

THE INVISIBLE THIRD.
THE BASQUE AND CELTIC WORDS FOR ‘SWALLOW’*

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ABSTRACT

In a keynote address at the XI. Fachtagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft, about possible non-Indo-European influence on the Celtic languages, Kim McCone drew attention to the similarity between the Insular Celtic, e.g. OIr *fannall*, W *gwennol*, and the Basque, i.e. *enara*, *ain(h)-ara*, words for ‘swallow’ (Lat *hirundo*). McCone reconstructs **waNālā* or **weNālā* as preforms for the Insular Celtic words, and **(w)aiNala* for Pre-Basque (McCone 2005, 408–9).¹ This suggestion looks very attractive and suggestive and, if correct, would shed rare light on prehistoric linguistic relationships in Western Europe. In this article, I will examine the equation more closely and add a number of observations.