literature and aside from Braid – often alludes to Traveller 'culture', without articulating what this culture resembles. Donald Braid's work – *Scottish Traveller Tales: Lives Shaped Through Stories* (2002) – served as a platform on which to build my arguments. Braid asserts that the Travellers' stories are vehicles for identity negotiation and worldview (2002: 37) and the present research demonstrably concurs. However, I have developed and expanded this concept to show *how* the stories accomplish such negotiations. The present thesis has shown that there are definable threads of meaning within Traveller culture that amount to sets of coherent ideological commitments. Along with my contextual evidence from TAD, my examples show that these commitments amount to the affirmation of

the Travellers' cultural legitimacy. The stories present an ideology that is based on environmental awareness, acute moral sensitivity and a sagacious appreciation of the pitfalls of material wealth. I invoked Geertz's concept of 'patterns of feeling' (2000: 95) as a way to understand cultural systems at work in given communities, and I return to Geertz here: 'Whatever else ideologies may be', says Geertz, 'they are, most distinctively, maps of problematic social reality' (1994: 288). The social problems faced by generations of Travellers are an observable theme throughout the narratives I examined. What I also reveal, however, is that the problematic realities are negotiated in such a way as to make sense of them and to reaffirm cultural identities. The changing socio-political landscape in Scotland meant that the ideological constitution of Scotland's 'other' simply did not gel with the capitalist ideals of the ruling elite.

For instance, my opening analytical chapter centred on stories from two strong tradition-bearers to demonstrate my critical underpinnings in practice. Stanley Robertson's Traveller-Judge was shown to encompass the social location of Travellers in negotiation with the perceived oppressive apparatus of the State. Robertson uses dramatic irony, motifs from recognised international tales and complex narrative devices such as anagnorisis to deliver a story that encompasses deep understandings about abstract concepts. In a very real sense, justice itself is put on trial when the 'conventional' upbringing of the Traveller-Judge means that the power he wields, as arbiter of the State, is devoid of moral rectitude. Moreover, identity politics are at play when the abandoned Traveller child is ironically cast as this arbiter. The innate sense of justice inexorably demonstrated by the Traveller-Judge at the conclusion of Robertson's story is linked to Traveller identity. The outwardly ugly 'black mark' of the Traveller child is a metaphor for the perceived turpitude of the Traveller communities. The problematic social reality – interpreted as the State's removal of Traveller children after the Children Act (1908) – is defused when the abandoned Traveller child's

inner identity is reawakened, and he releases the people being held for a crime they did not commit. The Traveller-Judge's innate sense of justice is thereby reconfigured as a gift to a State that has lost its way. The underlying ideological commitment is therefore not simply 'judge not lest ye be judged'; it is a conciliatory effort that demonstrates what the wrongly maligned Traveller communities have to offer to a more equitable and understanding society.

In Duncan Williamson's *The Hedgehurst*, I showed how my critical approach can be used in tandem with more orthodox comparative techniques to provide fresh insights into traditional narratives. Like the authors of the literary fairy tales I used for comparison, Williamson's version of ATU 441 – *Hans my Hedgehog* reconfigures this international tale to suit the ideological commitments of the narrator and the traditional resource on which he draws. I expanded on the concept of ecotypes (Von Sydow 1934: 349) to provide further evidence of the distinctive characteristics of the Nackian idiom. The journey of Williamson's *Hedgehurst* was shown not to be a narrative about a social climber who undergoes a physical transformation, like the literary versions. Instead, I demonstrated how the protagonist in the Nackian version of the story embodied a close affinity with the natural environment. *The Hedgehurst* resisted the temptations of wealth and power, choosing instead to remain in his self-made abode in the forest. This sense of harmony and balance with nature is a sentiment eloquently expressed by Traveller Janet Robertson:

Everybody in time of stress looks for a haven, a harbour, their own private piece of velvet. This is what Travellers call "Blue Velvet". You know some people when they think of other things often say a taste of honey, if they're speaking about something that applies to them. But I think with Travellers it really was their Blue Velvet, it was a haven if you like, it was a place where they go for refuge, and they could find companionship. They could identify themselves, but they could also identify themselves as children of nature, for they were children of nature, and they live close to nature.

(TAD 49824)

Robertson's points here go a long way to capturing the essence of the Hedgehurst's journey; he at once becomes comfortable and confident in his skin, while figuring out that his identity draws him back to a place in nature. Given what we know about the Travellers' chosen lifestyles, it is not surprising that Williamson situates his story in a setting that his audiences could identify with. In his memoirs, Williamson himself tells us that his early years were spent around a forest, explaining that 'in Furnace wood, my father raised thirteen children' (1994: 3). Perhaps a laudable relationship with the Scottish landscape and the natural environment – one that is not based on control or possession – is a more meaningful way to consider nomadic 'ways of thinking'.

I do not mean to romanticise the communities into some idyllic, prelapsarian landscape where lifestyle conflicts do not exist. Instead, I suggest that close attention be paid to the cultural expressions of the communities to better understand their motivations and to support self-determination. Elsewhere, for instance, McLeod's recent study of Gaelic in Scotland highlights the ideological discourse that underpins the perceived 'value of Gaelic' (2020: 44). He points out that the 'nature of this ideology has mutated considerably over time but at its core, at least since the eighteenth century, is a perception of Gaelic as an outdated, under-developed language unsuited to the modern world' (ibid.). McLeod goes on to suggest that Gaelic as a working language is perceived to be 'unsuited to the modern world and destined to die out, whose speakers are socio-economically disadvantaged and restricted in their life opportunities' (ibid.). When it comes to the ideological differentiation between Travellers and mainstream society, parallels with attitudes towards Gaelic can be drawn. In Chapter 1 above, I traced the hostility towards Travellers and their chosen lifestyles from the eighteenth century onwards through a variety of documentary sources: the many examples from TSAS are evidence for the developing contempt for a previously valued sector of pre-industrial Scottish society; the numerous governmental reports I went on to cite represent harrowing incitements

to cultural obliteration, with William Mitchell, for instance, calling for Traveller children to be ‘looked after and sent to school, and the whole tinker clan thus gradually brought into association with the other labourer’ (*Minutes of Evidence*, in Cameron et al 1895: 9). For McLeod, the value of Gaelic was similarly maligned when ‘from the eighteenth century onwards, a discourse of modernisation, improvement and progress became dominant in relation to Gaelic’ (2020: 44). McLeod goes on: ‘Gaelic monolingualism was said to hold Gaelic speakers back, preventing them from accessing opportunities and from participating fully in civic and cultural life’ (ibid.: 44-45). From this perspective, my thesis mobilises contemporary debate around the role of marginalised cultures in Scotland. McLeod concludes that in parts of Scotland, ‘deeply rooted language ideologies that devalued Gaelic remained in play, often reinforced by people’s direct personal experience that Gaelic had brought them no benefit in life’ (ibid.: 333). Traveller culture in contemporary Scotland suffers similarly, with the present generation often hiding their ethnicity for fear of discriminatory reprisals. My analyses throughout this thesis are a celebratory examination of a unique folk idiom that, although underrepresented at present, calls for further detailed investigation. Further study might also be undertaken to consider the role of Travellers in the preservation of Highland culture and the Gaelic language, for instance.

Another striking example of the Nackian idiom at work is found in the Travellers’ narratives about Burkers. The way that William Burke and Robert Knox perpetrated the murders seeped into the Travellers’ storytelling traditions in a unique way. I showed how mainstream representations of the crimes are often biographical, sometimes comical, but that the Nackian manifestations are altogether of a different sort. Here, the ideological negotiation is elevated from the symbolic to the visceral. According to Braid, the Burkean narratives may also ‘be used to instil a healthy fear of outsiders in Traveller children. These stories therefore reinforce the desire for isolation and strengthen the sense of shared identity in Traveller

communities' (2002: 83). The example that Braid provides for his summation is of the 'sinister black carriages' type that Shaw (2006: 167) pointed out appears in separate English folkloric traditions. Although Braid has a point, my own examples enhance his summation about Burkers because the narratives I examined are more redolent of the original crimes. The 'unresolvable social trauma' recognised by McCracken-Flesher (2012: 23) was shown to manifest itself in specific ways in the Travellers' tradition. The fear instilled during my examples transcends the bodily threat of the Burkers to represent an existential threat of a higher order. What is at stake during the 'Burking' episodes – understood as deliberate intoxication and smothering – is the confrontation between the ideological commitments of the protagonists and their would-be annihilators. The lifestyle choices of the Traveller protagonists are undisguised during the Burker tales, where the protagonists find themselves on the road and in peril. Their peril is not only symbolic of the precarious lifestyles they choose, but also of the problematic relationship they have with mainstream society. The confrontation comes when the Travellers seek help, despite the fear of discrimination, and are betrayed in the most abhorrent way. The symbolic negotiation engendered within the narratives speaks to the social realities faced by many Travellers to this day. The distinctive cultural identities that the communities hold dear are laid bare within their storytelling traditions and can give mainstream society useful insights into how they experience marginalisation.

I also highlighted analogous circumstances to the Burke and Knox affair in other parts of Scotland; the anatomist Andrew Moir's 'Burking Shop' in Aberdeen provided evidence that the trauma extended beyond Burke's hunting ground in Edinburgh. Specifically, the example of Moir revealed that the concept of nefarious medical professionals existed in areas more closely associated with Travellers. As noted above, McCracken-Flesher's notions of social trauma and narrative negotiation are especially resonant within the Burker stories that we hear

from Travellers. However, the closure that McCracken-Flesher recognises in the more profitable renderings of Burke is a wound that is far from closed in the Travellers' collective cultural memory. I revealed how the Travellers' Burker stories contrast themselves with the more symbolic narratives that were examined in the previous chapter. The inner wealth, wisdom, strength and confidence that the symbolic narratives of Chapter 4 displayed is juxtaposed with a deep sense of isolation and insecurity within the Travellers' Burker tradition. At the same time, the Burker accounts are instilled with a recognisable sense of hope and self-affirmation that challenges the passive persecution highlighted by Henderson and others. Further study in this area might consider parallels between the fear of abduction by the Burkers and the wider perspective of the poor and destitute being 'exported' to the colonies during the Scottish clearances of the nineteenth century (Devine 1994: 55).

My research comes at a time when a recent study reported harrowing insights into the mental health of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers across the United Kingdom. The report, entitled *Hate: "As Regular as Rain"*, set out to analyse 'anecdotal evidence that highlights the "ripple effect" of experiencing hate crime on mental health' (Greenfields and Rogers 2020: 10). The authors found that 80% of Scottish Traveller respondents reported having relatives who had attempted suicide in the previous five years, linking these statistics to experiences of hate crime and discriminatory practices (ibid.: 14). One Scottish Traveller reported that 'in some cases I have seen community members even go as far as to internalise the false beliefs outsiders make about our culture' (ibid.: 112). I have argued throughout this thesis that discrimination is nothing new for Scotland's Travellers. My analyses show that 'false beliefs' can be undermined by positive representation and fostering better understandings between Scotland's diverse communities. Elsewhere, James observes that 'Gypsies' and Travellers' social identities, that they align themselves to or are aligned to, have been negatively derived and sustained historically and contemporarily' (2020: 101). My initial contextual chapter

demonstrated this negative derivation in some detail, with my subsequent analytical chapters showing how these derivations manifest in traditional narrative.

The ‘social identities’ of the Travellers referred to by James can also be viewed as their social location; as I have demonstrated in detail, the social location of both the narrators and their protagonists is key to understanding the meaning of the stories they tell. The Burkean narratives I examined were predicated on the concept of social location. In the Burker stories, the worldviews and beliefs being expressed are the fundamental human right to making your own lifestyle choices and peacefully resisting contamination by values with which you do not agree. My analyses are an antidote to what James sees as the negation of Traveller cultures and the racialised identities that fail to acknowledge the experience of racism and prejudice (ibid.). James goes on to suggest that ‘the hierarchies of legitimacy between Gypsy and Traveller communities, as well as between Gypsies and Travellers and wider white sedentarist society, have been augmented’ (ibid.). This is especially true in the contemporary Burker example from Davie Donaldson; the verse sung in Cant – ‘look how the people live, look how the people eat. Bad people, bad house’ (Interview 2019: 45m 05s) – is an overt challenge to the lifestyles of the would-be Burkers and is a quintessential Nackian narrative. James points out that ‘Gypsies and Travellers struggle to subjectively console their cultural norms and expectations with the norms and expectations of neoliberal capitalism’ (2020: 101). However, as Shamus McPhee has it, the function of Nackian narratives is to represent ‘an inherent contradistinction to the sedentarist prototype that society has drafted for us’ (2021: Appendix I).

In my investigation of supernaturalism in Traveller storytelling, I argued that viewing the story spaces as super-empirical is a more useful conceptualisation when accessing their meaning. Following on from my preceding arguments around the real social conditions that are negotiated within the Travellers’ stories, my key point in this chapter was that uncanny

events do not represent anything ‘*super-natural*’. Rather, the stories necessarily place the narrated events outside of empirical reality so that their meaning can be delivered unfettered by physical constraints. The consistency of the reality is not only a secondary belief, or a ‘suspension of disbelief’, but a representation of *social* reality where the inner conditions of the story space can be used to interrogate such realities. ‘Fantasy is a natural human activity’, says Tolkien, ‘it certainly does not destroy or even insult reason [...] On the contrary’ (2001: 55). From this perspective, the ‘fantastical imaginations’ so maligned by the authors of the *Records of the Parliament of Scotland to 1707* (27 October 1579: online) are reconceptualised to represent sophisticated negotiations of issues that affect all of society. If societies ‘were ever in a state in which they did not want to know or could not perceive truth’, concludes Tolkien, ‘then fantasy would languish until they were cured’ (2001: 55). The examples I presented from the Travellers’ storytelling traditions are testament to this pursuit of truth in super-empirical story spaces.

To get at the meanings within the super-empirical stories, I invoked Teverson’s concept of ‘cultural realities’ (2013: 146) being contained within traditional narratives, a concept demonstrably apparent in Stewart’s story of Geordie’s experience in liminality, Duncan Williamson’s magic pot and Betsy Whyte’s money-producing tree. Not only were cultural realities on display, but also the view that folk narratives are ‘ideological battle grounds’ was explicated. The Travellers’ stories challenge ‘cultural authority’ and discourse, concurring with the idea that folktales have the ‘capacity to be resistant to, or critical of, dominant ideological interests’ (Teverson 2013: 127, 134). The fact that Traveller storytellers share these stories within the process that is tradition is testament to this view. The examples and analyses provided in the present chapter reaffirm my assertion that a central function of these stories is to communicate a particular worldview. Moreover, the impulse behind these stories must not be viewed as anti-capitalist, or the stories themselves as ‘vessels of peasant wisdom’

(Warner 2014: 133). Instead, the worldview being extolled by the Traveller storytellers is utopian in the sense that the messages the stories transmit are those of self-awareness and social responsibility. From this perspective, the challenges being levelled at material wealth are not antagonistic, they are representative of a society where the folk can confidently express their own points of view. Zipes sees this impulse as the utopian purpose of folklore, which seeks to 'enable people to give voice and form to their needs and dreams in a free manner', thereby enabling 'communities to be established on a non-antagonistic basis, to expose and overcome social antagonisms (1984: 335).

My final analytical chapter introduced evidence from contemporary Travellers to support my preceding analyses. My initial discussions provided the reader with an overview of contemporary discourses around the status of Traveller communities in modern Scotland. The Scottish Government's MWGGT demonstrates a commitment to a better understanding of Traveller culture (MWGGT 2019: Scottish Government, online) and this thesis has done just that. I also cited Sullivan – writing in 2020 for the Human Rights Consortium Scotland – who advocates participatory engagement with Scotland's Traveller communities to foster clearer understandings of their perspectives (2020: 8). Again, my fieldwork activities and communications with contemporary members of the communities shared the same impetus and has provided fresh insights into the perspectives of the communities. These insights addressed what Matthews pointed out recently; 'the commonly-used term, "traveller" (to mean Romanies/Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Roma and new travellers) has been described as a euphemism', says Matthews, 'absolving the speaker/writer of ascertaining details about any particular culture' (2012: 3). Although I use the term 'Traveller(s)' throughout this thesis, my principal argument was that the cultural expressions of the communities are better understood as a recognisable folkloric idiom, encompassed by the term 'Nackian'. In this way, this thesis contributes to the scholarship by advocating a new

delineation that foregrounds the voices of the communities and avoids the euphemistic failures alluded to by Matthews.

My discussion and subsequent interpretations engage with contemporary debates around our problematic relationship with the natural environment. The debates engendered by ecocriticism, for example, are mobilised in my analyses of Traveller cultural expressions. Ecocritical discourse is a broad and diverse field, and it is not my intention to attempt to summarise. I introduce the concept of ecocriticism here because, as the reader will recognise, the cultural expressions of the Traveller communities represent fertile ground for future research in the field. A common concern addressed by the modern discourse is that ‘environmental problems require analysis in cultural as well as scientific terms’, Garrard contends, ‘because they are the outcome of an interaction between ecological knowledge of nature and its cultural inflection’ (2012: 16). This common impetus is underpinned by the idea that our impact on our environment is something that is negotiated within our cultural outputs. The discussions of my analytical chapters, from this perspective, are pertinent to the field of ecocriticism. For instance, the journey of Duncan Williamson’s animal-human hybrid the Hedgehurst speaks to a more equitable relationship with the natural environment and its animal inhabitants.

Williamson’s narrative takes on a more significant meaning from this perspective; the Hedgehurst challenges mainstream uses of the landscape, where urban ideologies seek to exploit natural resources for material gain. Again, I am not suggesting that such expressions pine for a prelapsarian ideal, only that their emergence in Traveller traditions highlights an awareness of the inequitable relationships marginalised communities continue to face. ‘The most startling and significant insight of ecocriticism and animal studies’, Garrard surmises, ‘is that the supposedly distinct realms of culture and nature are naturalcultural throughout, interconnected in ways that are as likely to be uncanny or threatening as aesthetically

inspiring or physically pleasurable' (2012: 205). Garrard's use of the conflated term 'naturalcultural' here suggests what he describes as the 'continual interpenetration and mutual constitution of the human and non-human worlds' (ibid.: 208). There is a sense of interconnectedness with the natural environment at the heart of modern ecocritical debates and the examples I draw upon from the Travellers' traditions evoke a similar ideological commitment. Although this interconnection with our planet seems obvious, we continue to abuse natural resources to the point that legally binding international agreements – such as the United Nations Paris Agreement 2015 – must be established to restrain our appetites. The 'aesthetically inspiring' relationship between culture and nature that Garrard alludes to above is a neat summation of the ideological imperatives shared by Scotland's Traveller communities. Within my overarching context, the underrepresentation of Scotland's Traveller communities is further addressed by viewing their cultural expressions from ecocritical perspectives; their heretofore peripheral voices have much to contribute to contemporary debates around our relationship with our environments.

Another rarely utilised methodology was deployed in the same chapter to investigate place-naming within the Traveller tradition. I introduced the concept of folk onomastics to consider the use of superempiricism in place-naming, propounding that naming encompasses experiences with culturally specific meanings. Again, my discussions here engaged with contemporary debates around the uses of onomastics in the humanities. For instance, Kostanski and Puzey suggest that 'intricate analyses of the substantive power of naming practices are possible if researchers are bold enough to look deeper' (2016: xv-xvi). Such intricate analyses were delivered in my own examinations when I considered the significance of Rosehearty, Balquhidder and Balnaguard. I showed that the alternative conceptualisations of these Scottish placenames speak to a unique experience of the landscape. Not only that, but the etymologies were distinctively Nackian, where the distinct Nackian idiom is driven by the

Traveller characters that inhabit the world of the narratives. Kostanski and Puzey go on to point out that ‘as names can represent identities, the silencing of a name or promotion of a preferred name can speak volumes for cultural politics’ (ibid.: xx). This was demonstrably the case with the example of Balnaguard, where the Anglicisation of the placename divested it of its original meaning of ‘Township of the Tinkers’. By reorientating the etymologies of named locations in the landscape, the storytellers challenge dominant conceptualisations of landscapes, reclaiming the cultural significance of the places and negotiating their own cultural identities in the process. Davie Donaldson put this concept well, when stating that ‘we’re perceived as a community without roots or without rootedness in place, but Scottish travellers and other traveller groups have a deep rootedness in place’, before going on to say ‘we’re taught from a very young age about our ancestral connection to those places, and it’s very, very deep and I think settled people don’t often have the opportunity to have an insight into that’ (2020a: online).

In terms of further research that could be done on the topic of Traveller folklore, I would advocate the use of the interdisciplinary approach I deployed throughout this thesis. At its core, my approach is an act of interpretation that relies on close attention to the context of the folkloric expressions and then to detailed close readings of their contents. As the reader will see from Appendix II below, there are many hundreds of expressions held in TAD alone, not to mention the material held in the SSSA that is yet to be digitised. My methodological approach has demonstrated that there are culturally significant meanings below the surface of stories and that getting to these meanings is a worthwhile endeavour. Future scholarship in the field might utilise the same methodology and consider the expressions from different theoretical perspectives. For instance, in Chapter 5 we saw how Shaw’s feminist reading of Jess Smith’s Burker story yielded insights into the structural pattern of the Burkean masterplot. An adventurous interpreter might follow Dundes’ psychoanalytic approach; ‘my

own bias is that psychoanalysis provides the tools necessary for the illumination of folklore’, says an unapologetic Dundes, ‘unfortunately, there is a feeling of unease and distrust among conventional folklorists (and most academics) whenever psychoanalysis is mentioned’ (2002: ix, parenthesis in original). Despite Dundes’ acknowledgement of anxieties around unconventional analytical techniques, my own thesis demonstrates that plausible interpretations of folklore can be delivered using techniques that shift the focus away from taxonomy, seeking instead to uncover what our folkloric expressions mean.

In my introduction to this thesis, I included a quote from Traveller John Stewart; ‘our way of thinking, our deep concern inside’, Stewart remarks, ‘our jealousies and our hatreds, our loves and our likes are far different from yours’ (TAD 56424). Stewart’s poignant evocation of ‘deep concern inside’ and ‘certain ways of thinking’ encompasses the point of my thesis precisely. In Chapter 2, I made clear that it was not my intention to describe a new ‘unified field’ of Traveller worldview and ideology when writing this thesis. Braid’s earlier study emphasised the pitfalls of this approach when he recognised that Travellers are not a ‘homogenous community where one voice can claim to speak for all’ (1997: 45). However, my analyses have shown that through close attention to the *narrative* voices that come from the communities, much safer conclusions can be drawn about the nature of the Nackian tradition. Shared understandings around history, folklore, placenames, ancestry and local knowledge are key identity markers within the communities. When ‘travelling’ through *this* type of landscape, a vigorous sense of cultural continuity and self-determination exists; the attributes of the Nackian narratives thereby function as a challenge to group identities that are based on external naming conventions and the misunderstandings that Traveller communities continue to face. A dramatic change in working lifestyles – lamented by Duncan Campbell at the beginning of this thesis – and a mainstream shift toward sedentary ideals should not mean the obliteration of marginalised cultural identities. In the spirit of letting the communities

speak for themselves, I finish with Shamus McPhee's erudite summation of what this thesis is concerned with:

Nackens set great store in any art form: musicians, craftspeople, artists and, by extension, storytellers, occupy an exalted status within our culture. It is an Arts-driven culture; that is what matters most to us, in a nutshell. Coupled to this, is the aesthetic allure of the beauty spots, of being able to link art to nomadism and, in so doing, weave both into a travelogue which enables a virtual tour of the Scottish landscape and beyond.

(2021: Appendix I)

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## Appendix I – Stakeholder Communications

Donaldson, Davie. 2018:

**From:** Donaldson, David Thomas <d.d\*\*\*\*\*@aberdeen.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 06 February 2018 16:49  
**To:** FELL Robert  
**Subject:** Re: Traveller Research

Hi Bob,

Yes it was nice to finally meet 😊 I found the conversation incredibly useful and it challenged many of my own personal preconceptions as well. I will email across all the elements I mentioned over the next couple of days 😊 Thank you for the pieces you have sent across, I will enjoy reading through these.

Kind Regards,

Davie

— — . 2018a:

**From:** Donaldson, David Thomas <d.d\*\*\*\*\*@aberdeen.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 07 February 2018 19:44  
**To:** FELL Robert  
**Subject:** Follow up from Chat

Hi Bob,

I forgot to mention in my last email, i have spoken to Ducan Williamson's Granddaughter about the interview. She isn't keen, however her dad (Duncan's son) is very keen to help you in any way he can. Jimmy is still nomadic and enjoys making baskets, wooden flowers and the like. He is a wealth of knowledge and a delightful man.

If you let me know when you want to do an interview with him, i can arrange it 😊

Kind Regards,

Davie

Laing, Cathie. 2020:

(No subject)

Cathie Laing <ar\*\*\*\*\*@outlook.com>

Fri 31/01/2020 11:46

To: FELL Robert [s1130842@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:s1130842@sms.ed.ac.uk)

Good morning, what can i say, i am speechless.

I confess, there are words and phrases, i don`t comprehend, alas ,that is my lack, but the body of work is utterly brilliant.

What you are returning to the travellers, is a sense of place in this world, a balance, I think we spoke of good and evil in the stories the last time you visited, but your depth of research gives hope and confirmation that we did indeed have a place, a different part of that place, nevertheless, a place.

I hope D.E.Stewart can give you the refs. I alluded to, in a simple way, the piece about the family in Barra, tells of their refusal to take payment for a story.

I must congratulate you, I cannot add anything else

I have for you Essie`s e-mail, c\*\*\*\*\*@gmail.com

I know she will have a lot to share with you, on the other hand, not sure if i have anything of worth, but happy to see you.

I must away now and do the mundane things before a bit of outside work in the garden.

many, many thanks for sharing. My lack of academia leaves me unable to let you have a crit. that would be meaningful, but all my life, i have relied heavily on my instinct and as you say in your writing, recognising the traveller skills, in "reading" a situation. It is never let me down, though in today`s world we have to go through the pc route, I can say from this old traveller, from my heart, from the intuition of my soul, you have it right.

Every Blessing,

Cathie

McPhee, Shamus. 2021:

**Re: Chat on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb**

Shamus McPhee <sl\*\*\*\*\*@gmail.com>

Mon 22/02/2021 12:40

To: FELL Robert [s1130842@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:s1130842@sms.ed.ac.uk)

Dear Bob,

Thank you for your reply. I'm pleased that you can appreciate the significance and the consequences of terminology relating to Nackens; since it is imperative, in my view, that we be regarded as an ethnic minority, and not as a social group, merely linked to a nomadic bent. That could carry dire consequences, indeed.

There is a further piece of research I conducted under the auspices of Perth and Kinross Council, a WW1 booklet, entitled 'Heroes or Raj Hantle'. That research was edited by the Council and, notwithstanding one or two errata, such as stating that Stephan Valyi was German, when I believe he was Hungarian -- they were keen to control the output, you see --the essence of it might be helpful in terms of augmenting your already considerable understanding of the historical context, and, also, of the

cultural differences that resulted in Nackens being separated out on racial grounds for markedly different treatment (there being a selection process, if you will, underway).

It's gratifying that your focus is one trained on the aesthetic qualities encapsulated within the storytelling tradition; I find that truly refreshing, given the predominant elitism toward Nacken artistry. Nackens set great store in any art form: musicians, craftspeople, artists and, by extension, storytellers, occupy an exalted status within our culture. It is an Arts-driven culture; that is what matters most to us, in a nutshell. Coupled to this, is the aesthetic allure of the beauty spots, of being able to link art to nomadism and, in so doing, weave both into a travelogue which enables a virtual tour of the Scottish landscape and beyond. Therefore, yes, I do agree completely that there is an inherent contradistinction to the sedentarist prototype that society has drafted for us.

Storytelling affords an escapist, cultural safety net, where Nackens can drop their guard and relate instinctively to the content: they do not need to negotiate identities, and can cast off the expected public facade. It signals a withdrawal from the hostility, the vitriol, the diatribes spewed upon us in wider society. The ability to sever that negative flow at source, and to retreat into the safety of a culture-bound cocoon, allows that necessary re-connection with cultural roots, and serves to strengthen cultural bonds. It is almost redolent of the introspective search for inner peace and serene harmony, betimes detected in Pio Baroja's 'El Arbol de la Ciencia', very much the antithesis of the 'esperpentoism' -- the grotesque distortion of Nacken culture -- one would evidence in Valle-Inclan, the latter often hurled in the face of the community at the hands of wider society, which, let's be honest, to a great extent, wishes to subjugate and denigrate Nackens in order to reinforce their perceived inferiority.

Well, those are the key points I would wish to impress upon any target audience. If that necessitates sharing my e-mails, then, I have no objection to that course of action.

Kushti divvus,

Shamus.

— — . 2021a:

**Re: Chat on the 25th Feb**

Shamus McPhee <sl\*\*\*\*\*@gmail.com>

Thu 25/02/2021 21:27

To: FELL Robert <s1130842@sms.ed.ac.uk>

Dear Bob,

It was great to chat so informally but with such intensity almost, at the same time. I, perhaps wasn't at my most coherent today -- part and parcel of life with M.E. Hence, the miscue in relation to the story about the bus veering off the road at Dalry, where I should have said that butter in Cant is 'smoit' or 'smout', sometimes even 'shmout', whereas 'yerram' is actually 'milk' in Cant, and 'perram' or 'perm' is 'bread', as are 'brunston' and 'balwhidder/balwhudder', since these lexemes form part of an oral and,

concomitantly, evolutionary process, where phonetics vary from ear to ear and mouth to mouth (we're all deaf as doorposts, and half of us cannae speak right, as you will jann).

Should you have any questions, or just want to chat, you know where and how to find me.

I'll stal my mangen noo and coor the drom. Must nash avree for now.

Kushti ratti,

Shamus.

— — . 2021b:

**Re: Verse in Cant**

Shamus McPhee <sl\*\*\*\*\*@gmail.com>

Tue 02/03/2021 16:27

To: FELL Robert <s1130842@sms.ed.ac.uk>

Hi Robert,

I have had a look over the transcription, and there were just a couple of things:

1. I am wondering if 'govels' is a corruption of 'gobbles', as I don't recognise this word; it may be from 'guffie', or 'pig' --, austere people are often described as 'guffies'; it might also derive from 'guveno', or 'bull' in Romanes (provided the people were built like bulls!
2. I would use 'ha/haw' for 'to eat'; I have never come across 'hash' -- so 'deek how the hashie ha'; 'nash' from Sanskrit 'nasa' means to run, so maybe it is this?
3. Usually, 'cowl/cowel' is used for a man, especially a randy one;
4. Again, I would use 'kher/kain' for a house, e.g., the'dhobi-kher/kain for a 'laundry', the 'peeve-kain' for the pub, the 'raj/moich-kain' for the mental hospital, the 'jeer-kain' for the 'toilet', etc.; I don't recognise 'pottie' in this context; a 'pottie' or 'po' is a 'chanti' for doing the toilet, usually kept under one's bed;
5. I think 'feck' is actually 'feek' - give, take, bring - 'feek hizz the looer' meaning 'give us the money', an imperative or command -- 'feekies' being used to denote the 'police';
6. 'Neddies' are 'turnips', or 'neeps', whereas 'balrunts' or 'kertoffels', as in German, usually refer to 'tatties';
7. The phrase: 'to yer naggens' means 'to yourself', so 'keep/ take them for yourself';
8. 'Sluch' is to 'drink', usually, to guzzle excessively, and a 'sluch' is an 'alcoholic'; 'sluch' can also mean to drag one's heels when walking, so a 'slucher' is used to deride non-Gypsies who walk down, or pronate, on the soles of their shoes, so that they are all 'bachled' and worn.

I think that's about it. The verse is evidently influenced by familial dialect -- words will vary from and between families (as part of the creative process is the invention of new lexemes).

I hope that this is helpful.

Best wishes,

Shamus.

— — . 2021c:

**Re: Shamus touching base.**

Shamus McPhee <sl\*\*\*\*\*@gmail.com>

Mon 09/08/2021 18:41

To: FELL Robert [s1130842@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:s1130842@sms.ed.ac.uk)

Hi Bob,

I have read the piece of work you sent and, on the whole, I find it to be a most excellent outpouring. In short, you demonstrate a sensitivity for and understanding of the subject matter which I, as a Nacken, or Scottish Gypsy Traveller, seldom encounter in work produced by members of the 'settled' community. It goes far beyond the normal conception. It is brilliantly assembled, and the control of language is, similarly, quite exquisite. If it should become available to the lay-person like myself, I would certainly disseminate and recommend it. On that note, are there any plans to promote it? Will it be accessible? It really ought to be, and I hope that it will be in due course.

A couple of minor things I would exhort are as follows: that you might wish to abide by the adopted, official term used by the Scottish Parliament since 2001, that of 'Gypsy Traveller' as opposed to 'Traveller', bearing in mind that members of the community campaigned for retention of the word 'Gypsy'. For, as one who self-classifies as 'Nacken', the term 'Traveller' does not signify anything to me and I would only recognise it in a very loose sense, intended to encompass all Gypsy and Traveller communities. The term 'Gypsy Traveller' accommodates those of us who view ourselves more as 'Gypsy', as well as those who view themselves as 'Traveller', or both, as the case may be. I trust that makes sense to you?

Other than that, I would Scotticize, if you will, the word 'farm' and replace it with 'ferm' - which would be more in keeping with Nacken diction in a relaxed and lazy-tongued, informal environment. Oh, and I would replace 'assimilationist' with 'assimilatory', as evidenced in The Oxford Dictionary, if I were prone to nit-picking.

It really is a phenomenal piece of work, in my view, and I must compliment you on your labours.

Good luck with it and all best wishes,

Shamus.

Smith, Jess. 2021:

**Re: Way of the Wanderers**

Jess Smith <jess\*\*\*\*\*@gmail.com>

Sat 31/07/2021 17:52

To: FELL Robert <s1130842@sms.ed.ac.uk>

**This email was sent to you by someone outside the University.**

You should only click on links or attachments if you are certain that the email is genuine and the content is safe.

Hi Bob,  
excellent!

You have decided to journey with the culture and in doing so you have found the respect that many academics ignore or cannot find.  
Impressive dialogue threads through this and not much is lost in the narrative.

Thank you, it is well written and if I may add- spot on!  
aye,  
Jess

quiet note

(If Travellers meet and don't know each other we whisper "ma naggins ur Nachen."  
It is forbidden to use the word and that is why we say 'Traveller' instead.  
Certain contemporary Travellers use it without the knowledge that it is unspoken outside of the culture nor do they recognise its hidden origins.)

## Appendix II – Corpus of Material from *Tobar an Dualchais* (TAD)

\* *All tracks can be accessed via the TAD website by searching the numerical track ID using the ‘Search’ function - <https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/>*

Based at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye, the TAD project is dedicated to the presentation and promotion of audio recordings of Scotland’s cultural heritage. Its principal content is songs, music, history, poetry, traditions and stories, recorded from the 1930s onwards (TAD, ‘Home’: online). Most of the recordings were made by academics or students of folklore – such as Peter Cooke, Morag Macleod and Hamish Henderson – collecting traditions from thousands of individuals to extol their local knowledge and share their oral traditions.

The below material is compiled from a search of the TAD collection using the term ‘Traveller(s)’ and ‘Tinker(s)’. Arranged thematically, by genre and in chronological order, the below corpus demonstrates the wealth of material held within the SSS Archive and the opportunity for further research into the lives and stories of Scotland’s Traveller communities. Themes included below are:

1. Family
2. Conflict
3. Jack Tales
4. Lifestyle
5. Supernatural
6. Burkers (including a separate table of motifs)

**Please note:** Due to the nature of recording in the field, there may be some interchangeability between the themes labelled below. My thematic designations are therefore unable to be absolute.

### 1. Family

Title	Theme	Genre	Name	Date
<b>Hooch on my Bonnie Lass</b>	Family	Song	Frank Steele	1952
<b>The origin of the Robertsons</b>	Family	Info	Geordie Robertson	1954
<b>Discussion about Traveller family origins</b>	Family	Info	Alec Stewart	1957
<b>Discussion about Traveller bynames</b>	Family	Info	Alec Stewart	1957
<b>Jeannie Robertson's Stewart ancestors</b>	Family	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1959
<b>Stewart Travellers are descended</b>	Family	Info	Lucy Stewart: Ned	1960

<b>from Jacobite nobility</b>			Stewart	
<b>Sandy Bean (Sawney Bean)</b>	Family	Story	Sandy Archibald	1962
<b>The noble bearing of the Traveller Stewarts</b>	Family	Info	Sandy Archibald	1962
<b>Quarrel between a Traveller man and wife</b>	Family	Info	William Forbes	1964
<b>Biographical information and family history</b>	Family	Info	Belle Stewart: Alec Stewart	1972
<b>The different parts of the Stewart family intermarried, like royalty</b>	Family	Info	Belle Stewart	1972
<b>The Stewarts and the Higgins interrelated</b>	Family	Info	Belle Stewart	1972
<b>Lucy Stewart gives biographical details</b>	Family	Info	Lucy Stewart	1972
<b>Traveller families, their nicknames and rules</b>	Family	Info	Betsy Whyte	1973
<b>Johnston men and their build; naming Traveller children</b>	Family	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>Traveller weddings</b>	Family	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>Gender roles in Traveller communities</b>	Family	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>Biography: Stanley Robertson's grandfather</b>	Family	Info	Stanley Robertson	1976
<b>Jeannie Johnston and her son Duncan (Jack tales)</b>	Family	Info	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>Biographical information about Stanley Robertson's MacDonald grandfather</b>	Family	Info	Stanley Robertson	1978
<b>Family history of Alec Stewart</b>	Family	Info	Belle Stewart: Alec Stewart	1978
<b>Family history of Belle Stewart</b>	Family	Info	Belle Stewart	1978
<b>Alec Stewart's family history</b>	Family	Info	Alec Stewart	1978
<b>How Belle and Alec Stewart met up again as adults</b>	Family	Info	Belle Stewart: Alec Stewart	1978
<b>John Stewart's family history</b>	Family	Info	John Stewart	1979
<b>Duncan Williamson can trace his</b>	Family	Info	Duncan Williamson	1979

<b>ancestors back two hundred and fifty years</b>				
<b>Stanley Robertson talks about his grandfather and his grandmother</b>	Family	Info	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>Janet Higgins's family history</b>	Family	Info	Janet Higgins	1981
<b>Stanley Robertson's genealogy</b>	Family	Info	Stanley Robertson	1982
<b>The genealogy of Stanley Robertson's mother</b>	Family	Info	Stanley Robertson	1983
<b>Traveller family values</b>	Family	Info	Geordie Stewart	1983
<b>The spellings Stuart and Stewart</b>	Family	Info	Stanley Robertson	1984
<b>Discussion of child bearing and rearing among the Traveller communities</b>	Family	Info	Elizabeth Stewart	1987
<b>Courtship and marriage customs among Travellers</b>	Family	Info	Elizabeth Stewart	1987
<b>A girl is killed by her stepmother and fed to her father</b>	Family	Story	Stanley Robertson	1988

## 2. Conflict

Title	Theme	Genre	Name	Date
<b>Moss o Burreldale</b>	Conflict	Song	Jimmy MacBeath	1952
<b>A mother's lament</b>	Conflict	Song	Belle Stewart	1953
<b>Travellers hunted in the woods</b>	Conflict	Story	Jeannie Robertson	1954
<b>Youths attack Travellers</b>	Conflict	Info	Geordie Stewart	1954
<b>Traveller woman has an unpleasant encounter</b>	Conflict	Info	Geordie Stewart	1954
<b>Travellers' fear of bloodsuckers</b>	Conflict	Info	Maggie Stewart	1954
<b>How Jeannie Robertson's mother fought another woman</b>	Conflict	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1961
<b>Jeannie Robertson's brother Davie was always in trouble for drinking and fighting</b>	Conflict	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1961
<b>Jeannie Robertson's grandfather kicked a boxer</b>	Conflict	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1961
<b>What Did the Gadgie Bing tae You?</b>	Conflict	Song	Charlotte Higgins	1962

<b>Traveller woman insulted at being addressed in Romany</b>	Conflict	Info	Capt. John Campbell Duder Harvey Webb Macpherson	1962
<b>Jeannie Robertson describes how she and her family faced police harassment</b>	Conflict	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1965
<b>Travellers hunted by a party of men in a car</b>	Conflict	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1965
<b>Misunderstandings and harshness towards Travellers</b>	Conflict	Story	George Campbell	1973
<b>Jeannie Robertson talks about the resentment</b>	Conflict	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1973
<b>Travellers used Cant words</b>	Conflict	Info	Betsy Whyte	1973
<b>A fist fight between Traveller women</b>	Conflict	Story	Jeannie Robertson	1974
<b>A prisoner was helped by his daughter to compose a riddle</b>	Conflict	Info	Betsy Whyte	1974
<b>A man escapes prison by making up a riddle that the judge cannot solve</b>	Conflict	Info	John Stewart	1979
<b>A woman was cursed by a Traveller she had refused to help</b>	Conflict	Story	Betsy Whyte	1976
<b>The story of an old ballad about a farmer refusing lodgings to a tramp</b>	Conflict	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>The contributor's schooldays and the persecution</b>	Conflict	Info	Betsy Whyte	1976
<b>A rich American brings Travellers as his guests to a hotel that turned them away</b>	Conflict	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>It Happened at the Berry-Time</b>	Conflict	Verse	Belle Stewart	1977
<b>Anecdote about a member of Belle Stewart's audience hoping she wasn't a "wild tink"</b>	Conflict	Info	Belle Stewart	1977
<b>A poem about the persecution of settled Travellers</b>	Conflict	Verse	Belle Stewart	1978
<b>John Barleycorn</b>	Conflict	Song	Duncan Williamson	1978
<b>Traveller scrap merchant who bought the harbour</b>	Conflict	Story	John Stewart	1978
<b>Army captain trying the honesty of</b>	Conflict	Story	Alec Stewart	1978

<b>a soldier who was a Traveller</b>				
<b>After being left with no clothes, a Traveller got a suit</b>	Conflict	Story	Alec Stewart	1978
<b>A farmer who took a Traveller's last half crown was punished</b>	Conflict	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A Traveller who couldn't provide any entertainment</b>	Conflict	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>The Hawker's Lament</b>	Conflict	Song	Duncan Williamson	1979
<b>Stanley Robertson's Traveller traditions in conflict</b>	Conflict	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A maid served Traveller children food</b>	Conflict	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>Various instances of Travellers defending themselves</b>	Conflict	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Caledonia Dwelling</b>	Conflict	Verse	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Caledonian Dwelling (V.2)</b>	Conflict	Verse	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>Farmservants frightened a Traveller boy to death</b>	Conflict	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>The body of a murdered Traveller woman treated with indignity</b>	Conflict	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>An old Traveller woman who was treated badly</b>	Conflict	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A Traveller version of the ballad 'Little Sir Hugh'</b>	Conflict	Song	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Funny story about an abbot</b>	Conflict	Story	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>A Traveller makes a shop assistant look all over for a special car horn</b>	Conflict	Story	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>Travellers camping on the Old Road of Lumphanan: interaction with locals</b>	Conflict	Info	Anonymous	1981
<b>A girl rescues Travellers from cannibals</b>	Conflict	Story	Stanley Robertson	1983
<b>Conflict between pagan and Christian traditions</b>	Conflict	Info	Lizzie Higgins	1986
<b>Stanley Robertson's experience of prejudice against Travellers</b>	Conflict	Info	Stanley Robertson	1988

<b>The Wandering Piper</b>	Conflict	Story	Willie MacPhee	1991
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### 3. Jack Tales

Title	Theme	Genre	Name	Date
<b>The story of the Green Man of Knowledge, told in brief.</b>	Jack Tales	Story	Geordie Stewart	1954
<b>Jack made a journey to get water from the well at the world's end</b>	Jack Tales	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>Jack mistook a thorn tree for an old woman</b>	Jack Tales	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>Jack won the princess by catching the deer with the golden horns</b>	Jack Tales	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>Silly Jack killed the factor</b>	Jack Tales	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Jack in the stories is the Travellers' hero</b>	Jack Tales	Info	Duncan Williamson	1979
<b>The telling of Jack stories amongst Travellers</b>	Jack Tales	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Jack wins a bride by saving her from two shape-changing ravens</b>	Jack Tales	Story	Duncan Williamson	1980
<b>A rejected baby was disfigured, but when grown was restored by a little man</b>	Jack Tales	Story	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>Jack's misplaced attempts to follow instructions</b>	Jack Tales	Story	Stanley Robertson	1982
<b>An old woman rescued a prince from enchantment</b>	Jack Tales	Story	Stanley Robertson	1983
<b>Jack performed three tasks with the help of the daughter of the Green Man of Knowledge</b>	Jack Tales	Story	Geordie Stewart	1983

### 4. Lifestyle

Title	Theme	Genre	Name	Date
<b>Far Over the Forth</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Jeannie Robertson	1952
<b>Come Aa Ye Tramps and Hawkers</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Jimmy MacBeath	1952

<b>Tramps and Hawkers</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Willie Matheson	1952
<b>Traveller by-names</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Alec Stewart: Jeannie Robertson	1952
<b>Smoo Cave in Sutherland used by Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Charles Lemmon Simpson	1953
<b>Tramps and Hawkers</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Jimmy MacBeath	1953
<b>Information on Jock and Meg Pome, and Francis (Francie) Markiss</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Belle Stewart	1953
<b>Travellers in the Borders known as 'muggers'</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Mary Bryce Simpson	1953
<b>Nicknames for Travellers from different parts of Scotland</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1954
<b>Cant words for groups of people</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1954
<b>Jeannie Robertson says there was no discord amongst the Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1954
<b>Bogie's Bonnie Belle</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Maggie Stewart	1954
<b>Tramps and Hawkers</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Donald Campbell	1954
<b>Names and reputations of Traveller families</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1954
<b>Highland Jean</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Maggie Stewart	1954
<b>The King and the Tinker</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Geordie Robertson	1954
<b>A death foretold</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Andrew Stewart	1955
<b>Nicknames for Traveller clans</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Lizzie Higgins	1955
<b>Story of Geordie MacPhee's treasure</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Andrew Stewart	1955
<b>Education, working life and army service</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Davy Hutchison	1955
<b>Examples of Travellers' cant</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Davy Hutchison	1955
<b>Yowie wi the Crookit Horn</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Jeannie Robertson	1955
<b>Yowie wi the Crookit Horn (V.2)</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Jeannie Robertson	1955
<b>Travelling people in Glenlivet</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Adam Lamb	1956
<b>The coronation of the last Tinker King</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Charlie Douglas	1956

<b>A Traveller finds and spends a ghostly hoard</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Andrew Stewart	1956
<b>Mad Owen</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Bella Higgins	1956
<b>Information about Lewis Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Roderick Campbell	1958
<b>The Tinker's Wedding</b>	Lifestyle	Story	George Inglis Fraser	1960
<b>I am Goin to be Merriet</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Lucy Stewart	1960
<b>The Tinker's Wedding</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Emily Sinclair: Helen Scott	1960
<b>Tramps and Hawkers</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Jean Dugert	1960
<b>Jeannie Robertson has seen many bare-knuckle fights amongst Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1961
<b>Conversation about the berryfields of Blairgowrie and Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Charlotte Higgins	1962
<b>Phrases in Cant, with a partial English translation</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Charlotte Higgins	1962
<b>Jeannie Robertson talks about her love of wild animals</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1962
<b>Anecdote illustrating the disadvantage to Travellers of being illiterate</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Unknown	1962
<b>Mission work in the berry-fields of Blairgowrie</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1962
<b>The death of Jeannie Robertson's son is foreseen by Mrs Martin</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1962
<b>Encounters of travellers with Mrs Martin, the spiritualist</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1962
<b>O What Did he Feck ye?</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Jeannie Robertson	1962
<b>Travellers in Perthshire</b>	Lifestyle	Info	William Forbes	1964
<b>Travellers made and repaired pots and pans</b>	Lifestyle	Info	William Forbes	1964
<b>Donald Higgins' illness with TB; how Jeannie Robertson handled it</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1964
<b>The courtship and marriage of Jeannie Robertson and Donald Higgins</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1964

<b>The contributor first heard Cant as a boy</b>	Lifestyle	Info	George Hamilton	1964
<b>Traveller families in the Killin area</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Allan Walker	1964
<b>Donald Higgins' early life and successes as a piper</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1965
<b>Good upbringing of Traveller children</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1965
<b>Reminiscences of Travellers in Caithness before about 1918</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Annie Forbes	1968
<b>Travellers came to Tiree every summer</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Agnes MacKenzie	1971
<b>Travelling people used to come to Tiree</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Hector Kennedy	1971
<b>Travelling people came to Tiree</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Donald Sinclair	1971
<b>Few Travellers married in the old days</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Belle Stewart	1972
<b>James Jack Stewart called after farmer who saved his mother's life</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Belle Stewart	1972
<b>Travellers and piping in Tiree</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Hector Kennedy	1972
<b>Description of a Buchan character dance, 'Leddren Patch', featuring two Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Charles Reid	1972
<b>Traveller handicrafts</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Belle Stewart: Alec Stewart	1972
<b>Travellers' bow tents; family story of being storm-bound; attitudes towards Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Belle Stewart: Alec Stewart	1972
<b>Belle Stewart's grandparents and their family, and how they were known as the 'pilgrims of the mist'</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Belle Stewart	1972
<b>Lucy Stewart's father had a true dream about being asked to identify bodies</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Lucy Stewart	1972
<b>Pedlars and Travellers in Tiree</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Hector Kennedy	1973
<b>Land management in Tiree</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Donald Sinclair	1973
<b>Unlucky people to meet or mention; taboo names</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Jeannie Robertson	1974

<b>Lament of a Traveller Woman</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Stanley Robertson	1974
<b>Tinker families in Tiree</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Hector Kennedy	1974
<b>Travellers and Gypsies in Berwickshire</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Ailie Mack	1975
<b>The Johnston Traveller family</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>The Traveller way of life has changed</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>Traveller storytellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>Traveller families' by-names; fights caused by using them</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>Some Travellers, the 'Charlocks', spoke Gaelic</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>Traveller families' by-names</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>Lucy Stewart, as a traveller child</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Lucy Stewart	1975
<b>Travellers cannot find anywhere to stay in Scotland</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Lucy Stewart	1975
<b>Lucy Stewart's brother started as a door-to-door</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Lucy Stewart	1975
<b>Discussion of seniority and authority</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>The impact of deaths</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>The difference between a riddle and a guess</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>Relations between Scottish and Irish Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1976
<b>Recollections of Travellers camping in Auchterarder</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Lilias Young	1976
<b>A poor man predestined to marry a princess</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>How Traveller children celebrated Halloween</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>Bryce Whyte's war service, how the contributor and Bryce met</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1976
<b>Old Traveller beliefs and practices at Halloween</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>Guy Fawkes' night celebrated with</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Duncan Williamson	1976

<b>a bonfire</b>				
<b>Round the summer campfire with the Reid Traveller family</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>Jimmie Drummond Steals Food</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>A Traveller, sheltering in an open shed on a cold night</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>Family anecdotes; a walking holiday and dancing with Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	William Murdoch MacLennan	1976
<b>A poor Traveller family found a lucky magic pot</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Duncan Williamson	1977
<b>Williamson talks about how his Traveller family got food</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Duncan Williamson	1977
<b>A character with delusions about Prince Charlie... fellowship of outcasts</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Betsy Whyte	1977
<b>The Twa Sisters</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Sheila Stewart	1977
<b>A minister married an ugly girl expecting an inheritance</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Stanley Robertson	1978
<b>Baptism of the dead fulfils the words of Jeannie Robertson's grandmother</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Stanley Robertson	1978
<b>Travellers and how they made a living</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Unknown	1978
<b>Hind Horn</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Duncan Williamson	1978
<b>A pearl fishing success; anecdotes and reminiscences of travelling in Ireland</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Belle Stewart: Alec Stewart	1978
<b>Traveller suspected her husband of committing adultery</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Duncan Williamson	1978
<b>Sabbath observance in the countryside and amongst Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	John Stewart	1978
<b>Traveller family nicknames, some based on animals</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1978
<b>The Scottish Traveller outlook on life</b>	Lifestyle	Info	John Stewart	1978
<b>Travellers' ways of affirming the</b>	Lifestyle	Info	John Stewart	1978

<b>truth</b>				
<b>Travellers have their own beliefs and legends about God and Christ</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Duncan Williamson	1978
<b>The impact on Betsy Whyte of her relationship with the SSS</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte: Bryce Whyte	1978
<b>Discussion of road routes; Travellers wary of short cuts</b>	Lifestyle	Info	John Stewart	1978
<b>Travellers' belief in the existence of unlucky people</b>	Lifestyle	Info	John Stewart	1979
<b>Incidents, including supernatural ones</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>The decline of the travelling lifestyle</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1979
<b>I Dream of Freedom and Peace</b>	Lifestyle	Verse	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Travellers never let their children out of their sight</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1979
<b>Traveller children's names were not used until they were baptised</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1979
<b>A saying about hearing the cuckoo while lying in bed</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte: Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>Traveller superstition about stallions</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Betsy Whyte	1979
<b>Tale or real-life incident?</b>	Lifestyle	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>Traveller superstitions and beliefs</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Travellers were superstitious</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Reading cards; the Tarot; Traveller and Mormon beliefs</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Travellers' subtle communication and signalling amongst themselves</b>	Lifestyle	Info	John Stewart	1979
<b>The decline of Traveller traditions through intermarriage</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A foal came for help when its mother got stuck in a bog</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A horse that had pulled a hearse went mad and killed itself in a bog</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Humorous anecdote about the</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Belle Stewart	1979

<b>Highland Folk Museum</b>				
<b>When they first took to tents, there were plenty of neglected sites</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Duncan Williamson	1980
<b>Types of Travellers' tent and their construction and occupation</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Duncan Williamson	1980
<b>The prevalence of Biblical forenames amongst the Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>A Traveller couple's abandoned child grows up to be a judge</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>Stanley Robertson talks about what he played at as a child</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>Aberdeenshire children's games as played by Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>Maggie MacGregor had a large farm</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>The equipment used for pearl-fishing</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>The Tree of Life and the Old Road of Lumphanan</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>William Robertson liked hawking, travelling was in his blood</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>Stanley Robertson's grandfather operated on his daughter's diseased leg and cured it</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>William Robertson did a wide variety of jobs after he left the Army</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>Reminiscences of camping and singing on the Old Road of Lumphanan</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Janet Robertson	1981
<b>Reflections on nature and spirituality</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Janet Robertson	1981
<b>Travellers' love of nature, expressed in poems and spirituality; family solidarity</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Janet Robertson	1981
<b>Family anecdotes about yokels threatening Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Anonymous	1981
<b>A boy who prayed every day was</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Stanley Robertson	1982

<b>reassured by a heavenly voice</b>				
<b>Halloween customs in Stirlingshire</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Alec MacAllister	1982
<b>Manners and conduct of Traveller children</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1982
<b>Religious story about righteousness finding its reward in Heaven</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Stanley Robertson	1982
<b>Peeblesshire characters: Travellers, tramps, an itinerant tailor</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Thomas Todd	1982
<b>Stanley Robertson's mother; toughness combined with tenderness amongst Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1983
<b>Camping contrasted with city life for Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1983
<b>Biographical information about Stanley Robertson's childhood</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1983
<b>Biographical information, followed by some anecdotes</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Geordie Stewart	1983
<b>Remarks about the Scots language</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Geordie Stewart	1983
<b>A proposed TMSA archive; reminiscences (re Travellers)</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Willie Fraser	1985
<b>Anecdote about a Traveller sleeping in a barn</b>	Lifestyle	Story	Mabel Skelton	1985
<b>Betsy Whyte answers questions about the Traveller lifestyle</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1985
<b>Farm workers' contracts; the tradition of informal marriage surviving amongst Travellers</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Mabel Skelton	1985
<b>Betsy Whyte answers questions about Travellers' hygiene practices</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1985
<b>Discussion of traditional gender roles [among Travellers]</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1987
<b>Discussion of Traveller funerary customs</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Elizabeth Stewart	1987
<b>Yellow on the Broom - Song from the perspective of the travelling people</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Cilla Fisher	1987
<b>Traveller customs at Christmas, New Year and May Day</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1988

<b>Chaff mattresses; Traveller customs in connection with death and birth</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1988
<b>Traveller funeral and mourning customs</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Elizabeth Stewart	1988
<b>Travellers' traditional cures</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Betsy Whyte	1988
<b>Wedding customs, in particular blackening the future bride and groom</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Elizabeth Stewart	1988
<b>Stanley Robertson's experience of prejudice against Travellers, summer travelling and storytelling.</b>	Lifestyle	Info	Stanley Robertson	1988
<b>Till Doomsday in the Afternoon</b>	Lifestyle	Song	Arthur Johnstone	1990

## 5. Supernatural

Title	Theme	Genre	Name	Date
<b>A Traveller won a piping competition</b>	Supernatural	Story	Jock Higgins	1955
<b>The Elfin Knight</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bella Higgins	1955
<b>A family of Travellers sees a fairy in the Sma' Glen</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bella Higgins	1955
<b>A Traveller drinks from a phantom water-trough</b>	Supernatural	Story	Belle Stewart	1956
<b>A Traveller saw the ghost of a murdered girl</b>	Supernatural	Story	Lucy Stewart	1960
<b>A Traveller won a piping competition with magical help and married a laird's daughter</b>	Supernatural	Story	Jock Higgins	1955
<b>A shepherd was led to a pot of gold by a mysterious woman.</b>	Supernatural	Story	Jock Higgins	1960
<b>A Traveller saw a real ghost</b>	Supernatural	Story	Jean Stewart	1960
<b>The bewitched crofter</b>	Supernatural	Story	Unknown	1964
<b>A Traveller is entertained in an empty, ruined house</b>	Supernatural	Story	Alec Stewart	1969
<b>The princes Friday and Saturday in turn have to fight a witch</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte	1973

<b>A Traveller girl intent on stealing corn is frightened</b>	Supernatural	Story	Jeannie Robertson	1974
<b>The Angel of Death gave a Traveller boy a lift</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1974
<b>A Traveller boy gets a lift in the coach (V.2)</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1975
<b>A Traveller boy gets a lift in the coach of the Angel of Death (V.3)</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1976
<b>A Traveller boy got a lift from the Angel of Death (V.4)</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1976
<b>A Traveller boy gets a lift with the Angel of Death (V.5)</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A Traveller lad got a lift from the Angel of Death (V.6)</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>The black art was not always used for evil; three stories of Old Scary</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>A Traveller who was refused a drink</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>A goat that lied about its treatment was found out</b>	Supernatural	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>A wicked fairy made a baby into a hedgehurst</b>	Supernatural	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>A tree produced money</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte	1976
<b>Travellers believed that wicked people were working with the Devil</b>	Supernatural	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>Well-washers, also known as water kelpies, are spirits who keep water clean</b>	Supernatural	Info	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>A Traveller sleeping in a graveyard</b>	Supernatural	Story	Duncan Williamson	1976
<b>A family story about getting rid of a fairy changeling</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte	1977
<b>Belief in fairies amongst Travellers</b>	Supernatural	Info	Betsy Whyte	1977
<b>The Stewart family's experiences of premonitions</b>	Supernatural	Info	Belle Stewart	1977
<b>Traveller crossing a moor on Skye</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1978

<b>met a faceless ghost</b>				
<b>A man makes a pact with the Devil</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1978
<b>A man saves his soul from the Devil in a contest of wit</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1978
<b>A dead warlock possesses the body of a Traveller</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1978
<b>A man is saved from possession by a dead warlock V.2</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Travellers heard voices and laughter behind their tent</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1978
<b>A Traveller comes across a house that is not there on subsequent occasions</b>	Supernatural	Story	Belle Stewart: Alec Stewart	1978
<b>A minister found a talking skull</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1978
<b>Magog, the beautiful daughter of a moon king</b>	Supernatural	Story	Duncan Williamson	1978
<b>Lucifer was disappointed that he was not made ruler of earth</b>	Supernatural	Story	Duncan Williamson	1978
<b>The Devil's mother in Traveller mythology and as an insult</b>	Supernatural	Story	Duncan Williamson	1978
<b>When they were sheltering in an old kiln some Travellers saw the ghost of a local man</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1978
<b>Examples of Travellers' powers of premonition</b>	Supernatural	Info	John Stewart	1978
<b>An Irish Traveller had an uncanny experience</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1978
<b>A black bull appeared at a Travellers' camp site and disappeared into a ruined lodge</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1978
<b>A mute hunchback was turned into a swan</b>	Supernatural	Story	Duncan Williamson	1978
<b>One brother rescued the other; one got the reward and the other the princess</b>	Supernatural	Story	Duncan Williamson	1978
<b>A minister found a talking skull</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1978
<b>A blacksmith tries unsuccessfully to copy the cutting off of a</b>	Supernatural	Story	Duncan Williamson	1978

<b>woman's back-to-front head</b>				
<b>A woman finds a sheet which turns out to be a shroud</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1978
<b>A minister accepted an invitation from a speaking skull</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>A crippled tailor was able to walk after being chased by a ghost</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>The Devil can come in any form at Halloween</b>	Supernatural	Info	Duncan Williamson	1979
<b>Discussion of events replaying; a ghostly nurse</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A put-upon step-daughter was helped by the twelve seasons</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Travellers meet the ghost of a drowned man while pearl fishing</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>A Traveller accepted a bet to walk through a haunted wood</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Two stories of dead parents appearing protectively to their children</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>With the help of her sweetheart's mother, a girl tricked a laird of the black arts into a bottle</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Travellers' strange experiences at Belleek</b>	Supernatural	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>A Traveller girl saw a farm's broonie</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte	1979
<b>A prank by two Travellers in a camp backfires when their scarecrow comes to life</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>Belief in the Devil; Travellers avoid camping where the Devil has been seen</b>	Supernatural	Info	Duncan Williamson	1979
<b>A Traveller died after fighting with a bull that got bigger and bigger</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>A Traveller encountered a mysterious man</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bryce Whyte	1979

<b>A woman proved that witchcraft existed by causing a man to kill his own cow</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>A Traveller saw a huge black dog</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte: Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>Anecdote about a Traveller woman 'putting her eye into' something</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte: Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>A farmer with supernatural powers</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte: Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>The Lucky Woman of Rannoch</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte: Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>Most Travellers are very psychic</b>	Supernatural	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A Traveller lad who tried to frighten his friend</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte	1979
<b>The noise made by drunken Travellers</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte	1979
<b>An old Traveller and his wife are given three wishes</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte	1979
<b>Things that protect people from witchcraft</b>	Supernatural	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Some people believe the Devil is more powerful than God</b>	Supernatural	Info	Duncan Williamson	1979
<b>A Traveller family prosper through the gratitude of a brownie</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>How Rosehearty got its name</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>An encounter with a howling banshee in Glenisla</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Dressing up as a ghost backfires</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A Traveller lad is chased by a water kelpie</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Discussion of the Devil</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>The Laird of Skene tried to escape from his pact with the Devil</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A Traveller girl is protected during a storm</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A knight fell in love with a</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979

<b>beautiful voice</b>				
<b>A farmer with supernatural powers</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>A girl sees the ghost of a knight</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>Strange noises at a Traveller camp</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>A Traveller died after fighting with a bull</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>A Traveller slept in graveyards</b>	Supernatural	Story	Bryce Whyte	1979
<b>Story of the origin of the name Lumphanan</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A girl is courted by the Devil, loses a challenge to him, and is turned into stone</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A Traveller's wife sees a strange figure following them</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A mysterious bird appeared to a Traveller</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A man gave a lift to a girl, a ghost, and gave her his jacket</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Spaewives and witches</b>	Supernatural	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>A walking, talking doll moved by itself, seeking affection</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>The Devil, who lives inside Bennachie, makes a wager</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>Report of a conversation about UFOs and the Devil both being associated with the same places</b>	Supernatural	Info	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>A Traveller made a whistle that summoned him a fairy wife</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>A bishop of Aberdeen cursed a thief with a plague of rats</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>A man is given a protective parchment</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1980
<b>A Traveller who was pearl-fishing was nearly caught by a kelpie</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>A Traveller woman saw a ghost</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1981

<b>Two humpbacks added to a fairy song</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1981
<b>The ghost of a Saracen girl, murdered by a knight whom she followed home</b>	Supernatural	Info	Stanley Robertson	1982
<b>A Traveller child saw something on a haunted hill</b>	Supernatural	Story	Maggie Stewart	1982
<b>A magic bannock runs away but is caught and eaten by a frog</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1982
<b>A fairy man objects to the noise Travellers are making in a disused quarry</b>	Supernatural	Story	Maggie Stewart	1982
<b>A man is replaced by his evil shadow</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1982
<b>Jack beats the Laird of the Black Art at cards</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1984
<b>A Traveller tale about a piper blinded in a haunted castle</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1984
<b>A tale about the survival and triumph of a foundling girl sold to the Devil</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1984
<b>A beautiful but useless girl married a prince and lied</b>	Supernatural	Story	Stanley Robertson	1984
<b>Foundling Traveller boys broke a spell on a girl enchanted as a she-wolf</b>	Supernatural	Story	Betsy Whyte	1988

## 6. Burkers

Title	Theme	Genre	Name	Date
<b>Hawker escaped burkers' dog by hiding in stack.</b>	Burker	Story	Jock Higgins	1953
<b>Jock Higgins' father escaped from burkers.</b>	Burkers	Story	Jock Higgins	1953
<b>Travellers took trouble to be safe from burkers</b>	Burkers	Info	Belle Stewart	1953

<b>A boy sings a song to warn Travellers that they are in the hands of burkers</b>	Burkers	Song	Geordie Stewart	1954
<b>Description of burkers' coaches</b>	Burkers	Info	Maggie Stewart	1954
<b>An old Traveller couple taken by burkers</b>	Burkers	Info	Maggie Stewart	1954
<b>Description of burkers' coaches</b>	Burkers	Info	Maggie Stewart	1954
<b>Travellers are locked in a barn</b>	Burkers	Story	Maggie Stewart	1954
<b>A fellow Traveller on a lonely road</b>	Burkers	Info	Maggie Stewart	1954
<b>A boy sings a song to warn Travellers that they are in the hands of burkers</b>	Burkers	Song	Geordie Stewart	1954
<b>Travellers have a narrow escape from burkers</b>	Burkers	Story	John Stewart	1955
<b>A traveller taken by burkers</b>	Burkers	Info	Unknown	1955
<b>Burkers captured a baby and almost slit a woman's throat</b>	Burkers	Info	Bella Higgins	1955
<b>A woman hawker taken by burkers; bodysnatchers given a fright</b>	Burkers	Story	Davy Hutchison	1955
<b>A picaresque story of encounters with burkers.</b>	Burkers	Story	Jock Higgins	1956
<b>Traveller woman is rescued from burkers</b>	Burkers	Story	Alec Stewart	1969
<b>A narrow escape from burkers and their dogs</b>	Burkers	Story	Alec Stewart	1969
<b>The lingering fear of burkers amongst Travellers</b>	Burkers	Info	Betsy Whyte	1975
<b>A burker story about a man's ugliness</b>	Burkers	Story	Stanley Robertson	1978
<b>Two family stories of Travellers escaping from burkers</b>	Burkers	Story	Alec Stewart	1978

<b>The start of a burker story and discussion of burkers</b>	Burkers	Story	Belle Stewart: Alec Stewart	1978
<b>Explanation of burking; brief account of a burking incident</b>	Burkers	Info	John Stewart	1979
<b>Two family accounts of Travellers being attacked by burkers</b>	Burkers	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>A woman was murdered by burkers at Alyth Woods</b>	Burkers	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>Travellers' fear of burkers; discussion of evil and the Devil</b>	Burkers	Info	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Two stories of burkers being fought off</b>	Burkers	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>A woman was murdered by burkers</b>	Burkers	Story	John Stewart	1979
<b>A song in Cant warns a Traveller not to drink drugged tea</b>	Burkers	Song	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Two stories about Travellers escaping from burkers</b>	Burkers	Story	Stanley Robertson	1979
<b>Travellers mistake a courting couple's car for the legendary bloodsuckers</b>	Burkers	Story	Maggie Stewart	1982
<b>Travellers' fear of burkers</b>	Burkers	Info	Stanley Robertson: Betsy Whyte	1988

## Burker Motifs

Narrator	Precarity	Captivity	Anatomists	Red Hair	Intoxicant	Escape
<b>Sandy Stewart</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Jock Stewart</b>	✓	✓	✓			✓
<b>Geordie Stewart</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Davy Hutchinson</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Davie Donaldson</b>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
<b>Jess Smith</b>	✓	✓	✓			✓

## Appendix III – TAD Records Cited and/or Analysed

The below is a refined list of the narratives, oral histories, anecdotes and songs which are specifically cited and/or analysed during this thesis.

The list is organised alphabetically by the surname of the contributor.

Title	Contributor	Date	Track ID
<b>Aoidh na Dèan Cadal Idir</b>	Campbell, James	1973	86108
<b>A soldier got possession of a magic tinder-box and gained wealth and a princess</b>	Elliot, John	1956	14182
<b>Reminiscences of Travellers in Caithness before about 1918</b>	Forbes, Annie	1968	24874
<b>The Elfin Knight</b>	Higgins, Bella	1955	2327
<b>A family of Travellers sees a fairy in the Sma' Glen</b>	Higgins, Bella	1955	74642
<b>A woman hawker taken by burkers; bodysnatchers given a fright</b>	Hutchison, Davy	1955	74614
<b>Travelling people used to come to Tìree</b>	Kennedy, Hector	1971	50181
<b>Travelling people in Glenlivet</b>	Lamb, Adam	1956	3135
<b>Origin of the saying: Thoir bò gu ruige taigh mòr is iarraidh i don bhàthaich</b>	MacDonald, Norman	1953	8571
<b>Travellers came to Tìree every summer</b>	MacKenzie, Agnes	1971	51886
<b>Travellers' love of nature, expressed in poems and spirituality; family solidarity</b>	Robertson, Janet	1981	49824
<b>Names and reputations of Traveller families</b>	Robertson, Jeannie	1954	10279
<b>Cant words for groups of people</b>	Robertson, Jeannie	1954	10285
<b>Unlucky people to meet or mention; taboo names</b>	Robertson, Jeannie	1974	38906
<b>How Roseheartly got its name</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1979	64475
<b>Storytelling as a family activity</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1979	65165
<b>A song in Cant warns a Traveller not</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1979	65216

<b>to drink drugged tea</b>			
<b>The decline of Traveller traditions through intermarriage</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1979	67492
<b>A song in Cant warns a Traveller not to drink drugged tea</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1979	65216
<b>Report of a conversation about UFOs and the Devil both being associated with the same places</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1980	38128
<b>A Traveller couple's abandoned child grows up to be a judge</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1980	38131
<b>A Traveller couple's abandoned child grows up to be a judge</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1980	38131
<b>A Traveller made a whistle that summoned him a fairy wife</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1980	38224
<b>The Devil, who lives inside Bennachie, makes a wager</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1980	38124
<b>A man is given a protective parchment but can never find out what is written there; comments on inventive storytelling</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1980	38319
<b>William Robertson liked hawking, travelling was in his blood</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1981	42990
<b>William Robertson liked hawking, travelling was in his blood</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1981	42990
<b>The ghost of a Saracen girl, murdered by a knight whom she followed home</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1982	50127
<b>The place of stories in Stanley Robertson's upbringing</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1982	50189
<b>The place of stories in Stanley Robertson's upbringing</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1982	50189
<b>Stanley Robertson's experience of prejudice against Travellers, summer travelling and storytelling.</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1988	85439
<b>Travellers' fear of burkers; stories of escapes from burkers and other kidnappers</b>	Robertson, Stanley	1988	85577
<b>Discussion about Traveller family origins</b>	Stewart, Alec	1957	35360

<b>A baker accepts three pieces of good advice instead of pay, and is rewarded with riches</b>	Stewart, Andrew	1955	31634
<b>Story of Geordie MacPhee's treasure</b>	Stewart, Andrew	1955	13847
<b>It Happened at the Berry-Time</b>	Stewart, Belle	1977	74588
<b>Traveller handicrafts</b>	Stewart, Belle: Stewart, Alec	1972	100320
<b>The start of a burker story and discussion of burkers</b>	Stewart, Belle: Stewart, Alec	1978	55956
<b>A boy sings a song to warn Travellers that they are in the hands of burkers</b>	Stewart, Geordie	1954	3817
<b>Discussion on storytelling</b>	Stewart, Geordie	1983	81408
<b>A Traveller saw a real ghost</b>	Stewart, Jean	1960	56100
<b>Travellers have a narrow escape from burkers</b>	Stewart, John	1955	11474
<b>Travellers' ways of affirming the truth</b>	Stewart, John	1978	65889
<b>Traveller scrap merchant who bought the harbour</b>	Stewart, John	1978	67341
<b>Two family accounts of Travellers being attacked by burkers</b>	Stewart, John	1979	75777
<b>Storytelling around Travellers' campfires</b>	Stewart, John	1979	65775
<b>A Traveller saw the ghost of a murdered girl</b>	Stewart, Lucy	1960	22163
<b>A fellow Traveller on a lonely road</b>	Stewart, Maggie	1954	10224
<b>Travellers used cant words</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1973	76578
<b>The lingering fear of burkers amongst Travellers</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1975	77229
<b>The Traveller way of life has changed</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1975	76669
<b>A tree produced money</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1976	76412
<b>The contributor's schooldays and the persecution</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1976	39610
<b>A family story about getting rid of a fairy changeling</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1977	63936
<b>Traveller family nicknames, some based on animals</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1978	56424

<b>Traveller family nicknames, some based on animals</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1978	56424
<b>A Traveller girl saw a farm's broonie</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1979	63443
<b>The role of stories and storytelling in the Traveller community</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1985	82457
<b>Betsy Whyte answers questions about the Traveller lifestyle</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1985	82053
<b>Foundling Traveller boys broke a spell on a girl enchanted as a she-wolf</b>	Whyte, Betsy	1988	85496
<b>The impact on Betsy Whyte of her relationship with the SSS</b>	Whyte, Betsy: Whyte, Bryce	1978	64239
<b>A Traveller died after fighting with a bull</b>	Whyte, Bryce	1979	91089
<b>A prank by two Travellers in a camp backfires when their scarecrow comes to life</b>	Whyte, Bryce	1979	91083
<b>A rich American brings Travellers as his guests to a hotel that turned them away</b>	Williamson, Duncan	1976	36850
<b>A wicked fairy made a baby into a hedgehurst</b>	Williamson, Duncan	1976	36536
<b>Henwives often feature in Travellers' stories</b>	Williamson, Duncan	1976	30617
<b>Discussion of role of henwives in Traveller stories</b>	Williamson, Duncan	1976	36470
<b>Duncan Williamson heard many stories from Johnnie MacDonald</b>	Williamson, Duncan	1976	30610
<b>A goat that lied about its treatment was found out</b>	Williamson, Duncan	1976	36568
<b>A poor Traveller family found a lucky magic pot</b>	Williamson, Duncan	1977	33627
<b>Duncan Williamson can trace his ancestors back two hundred and fifty years</b>	Williamson, Duncan	1979	65494
<b>The Hawker's Lament</b>	Williamson, Duncan	1979	68649