‘Un-boarding’ the window *trom faca mi an àird an Iar*/ through which I saw the West: Excavating the Practices of Anne Campbell, Marnie Keltie, Moira MacLean, Mary Morrison and Ishbel Murray

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Abstract

This thesis provides a close examination of artists' Anne Campbell, Marnie Keltie, Moira MacLean, Mary Morrison and Ishbel Murray's work and practices from 2000-2022. Prior to this study, the artists in question were unresearched in academia. The paper's urge to highlight the artists' practice derives from their timely engagement with decolonisation. To best understand the decolonising processes in the artists' work, the paper proposes looking at them through a metaphorical lens: comparing the way the artists uncover stories from history to 'un-boarding' Sorley MacLean's boarded house gazing West (as described in MacLean's poem *Hallaig* from 1954). Then, the decolonising strategies deployed by each artist are unpacked through a postcolonial, loosely Bhabhanian, lens. The fruitful results of this application show the benefit of applying postcolonial theory to (disputedly) internal colonies and fringe nations.

The decolonising themes dealt with include discussions of (re)writing history, establishing the effects of Colonial Alienation, utilising mapping to discuss land issues in relation to Imperial intervention, reasserting the credibility of indigenous methods (both scientific and historical) and regaining indigenous autonomy. This paper looks at how the 'un-boarding' artists deconstruct representations of the Gael, representations which had roots in art made amidst the greatest Imperial intervention in the *Gàidhealtachd* – the Clearances of the 1800s. Critically, the paper also looks at how the artists went on to make radically hybrid, new representations of the *Gàidhealtachd* and its inhabitants - employing progressive temporal and spatial tools to do so.

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Introduction

Fig. 1: Abandoned Croft on Hallaig, Rasaay. © LoveExploring.

Fig. 2: Moira MacLean, At Work 'Raiding' the Abandoned Croft Houses for scraps of wallpaper which she calls 'Silent Witnesses.' © Moira MacLean.

In 1952, *Hallaig* was written by Sorley MacLean in testimony to the abandoned homes in the largest village on Raasay of the same name (see fig. 1 for an example), empty since the tenants were 'cleared' from 1852-4. Wrote Sorley MacLean:

"Tha bùird is tàirnean air an uinneig
trom faca mi an Àird an Iar/

The window is nailed and boarded
through which I saw the West".[1]

The cleared village of Hallaig was a small story in the wider epidemic of the Clearances of the nineteenth century, more accurately described in *Gàidhlig* as the *'Fuadaichean nan Gàidheal/* the banishment of the Gael,' which saw ordinary people of the *Gàidhealtachd* pushed from their land, left to assigned coastal towns or sent across the Atlantic. In 2006, on analysing artist Will Maclean's reference to those lines of poetry in his artwork *Inner Sounds*, professor of Scottish History of Art Murdo Macdonald devised a metaphor he saw as integral in outlining how to repair visualisations of the *Gàidhealtachd/* Highlands and what principles would lie at the core of such an endeavour.[2] [3] Over the next few years, Macdonald developed this idea, going on to curate an exhibition of art of the *Gàidhealtachd* (with the advocacy of The University of Dundee and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig) which he titled 'Window to the West' (in a nod to the poem *Hallaig* and to Will MacLean's reference of it). When discussing the title of his exhibition in a later publication, Macdonald wrote "From the perspective of the visual art of the Scottish Gàidhealtachd that window has been boarded for far too long. Our purpose is to help unboard it."[4] The 2000s saw a proliferation of women artists doing just that; interrogating the (Imperial) history of the Outer Hebrides through a pioneering practice of

[1] Sorley Maclean, trans. Sorley MacLean, "Hallaig" in *Hallaig agus Dàin Eile/ Hallaig and Other Poems* selected and introduced by Aonghas-Pàdraig Caimbeul and Aonghas MacNeacail (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2014), 119-121.
[2] Murdo Macdonald, "Art, Maps and Books: Visualising and Re-visualising the Highlands," in *Art, Maps and Books: Visualising and Re-visualising the Highlands*, Lie of the Land Conference, University of Stirling, 26-30 (2006). URL: https://murdomacdonald.wordpress.com/art-maps-and-books-visualising-and-re-visualising-the-highlands/.
[3] While Macdonald may have used the term 'Highlands,' here the Gaelic word *Gàidhealtachd* is used to emphasise that this particular thesis focuses upon the Gael and the *Gàidhlig* speaking heartlands. In doing so, the term reinforces that this study prioritises Culture and Ethnicity of the Gael over Geographical regions.
[4] Murdo Macdonald, "Unboarding Sorley's Window" in *Sealladh as ùr air ealain na gàidhealtachd: brÌgh eirsinn ann an dualchas nan gàidheal / Rethinking highland art: the visual significance of Gaelic culture*, Murdo Macdonald, Lesley Lindsay, Lorna J. Waite, Meg Bateman, eds., (Edinburgh: Royal Scottish Academy, 2013), 8.

'unboarding' that window, of 'excavating' what they found within.[5] Their practices can be considered 'excavating' in that they might best be described as both a literal and metaphorical 'unboarding' of the windows through which Sorley MacLean saw the West. In taking the same title as Macdonald did for his exhibition, this thesis intends to continue the pertinent task of 'unboarding' the blackhouse window and re-visualising images of the *Gàidhealtachd* through an analysis of those artists' work.

The image Sorley MacLean conjures of the empty, boarded blackhouse has become one of the most salient and symbolic representations in literature of the individuals and communities subjected to the *Fuadaichean.*[6] MacLean himself said that, "of course, I think the image in poetry is always, ought to be, symbol."[7] Envisioned as a symbol, it might be treated as such; as an apt metaphor to visualise the process the aforementioned contemporary artists take to unpack the history of the abandoned home and subsequently re-envision it. The symbol has much to offer by way of establishing a theoretical methodology whereby the metaphor of 'unboarding' can be used to analyse the artists' work. Firstly, 'unboarding,' as a verb, provides an apt metaphor for the *ongoing* process the artists take in continuing Macdonald's aim of reimagining visualisations of the *Gàidhealtachd* and emphasises an interest in the artists' practices, not just their work. Secondly, the symbolism of the 'boarded windows' suggests that the history of this house remains untouched within the hermetically sealed unit. The house has weathered history, in its continuance in the landscape it stands as a landmark of history, bearing a palimpsest of historical scarring. The artists' work can be seen as tearing down the boards of the sealed croft, uncovering histories which have been trapped within. With windows now open, daylight floods in and light is shed upon on the contents of the home's interior, allowing the artists to examine and reimagine the stories of those who once lived within. Investigating the personal stories connected to these interiors, the artists often focus on specific objects from the home. Those selected objects often become central to how they then form new representations of the Western Isles.

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[5] This paper will look at artists from, or currently working in, *Na h-Eileanan an Iar*/ the Western Isles given that *Gàidhlig* language skills there are possessed by 61.2% of the population (as opposed to 1.7% of the population of Scotland) and can consequently be viewed as the 'heart' of the *Gàidhealtachd.*

[6] The blackhouse being a traditional crofting cottage common to Ireland and the West of Scotland, the Taigh Dubh, as seen in figure. 1.

[7] Sorley MacLean quoted in *Sorley MacLean Poetry Reading* (1975) CCA Glasgow, https://vimeo.com/94141331

In a very literal excavation of fragments from the blackhouse, Moira MacLean describes her artistic process as "raiding" abandoned crofts. In such 'raids,' she descends upon empty dwellings across her native Lewis uncovering items of dwellers past (see fig. 2 for a photograph of her in action).[8] From these excavations, MacLean often extracts wallpaper scraps with which to incorporate into her work (see fig. 3 for reference to the scraps now inhabiting her studio, waiting to be pasted into collages). This 'raiding' often takes on a decolonising role: this ransacking of empty homes could easily be read as a subverting the violent manner the British Government and troops implemented to banish inhabitants from their homes.[9] The wallpaper also encapsulates the domestic sphere, a deliberate choice because women's stories are given primacy in her ouevre. Domestic and localised stories are also the locus of Marnie Keltie's work, an artist whose practice begins in a manner similar to the scavenging of MacLean's. Over on North Uist, Keltie can be seen scouring the beach; extracting and excavating objects and materials with human, and often women's, stories which become the departure point for her work and practice (see fig. 4).

[8] Moira MacLean, "About," *Moira MacLean.* Accessed: January 2020, URL: https://www.moiramaclean.net/about

[9] Across the *Gàidhealtachd* there were violent events when people were banished – these included the burning of houses, destruction of furniture and even seizing of cut peats from people left. Note that the Clearances manifested differently on each Island, as will come to the fore when looking at the artworks to come in this paper. For more information on The Clearances, see such staple texts as John Prebble, *The Highland Clearances* (London: Penguin Books, 1969; 1963), T.M Devine, *The Scottish Clearances, A History of the Dispossessed* (London: Penguin, 2019) and Alexander MacKenzie, *The History of the Highland Clearances* (Glasgow, P.J O'Callaghan 1914).

Fig. 3: Moira MacLean in her studio. © Moira MacLean.

Fig. 4: Marnie Keltie, Still from film Art is Not an Island, *2020, by AALERT. Dir Ewan Allinson. © AAlert.*

The benefits of viewing the artists' work through the lens of un-boarding the windows of Sorley's abandoned home is even more clear when looking at Ishbel Murray's excavation

process. She literally curates her collections of works to mimic the interior the blackhouse - thus illuminating lives lived in such a space. Just as the archaeologist will present her findings in a way which best describes the site excavated, in Murray's installation at the 'Astar' exhibition she presents her teacups on shelfs, resembling the way in which good china would have been presented on shelves or upon presses or the blackhouse dresser (see fig. 5). Anne Campbell expands the Un-Boarding process to look past the house but to the surrounding land its inhabitants would have worked. Imperial interventions on Highland land are explored in so much as they have affected the use of the *Gàidhlig* language in the area in question. For example, *Na Bughachan* from 2007/8 (see fig. 6) is an oil painting which describes her hometown of Bragar, in Lewis. The painting gives the local placenames for every little *bugha*/ bend or *linne*/ pool in the river - names now at risk of being forgotten due to the impact colonialism has had on the language. Mary Morrison's practice goes on to interrogate the colonial lexicon surrounding the situ of the House. In *Bridge II* (fig. 7). For example, she interrogates the longstanding effects of Imperial mapping and titling in her local Harris. In this work she (re)maps the area of Kyles of Scalpay with a specifically small frame of reference, refocusing the map onto the personal and small scale stories of the individual to map their interaction with the Imperial forces which affected the area.

Fig. 5: Installation shot from 'Astar: Glen Tolsta' (shown at An Lanntair) featuring Ishbel Murray's Conversational Fragments. *Porcelain on wood mounts, 2012.*

Fig. 6: Anne Campbell Na Bughachan, 2007-8. 61 x 61cm, Oil on Canvas. ©Mary Morrison

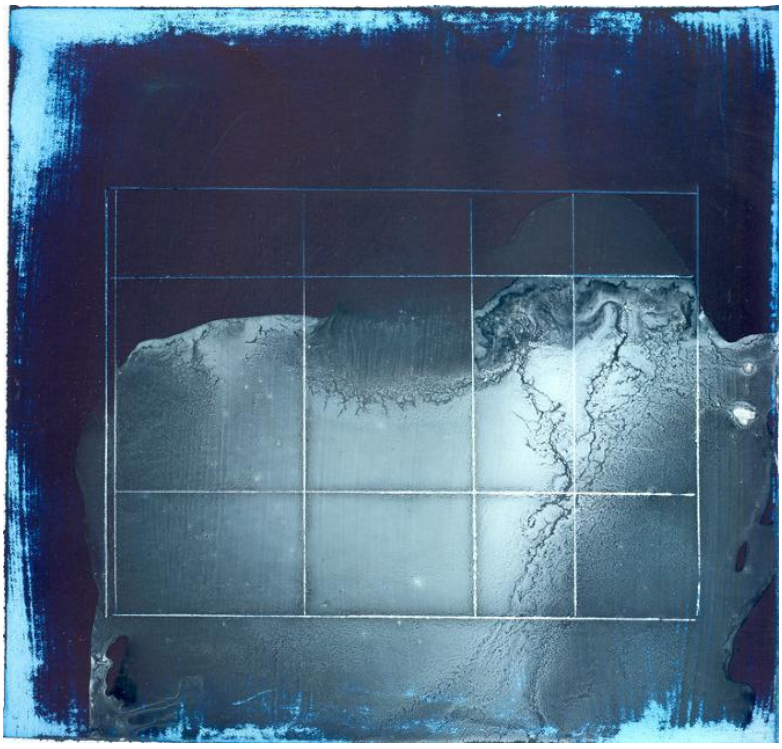

Fig. 7: Mary Morrison. Mapping. *41 x 41 cm, Oil on Paper. Private Collection. © Mary Morrison.*

Given the decolonising nature of these excavating processes, in analysing these artists' work and practices, this paper will (loosely – it will be explained why later) adopt a postcolonial lens. Whether or not the reader believes that either Scotland or the *Gàidhealtachd* was a site of internal colonisation – a highly contested topic of debate in academia just now- I wish to sidestep entering into this argument and simply show that the postcolonial approach is illuminating given the discursive themes of power imbalances that the artists' work addresses. (Even if the reader is determined that the *Gàidhealtachd* has not been colonised since the early modern period, the reader might at least be sympathetic to this paper's approach given that 'Improving' Estate managers and landlords referred to their estates in the *Gàidhlig* heartlands as "the new colon[ies]," and that there certainly existed a colonial imbalance of power within Imperial Britain under Empire).[10] Certainly, the events of the Clearances occurred within a colonial set of circumstances: in unearthing and investigating the interior of Sorley's boarded house, the five artists simultaneously address, and to different extents interrogate, the colonial theoretical and ideological framework through which such a humanitarian crisis as the clearances was permitted to occur. In Edward Said's model of Colonialism, the Imperial country controls (and utilises) representations of the colonised country through culture.[11] Likewise, 'Improvements' in the *Gàidhealtachd* were underpinned by a larger colonial framework whereby derivative representations of the Gael fostered a 'need' for a civilising/ improving mission. The (colonial) idea that 'civilization and progress' happened in Scotland only with Unification and 'Improvements' (i.e. Clearances) is an idea so widespread it was disseminated in children's school textbooks until at least the 1970s.[12]

Before discussing methodologies any further, a second might be taken to consider the positionality of myself, the writer, and to establish what right I have to analyse artworks pertaining from and discussing the *Gàidhealtachd* or postcolonial theory. The answer would be, not much, as a white woman from the North-East (of Scotland) and not a *Gàidhlig* speaker (though attempting to learn). As such, the following research is completely founded in ongoing artist led conversations and interviews, ensuring that the artists' work may directly

[10] Iain Mackinnon, "Colonialism and the Highland Clearances," 22-48 in *Northern Scotland* 8 no 1 (2017), 31.
[11] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994; 1993), xiii-xxxv.
[12] Michael Newton, *A Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World* (Dublin, Four Courts Press Ltd, 2000), 199.

speak for itself and is not paraphrased. IAs Iain MacPherson rightly notes, given that there is intergenerational trauma and fracturing within *Gàidhlig* speaking communities, and terse views towards the researcher, as an outsider researching one must approach ready to listen and approaching the subject with "le spèis do" - respect.[13] MacPherson does agree an outsider perspective can be useful, though always as long as said outsider is a mindful listener, which is what I have tried to be throughout the research process.[14] As Deirdre Smiles stresses, a researcher can ensure that they are neither extractive nor problematic in their collation of material by respecting the consent and viewpoints of the researched communities.[15] In order to be respectful and show my views are my own and rooted in my own positionality, I will use the personal pronoun in this paper. Afterall, considering Haraway's notion that one cannot be detached from one's surroundings at all, it is better to acknowledge the part one's positionality plays in shaping your world view.[16] Additionally, the personal pronoun also helps resist making 'objective' grandiose assertions, 'objectivity' being a lofty term afforded to the privileged.[17] My viewpoints are to be understood as specifically my own and not totalizing narratives.

To return to the narrative, this thesis paper builds on Murdo Macdonald's enterprises and similar (decolonising) enquiries such as that of *An Lanntair*, whose 'As an Fhearann/ From the Land: Clearance, Conflict and Crofting' exhibition of 1986 which was entirely dedicated to addressing how representations aided Imperial forces to declare the 'need' for such civilising missions in the *Gàidhealtachd*. It did so by exposing the myths made of Scottish [read Highland or *Gàidhlig*] culture at the time of Imperialism. Organised by *An Lanntair*, the exhibition deconstructed representations of the Gael in history by presenting a vast amassed collection of material. The collection drew attention to the differences in representation of the Gael by presenting stereotype pieces such as satirical cartoons from newspapers juxtaposed with portraits by various photographers (Margaret Fay Shaw and Gus Wylie to name but a few) over the last hundred years. The latter afford prestige, pride and personality to the

[13] Iain MacPherson, "Live Q&A" in *Exploring Multidisciplinary Approaches to Indigenous Methodologies, Lecture Series* (3rd June 2021).
[14] Ibid.
[15] Deirdre Smiles, "Keynote" for *Exploring Multidisciplinary Approaches to Indigenous Methodologies, Lecture Series* (10th May, 2021).
[16] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in *Feminist Studies, Inc*. 14 no. 3 (1988).
[17] Adrienne Rich, "A politics of Location," in *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985* (London: Virago Press, 1987), 215.

sitters. For instance, Gus Wylie's 1970s photograph of Murdo MacFarlane shows the 'great *Gàidhlig* supporter' sat with his head high in staunch defence of the *Gàidhlig* language's contemporary importance (see fig. 8). This is further reflected in the images from text on the wall he has chosen to be photographed in front of. The objects he is surrounded by reflect his title as the local 'bard,' poet but also respected truth teller and knowledgeable villager. Compare this to the *Poster for the 1982 film* Scotch Myths, directed by Murray Grigor, where the Gael is depicted garishly gormless (see fig. 9). Campbell, Murray, Keltie, Morrison and MacLean can all be seen building upon the exercise which these exhibitions began; that of unpacking and re-presenting representations of the Gael. This paper will analyse and expand upon their unpacking and excavating enquiries.

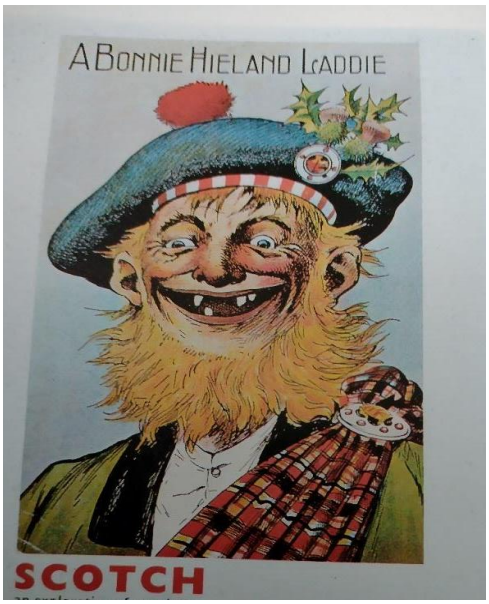

Fig. 8 (Left): Detail from Gus Wylie, Murchadh MacPharlain: The Melbost Bard, *c. 1970s.* © Gus Wylie.

Fig. 9 (Right): Detail from the Poster for the 1982 film Scotch Myths *Directed by Murray Grigor.* © As An Fhearann*/ From the Land Exhibition Catalogue.*[18]

[18] Malcolm MacLean and Christopher Carrell, eds. *As an Fhearann/ From the Land: Clearance, Conflict and Crofting A Century of Images of the Scottish Highlands* (Stornoway: An Lanntair, 1986), 58 and 76, respectively.

Given the unconfirmed position of the *Gàidhealtachd* as a colony, and given that postcolonial theory was crafted in circumstances, this paper will apply a loose, 'Bhabha-nian' postcolonial lens where appropriate. 'Loose' in the sense that elements of Homi Bhabha's theories might be plucked in so far as they are illuminating in regards to the artists' work, but given the difference in historical context, not all comparisons or parts of the theory are appropriate in the Un-Boarding endeavour. This thesis will serve as an example of how Bhabha's theory might be extended to analyse any set of artworks seeking to recover the voice and agency of the subaltern and find alternative articulations to monolithic Imperial representations. Certainly, one of the main themes of this paper is to highlight personal articulations of of subaltern voice, which are abundant in the personal stories the work of Campbell, Murray, MacLean, Morrison and Keltie. As Iain MacKinnon advises, a fuller picture of colonial relations in the *Gàidhealtachd* can be gleaned only by *conveying the perspective of the indigenous people*.[19] Subsequently, this paper will do just that, giving plenty of space for the artists' voice.

The process of 'un-boarding' takes a deconstructive approach, one which is particularly concerned with analysing nationhood and hierarchical Othering and binaries related to identity. Thus, Derrida's theories of Deconstruction (as initially set out in 1972 in *Positions*) can also be read as the schema used to delineate the 'un-boarding' process.[20] In *Positions*, Derrida was concerned with (dismantling) hierarchies of oppositions. This will be a theme throughout the entirety of the thesis. Derrida's was an enquiry whose heart was led by the impetus to "disarm the bombs… of identity that nation-states build to defend themselves against the stranger," about addressing power imbalances amongst nations and deconstructing processes of Othering – a theme of equal import to the artists discussed in this paper and its writer.[21] Could it be said that Woman, as a doubly Othered subject, has more determination to 'Write-Back' in a post-/colonial context? Is there a point at which postcolonial theory must intertwine with feminism in order to provide a full analysis? In analysing the exciting works and practices of Campbell, Keltie, MacLean, Morrison and Murray, it will also become

[19] Iain Mackinnon, "Colonialism and the Highland Clearances," 26.
[20] Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Continuum, 2004; 1972).
[21] Derrida quoted in John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997), 231.

evident to what extent feminist concerns are intertwined with theories of place, space and postcolonialism; and critical to the Un-Boarding process.

To deliver the perspective and response of Campbell, Keltie, MacLean, Morrison and Murray to the symbol of the *Boarded-House,* chapter one will examine, in great detail, their excavating practices surrounding it. This first chapter will analyse how the 'Un-Boarding' artists unpack the Imperial history affecting their locales. It will do so using a mostly comparative postcolonial approach which locates their work in relation to other postcolonial contexts and discursive themes. It will, however, never take a purely comparative approach as to do so would be limited, hence the emphasis on conveying the perspective of the indigenous person in response to specific historical events. The second chapter will look at how the artists tackle issues of representation; primarily, the house's symbolic position in the landscape. How this 'symbol' is written up, correlates with how *Gàidhlig* culture is represented in culture past and present. The social and political ramifications of these representations will then be unpacked. As will the artists' deconstructions of such representations. Of timely importance, the second chapter will end on a discussion of how representations and personal stories are now being given primacy in policy making by politicians. The first two chapters give the group of artists a thorough analysis of their work and practices. If these two chapters are significantly longer, this is in part because none of the artists have been critically examined in academia hitherto (as of the time of writing).

The third chapter is brief and will change tone slightly: it is concerned with reconciliation. It is more idealistic than analytic. The focus is not on a thorough unpacking of the artists' work but a practical application of their practices into a functioning objective: how to reclaim the Boarded House in 2022. How to conceive of its embodiment and repopulation. With this aim, the third chapter will first look at how, metaphorically and literally, the Boarded House can be repopulated by the work of these artists so that they can reclaim the space. In refilling it, I will look at what rules and devices would they deploy to fulfil Homi Bhabha's prophecy of being truly post-colonial, of carving a radical third space which is neither a return to the past

nor a conformation of the dominant culture.[22] To achieve this goal, it will be argued that the artists in question dispose of progressive time and spatial boundaries while creating a space which is diasporic in nature. Chapter three will briefly brainstorm how the metaphor of the house can serve to designate (a) room (in the house) in which to present this research as a means of giving back to the community discussed and ensure that the artists' voices are heard. Most excitingly of all, such a use of space would give room for discussion: to allow a cross pollination of ideas and for the artists themselves and their work the opportunity to develop in tandem and to grow.

The themes raised in the three chapters might be seen as particularly timely given the current political climate of 2022. With Brexit, Britain's departure from the European Union, prompted in part by a rise of fears around immigration and multiculturalism, British and Scottish nationalism and the 'stability' of British identity are worth reconsidering. Given the current conservative Government's stern immigration policy, any discussion touching on colonial scarring, the legacies of Empire and hierarchical racism is pertinent. After centuries of the central belt and further South differentiating the Gael as a 'barbaric Other,' the reopening of Holyrood in 1999 and the Scottish Independence referendum of 2014 spurred nationalistic propaganda which necessitated banners by which to differentiate itself as a separate entity to England - and relied upon *Gàidhlig* culture to do so.[23] Given the possibility of Brexit pushing another Scottish referendum - and therefore another wave of Scottish nationalistic propaganda - questions are raised concerning whether elements of *Gàidhlig* culture will once again be extracted out of context to suggest a 'homogenous' and 'unified' Highland and Lowland Scottish identity. The work of the Un-Boarding Artists will suggest a more protracted view of the communities within Scotland and then within Britain, destabilising overarching narratives of a homogenous people and instead celebrating difference.

[22] A fuller explanation of Bhahbha's radical postcolonial will be given in chapter two, as taken from Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*,Taylor & Francis Group, 2004. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gla/detail.action?docID=653022.

[23] Martin MacGregor and Dauvit Broun "Introduction," 1-6 *Mìorun Mòr nan Gall / 'The Great Ill Will of the Lowlander'? Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands, Medieval and Modern,* 1-6 Dauvit Broun and Martin MacGregor eds (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2009), 1-2.

Chapter 1: 'Un-Boarding'/ Interrogating

(Re)Writing History: Examining the Colonial Scars of the Clearances

"Who controls the past… controls the future;
who controls the present controls the past."
George Orwell.[24]

As they unpack the history of the symbol of the now-empty blackhouse, the Un-Boarding artists write-back against mainstream history, its mis-tellings and the absent stories. As is the case of Moira MacLean, whose work incorporates wallpaper segments from the domestic interior of the home, excavated from her raids of abandoned homes across Lewis - such as in her 2018 *Collages* (see fig. 10). She describes the fragments as "silent witnesses," having watched the lives lived within the now-boarded old blackhouses (used until the 1960s) or the deserted white-houses (left more recently when many young people travelled elsewhere to seek employment). Given that social history describes little about woman's history or the domestic life which went on within these spheres, her 'silent witnesses' become a testimony to all the stories they've 'witnessed' and which were never written down. She presents the various scraps - and all of the stories they allude to – across a flattened picture plane in an abstract form so that they conjure a sense of the vitality of the happenings which played out within the walls they once covered.

The village scenes have busy superficies and the surfaces whirr in colour in a manner that replicates the busy lives these fragments would have witnessed as literal flies on the wall of the house's history. Or her-story, given that they bore witness to a specifically domestic sphere. By choosing wallpaper, and not, say, a tool of work, to represent the lives of the crofters gone she specifically references the *woman* tending the hearth at the heart of the abandoned croft. This concern with 'woman' becomes further evident in the way she exaggerates what could be considered the 'feminine' aspects of the wallpaper in her collages; condensing floral patterns, exaggerating the pinks and 'fussy' Victorian details. The aphorism

[24] George Orwell, *1984* (London: Penguin, 1991; 1948), 44.

of Second Wave Feminism resonates: the Personal is Political.[25] Her work attempts to reconcile with lost or forgotten stories, those previously unappreciated by historans past.

Fig. 10: Moira MacLean, Collages*, 2018. Mixed Media. © Moira MacLean.*

Marnie Keltie also questions which types of histories have traditionally been valued by history books when she chooses to draw attention to the oral histories imparted by bards on her local North Uist, stories which retell North Uists history through a colonial lens. Her *Kelp Ink Wall Drawing* from 2012 (see fig. 11) is a large-scale mural featuring script drafted in homemade kelp ink. It relays, word for hand-painted word, a slice of oral history explaining the relationship between the Kelping Industry's demise and the Clearances on Uist. The story was told to her personally by her neighbour and renowned local intellect - a man she herself describes as a bard - Alasdair MacDonald – and regards a certain farmer Hugh MacDonald. Hugh had brought the Kelping Industry to the Hebrides in 1735 and he owned the seaweed rights to Ronaigh and Baleshare in North Uist. The industry was exceedingly profitable. By the mid nineteenth century, with Lord MacDonald earning some £20 000 a year from kelp alone in 1849 around which time the industry was described as being "like a goldmine."[26] Some seventy percent of the populations of the Uists and Bernera worked at least seasonally on the kelp farms at that point. However, the kelp price plummeted when Barilla, a cheaper alternative, could be imported from Spain. Consequently, in 1849, Lord MacDonald would evict some 1300 people from Uist as the kelping was no longer profitable to him, and profits were valued higher than people. The cruelty of this exploitation is reflected in the tale: Hugh

[25] As coined by Carol Hanisch in 1968, in her essay "The Personal is Political," *Notes from the second Year: Women's Liberation, Major Writings of the Radical Feminisms* (1970), 76-77.

[26] Eric Richards, *The Highland Clearances: People, Landlords and Rural Turmoil* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2008), 291.

MacDonald tricks the seasonal kelp worker in a symbolic horse and dog race so that he and his horse may win and keep the riches, killing the Skye man's dog to do so. By bringing this tale to our attention, the artist echoes the bardic tradition in Sorley MacLean's poetry whereby the *bàrd bhaile* [the village bard] created symbolic songs in reaction to the major events affecting the community.

If Sorley MacLean fulfilled the bardic role of transmitting the history of the clearances through the symbol of the lone houses stood on Hallaig, Keltie continues in the same vein. She peers into the past of the now cleared ruins on *Rònaigh/ the Isle of Rona* and re-tells the history for a wider audience. She adopts the bardic role, one which was a functional and integral part of the community in terms of story preservation - the bards being the *de facto* spokesmen and women for that community. She shows her respect to the traditional story-telling trajectory by faithfully retelling the story as an exact quotation, which shows reverence to the bard's original tale. In decolonising terms this is crucial as MacDonald's words differ vastly from, and therefore write-back against, the Imperial Narrative of 'Improving.' His words have resonance for the local community who will recall similar histories being passed down to them from within the family.

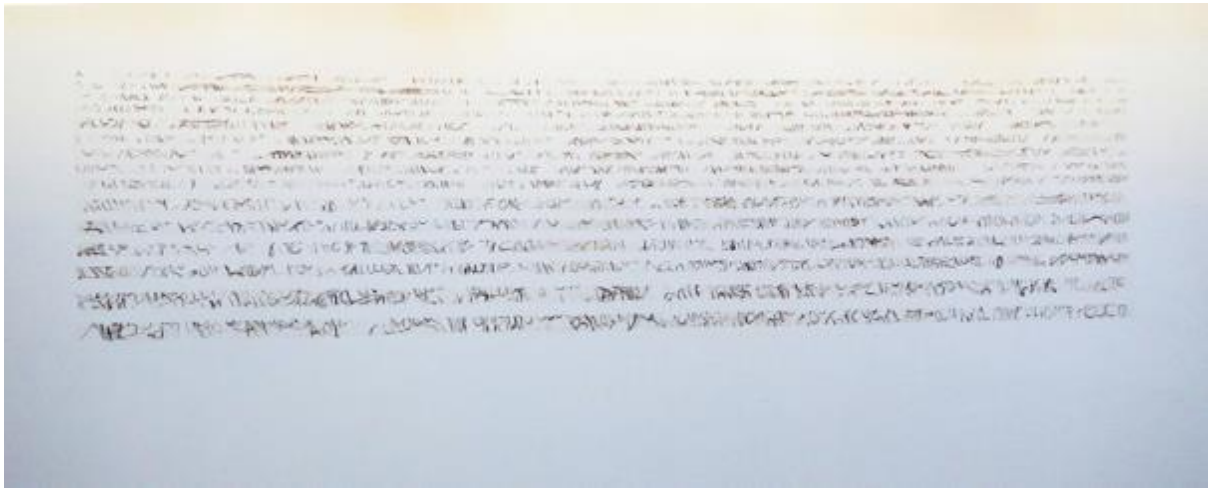

Fig. 11: Marnie Keltie, Kelp Ink Wall Drawing, *2012. Kelp Ink on Plaster. © Marnie Keltie*

By providing a full translation on her website in English of the *Gàidhlig* script, Keltie makes clear that her work is to serve a pedagogical purpose to a wider audience than just the local.

Evidently the aim was to disseminate Alasdair's tale to a broader audience, one which might not be aware of this 'other' history. Presenting the script in *Gàidhlig*, its original form, might seem antithetical to this aim but it was indeed a deliberate decision. Doing so honours the authority and culture of Alasdair MacDonald's voice. In allowing MacDonald's words to quite literally 'speak for themselves,' by writing them as they were told and not trying to create her own imagery or symbols from his words, Keltie allows the oral tradition to continue to function in the form it always has. The font is a highly elaborate flourish of calligraphy (see fig. 12), yet the artist herself admitted that calligraphy is not a skill she had hitherto cared for, nor cultivated, and that, consequently, the formation of the lettering was a brutal, painstaking process for her.[27] Yet one which she believed was crucial to the work's meaning; crucial to validating Alasdair's words. The rhythmic quality of the neatly notated script and the stylistic brushstrokes, which roundly carve the form of each character, ensure the voice of the orator is not lost but honoured: the rhythmic curls of each letter echo his measured, sonorous manner of speech, says Keltie.[28]

By *writing* an oral history, Keltie also draws attention to the fact that more credibility has historically been given to written history than its oral counterpart. Since historical record and learned orders in *Gàidhlig* were outlawed by the statutes of Iona in 1616, written English accounts have been the main stash of primary sources for historians. Only in the last hundred years have oral histories received more attention and become collected materials.[29] Keltie's work reinstates the authority of local systems of knowledge: by presenting the oral history in the format of an 'acceptable' form of knowledge – the written word. As such, the viewer is asked to consider *who* has customarily held the discursive authority to tell history. *Wall Drawing* challenges the colonialist attack on indigenous forms of record-keeping by highlighting the success the ongoing bardic tradition has had in passing down meticulously recorded stories within the community. If such methods have historically been considered backward or barbaric in the colonial imagination, she celebrates them as legitimate. This is cemented by the fact that the text of the mural occupies an enormous space on the wall, with Keltie giving it the scale, and therefore the reverence, which has traditionally been afforded to the history painting.

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[27] Keltie, interview with writer (online, December 2019).
[28] Ibid.
[29] Margaret Fay Shaw (1903-2004) and John Lorne Campbell (1906-1996) were among those first to acknowledge the wealth of primary resources in the Highlands and Islands in the early 21st century.

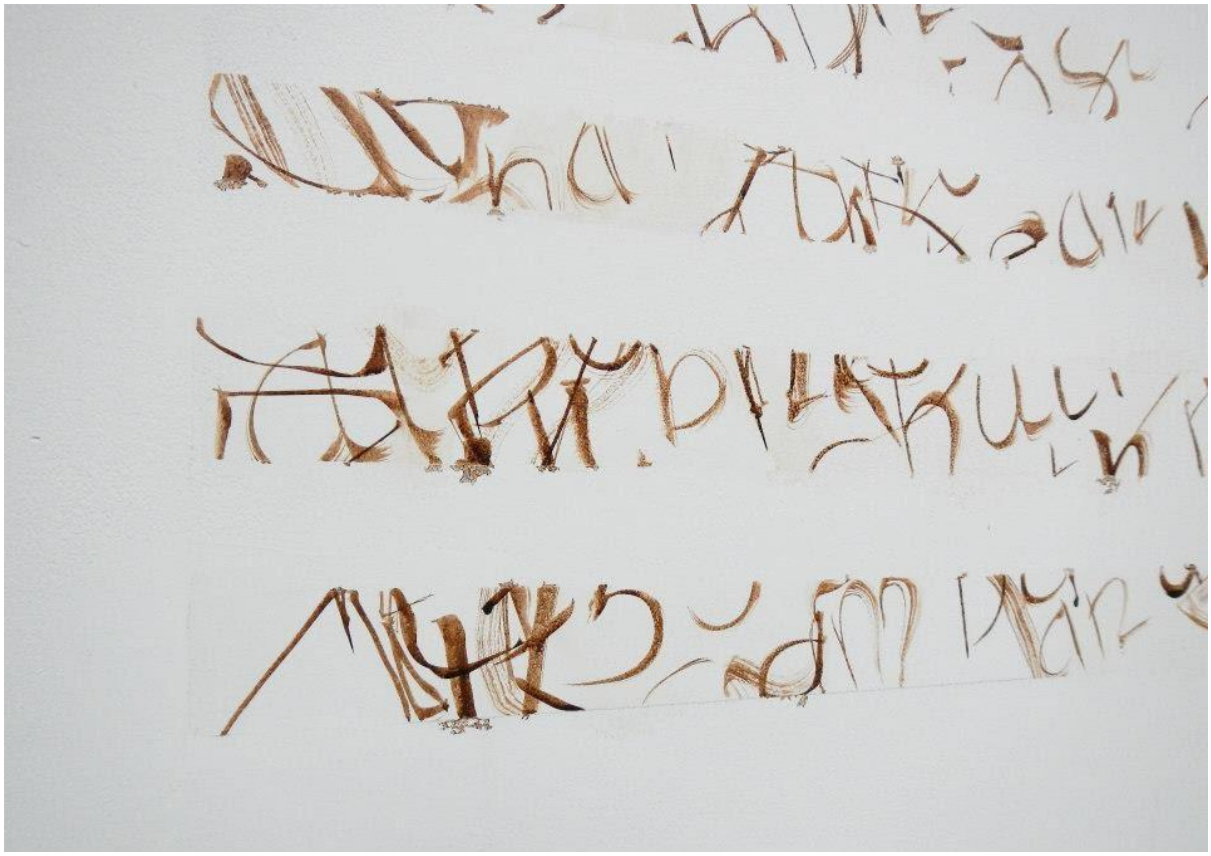

Fig. 12: Detail from Kelp Ink Wall Drawing.

Keltie might have chosen to directly quote MacDonald, as opposed to adding her own flourish of storytelling, because narratives themselves have always played a vital part in Imperial conquest. For this very reason, France and Britain have an unbroken and unparalleled novel tradition, notes Edward Said.[30] The stereotypes that the lowland Scottish papers purveyed in their narratives in the 1840s proved pivotal in allowing the atrocities of the Clearances and forced evictions to occur undeterred by public opinion. *Gaiseadh a' bhuntàta*/ The Potato Famine, which began in 1836, initially drew in much public empathy. However the public (or the urban masses) after the 1846 began to grow irritated towards Highlanders, deeming them as dependents of charity. Consequently, public opinion grew favourable towards the clearance.[31] From within the Islands, the decline of the clan system led to the anglicisation of clan chiefs, which was achieved by the 1609 Statutes of Iona

[30] Said, xxv.
[31] Eric Richards, 289.

imposing that all sons of chiefs be educated in the Lowlands if not further afield. This resulted in the new generations of landowners absorbing the ubiquitous metropolitan ideas of Enlightenment, racial hierarchies and 'Laissez faire' – the latter certainly influencing them to exploit property laws over land previously believed to be common.[32] This can be likened to the way the public grew angry towards the Irish deeming them to be shying from work and waiting for handouts from the generous mainland – see for instance a cartoon image (published in Punch Magazine) in 1846 showing the Irish 'doing nothing' and waiting for the kindly English Bull to hand them charity – a sign that they should find work via emigration (see fig. 13).[33] For Keltie, re-telling the story of the Clearances of Uist is critical to undoing the legacy such imperial representations of Gaels have had upon public opinion towards the culture of the Gael (something which will be discussed further in chapter two).

[32] Pressures were placed on Clan Chiefs to be educated in English by the Statutes of Iona of 1609 but arguably there was pressure on them to anglicise even prior to this, between 1596 and 1619. See J. Goodare, "The Statutes of Iona in Context" *Scottish Historical Review*, 77 (1998), 57.

[33] The comparison here to the Irish famine was felt appropriate as this image was made in the same year in which the crop failure existed in the Highlands, resulting in both Irish and Gaels to be treated in the same way: pushed into emigration on the same 'Coffin Ships,' ships with very low mortality rates.

Fig. 13: Richard Doyle, Union is Strength, *1846. Ink, copyright Punch Magazine. © Punch Magazine*

Keltie utilises the potency of *material* to make an affecting connection between the viewer and the narrative of her retelling of the Clearances. Her ink is made from local kelp; the materiality creating a tangible link to the story of the Kelping Industry, making it more accessible to a modern audience, which is arguably desensitised to imagery. Addressing the trope of the work-shy Gael (recall the Irishman in Doyle's cartoon), Keltie deploys a labour-intensive practice to reference the laborious slog undergone daily by the kelp workers. The ink is created by first scouring the beach for kelp, then dragging it back in loads, then boiling it at length and all the while tending to it. This is a nod to the larger scale process of the tedious labour of collecting and burning kelp for ashes - which whole families would have been involved in. Kelp workers acquired masses of the plant via hours of standing waist deep in the sea hacking at tough stalks, which were then hoisted in bulk onto ponies (or shoulders, if no ponies were owned) and hoisted down to the kilns or pits – where they had to be

attended to for up to eight hours.[34] Despite their hard labour, workers had no rights to the kelp themselves and could not use the plant to fertilise their own land.[35] Keltie tries to acknowledge all of this through the material choice.

Her choice to utilise materiality for decolonising purposes inserts Keltie into a wider trend of (decolonising) art in the *Gàidhealtachd* - Will Maclean, for example, often utilises material choices to best honour *Gàidhlig* communities and tell stories. His 1996 *Memorial Sculpture at Aignish* (see fig. 14) is part of a series of cairns memorialising those involved in the land agitations of the Crofters War in the late 19th century and marks the territory where the 1888 Land Uprising took place in Aignish in Lewis.[36] The Aignish cairn does not fulfil the traditional role of a public memorial, which would tend to glorify a person of high social status. Instead, it celebrates the rebellion of the local people in face of unjust treatment from the landlord and state. The Cairn is made of the very stones of the raiders' houses, thus ensuring their legacy lives on. The home stones provide a tangible link to the past thus imbuing the cairn with a very personal quality. Furthermore, Maclean employed local stone mason Jim Crawford to build it, guaranteeing that the work financially benefited the local economy and therefore didn't capitalise on their tragedy. The official opening of the cairn was hosted by John Mackay who was a son of one of the thirteen jailed raiders. That the opening day was attended by over six hundred people and included parades, flag bearers and pipers suggests the statue's presence on the Island was, and is, very much a significant and beloved one. The cairn re-writes the history of Lewis in a way which reflects the lives and experiences of the local community. It becomes, then, a source of local pride and talisman to the *Gàidhlig* history and culture. Both Moira MacLean's and Marnie Keltie's work can be seen as continuing in this trajectory.

[34] McIlwraith, "Island Echoes."
[35] Malcolm Gray, "The Kelp Industry in the High-Lands and Islands," *The Economic History Review*, 4, no. 2 (1951): 197-209. Accessed November 24, 2020. doi:10.2307/2599122.
[36] The riot at Aignish occurred after crofters were told they had two weeks to remove themselves and their stock or they would be driven out. Navy troops were drafted in from Stornoway to quash any resistance – and resistance there was. A team of raiders came to drive the cattle themselves, resulting in many being jailed.

Fig. 14: Will Maclean (built by Jim Crawford), Memorial Sculpture at Aignish, *1996. Aignish, Isle of Lewis (scene of the Land Uprising in 1888). © Will MacLean.*

Engaging in a similar appropriation of material in her practice of historical interrogation is Ishbel Murray. Her *Roll of Honour* Portrait Plates (see fig. 15) reimagine the objects which would have adorned the Blackhouse dresser, the sort that would have furnished Sorley's nineteenth century village homes in Hallaig or any of the abandoned crofts across Murray's local Lewis. The plates were fashioned for the 'Astar: Glen Tolsta' exhibition of 2012 and the aim of the exhibition was to spark a fresh connection with Glen Tolsta. 'The Glen' – an area whose first inhabitants only arrived in 1842; they were the displaced shepherds late from across the Island who had been relocated to the village of North Tolsta during or after the Clearances. The population soon grew to accommodate those evicted from the Park peninsula under the rule of Lord Seaforth (who saw more profit in sheep farming on Park land). "[A]lways 'The Glen' as if no other existed," reminisced Catriona Murray, on discussing the special relationship she developed with Glen Tolsta when making yearly visits as a child.[37] Those chosen to exhibit held very personal histories and relationships with the area. Murray

[37] Catriona Murray Quoted in *Astar: Glen Tolsta* (Glasgow: FARAM, 2012).

worked alongside Mairi Morrison and Anne Campbell; all three artists having familial ties to 'The Glen.' Tolsta is where Murray's mother's people are from, so for her the choice of material she is grappling with is very personal and holds a wider social and political history. Again, the personal is political.

Each of Murray's plates has been carefully hand painted with the portrait of a serviceman from The Glen. Barely more than boys, they wear their clean crisp navy uniforms before leaving to serve in World War II. In the installation for the 'Astar' exhibition (held at An Lanntair in 2012) there were twelve plates. All were wall mounted, in a row, taking up some three to four metres of space. The sheer length of the row and the space it occupied really impressed upon the viewer the scale of the population loss in the Glen after the war (and the loss of Lewis and more). The plates also make a socio-political comment on the loss of ways of life in the Glen after the war, which saw a shift in the way people lived and where. The men of the portraits were the last to be of Glen Tolsta born and raised. Murray's work, then, is a memento mori. She stops the work from being purely about loss, though, and makes it more about actively remembering and celebrating the men, by rendering the men's portraits in a vivacious cobalt blue. This brings the boys' images to life. In turn making their poignant personal histories vivid, and thus current, allowing us to see these young men as living human beings, with families and stories of their own.

Fig. 15: Ishbel Murray, "Roll of Honour" Portraits *for the Astar: Glen Tolsta exhibition, 2012. © Ishbel Murray.*

The plates are Chinese porcelain and adorned with a willow tree pattern – all of which has deep political implications. It connotes that behind the portraits of these young men there were dual colonising forces at play. The willow tree pattern references the endeavours of the

proprietor of the Isle of Lewis from 1843-78, Sir James Matheson, a Highland born (Lairg) gentry-man, who earned his fortune trading tea – and opium – in China with his partner in their combined firm 'Jardine, Matheson and Company Ltd.' Matheson bought the Isle of Lewis in its entirety in 1843 and it was under his and the continued rule of his wife, Lady Matheson, that some of the largest clearances of people and reduction in population occurred. Murray states that she hoped the piece would make the viewer re-consider Matheson in regards to his treatment of the locals of Lewis: he build the extravagant Lews Castle on his newly bought Island at a time when many Islanders, like those who moved to Glen Tolsta, struggled to find the resources to survive.[38] Across the rest of the *Gàidhealtachd*, many landowners benefitted from slavery derived wealth while many estates were sold to beneficiaries of slave derived wealth between 1790 and 1855 – the main period of evictions.[39] As Murray's work suggests, the story of Lewis – and the Highlands at large - is one of complex colonial relations, a story which requires unpacking and bringing into focus.

Murray's drawing attention to the multifaceted aspects of colonisation in Mattheson's rule is key in her project of writing back against benign views whereby even current institutions like *Undiscovered Scotland* describe the Matheson as "an enlightened landlord who invested heavily in the island and introduced a number of schemes to provide work and ease poverty."[40] While his 'poverty easing schemes' might have produced infrastructure which is still useful today, the colonial (hierarchical) lens through which he saw Gaels was highly problematic. The extent to which he viewed the indigenous people of Lewis as inferior to notions of Progress and Capital can be directly correlated to the backlash of *Na Gaisgich*/ the Land Struggles in the later half of the century. Such was the unrest amongst the small tenants, that within quick succession the people revolted against Matheson and his wife with the Bernera riot of 1874, the deer park raids of 1887 and the Aignish Riot of 1887.

Given the complexity of the situation, the tension introduced by the willow tree pattern on the plates encapsulates what Silke Stroh calls the 'Uneasy subject' of applying postcolonial studies to the *Gàidhealtachd.* Murray's work highlights the complexities in applying a

[38] Interview with the artist.
[39] Iain Mackinnon and Andrew Mackillop, "Plantation Slavery and Land Ownership in the West Highlands and Islands: Legacies and Lessons," *Land and the Common Good: A Discussion Paper Series on Land Reform in Scotland* (Community Land Scotland, 2020).
[40] *Undiscovered Scotland*, "Sir James Matheson." Accessed December 2020. URL: https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/usbiography/m/jamesmatheson.html

postcolonial theory to such an intricate situation in which the Gaels themselves could be colonisers, both at home and away. Murray's installation in the 'Astar' exhibition exemplifies this contradiction: the portrait plates are set with teacups in front of them – tea being one of the more overlooked relics of Empire yet one which is an intrinsic part of daily life for Brits, Scots and Gaels alike (see fig. 16). As Stroh wryly notes:

> "Gaels have often been uneasy subjects of the Scottish or British state, just as many anglophone Scots have been uneasy subjects of the British state. They have also occupied an uneasy position as both intra-British "colonised" and overseas colonisers. These ambivalences have also made the question of Scotland's post/coloniality an uneasy subject in academic and political discussion."[41]

In this context, the *Gàidhealtachd* is an intriguing subject for postcolonial investigation as it exhibits Imperial internal hierarchies and discursive patterns of Othering outwith simple binarisms of coloniser/ colonised. Discomfort is often fruitful, and embracing this uneasy subject and properly diagnosing the colonial power relation balances in the Western Isles can also greatly aid dealing with political contestations there today.

Fig. 16: Installation shot from Astar: Glen Tolsta featuring Ishbel Murray's 'Conversational Fragments.' © *Ishbel Murray.*

[41] Silke Stroh, *Uneasy Subjects: Postcolonialism and Scottish Gaelic Poetry* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011), 11.

A closer examination of internal racial hierarchies is critical in 2022. Firstly, acknowledgment of internal hierarchies of race proves the sheer instability of 'dichotomous' notions such as colonised/ coloniser. They are not two 'neat' or 'distinct' groups. Secondly, exerting that Gaels experience inter-white racism according to hierarchical notions of identity in the United Kingdom, and that this problem can be unpacked using postcolonial theory, proves that the theory can be used to unpack Uneasy Subjects of inter-white racism in other fringe contexts. For instance, Kalwant Bhopal proves that inter-white racism is ubiquitous in the United Kingdom. He elaborates in regard to traveller and gypsy children, who experience "overt" and often daily abuse which is perceived as 'permissible' because it is not understood as racism by the perpetrators.[42] Similarly, Chris Haylett looks at the phenomenon of being "not quite white enough – or not British *enough* [emphasis added]," whereby everyone from poor whites to whites pertaining from other parts of Europe all fall into a vast hierarchical system whereby they are regarded as more or less 'British.'[43] These ideas are crucial because they bring into question what 'Britishness' even is. Focusing on 'uneasy subjects' could be critical in destabilising ideas of a stable Britishness because, arguably, he who hs occupied the position of colonised and coloniser ought to be in a better position to help counteract current migration racism in Britain due to his awareness of both sides of the coin. Presumably, there ought to be a deeper sense of empathy and, critically, a deeper responsibility towards the 'Other.' Such awareness and experience could arguably be harnessed, and ought to be.

[42] Kalwant Bhopal "'What about us?' Gypsies, Travellers and White Racism in Secondary Schools in England," *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 21 no. 4 (2011): 315-329. URL https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2011.640520.
[43] Chris Haylett, "Illegitimate subjects? Abject Whites, Neoliberal Modernisation and Middle-Class Multiculturalism," *Environment and Planning D*: *Society and Space* 19 no. 3 (2001), 361.

Addressing Colonial Alienation: Decolonising the Mind of the Gael

"He who loses his language loses his world."

Iain Crichton Smith[44]

Colonial 'Othering' is a key topic the Un-Boarding Artists unpack in their work. Ideas of 'civilising missions' as justification for a colonisation of peoples coincided with the ubiquitous notion of "progress" in the colonial lexicon in the 1800s. Consequently, the word 'Progress' is held up for questioning in the oil painting of the same name by Ishbel Murray (see fig. 17). The painting is a cropped study of a fishing boat, alluding to the fishing industry of Lewis through its attention to implements of work like ropes and net. Comprising a central - and integral - part of the composition, the word 'progress' is written across the painting in large font as the name of the fishing boat. In positioning the noun with such centrality, Murray asks the viewer to consider the meaning such a loaded word holds in the context of the Western Isles. In asking this, she is highlighting the 'progressive' industries (such as fishing) Islanders were required to participate in once banished from their land and crofts. Historically, in the Imperial lexicon, 'progress' was defined by language. English was heralded as a symbol of enlightenment, the *Gàidhlig* equated with barbarism. Whether or not the reader will accept that the *Gàidhealtachd* can be described as an internal colony, inhabitants of the *Gàidhealtachd* were indisputably described using similar terminology to the colonies. The 'progressive and kindly' European powers 'nobly' sought to "regenerate materially and morally, races whose degradation and misfortune it is hard to realise."[45] It was similarly said of the Gaels that they were:

> "…[F]rom the cradles train'd up in Barbarity and Ignorance. Their very language is an everlasting Bar against all Instruction… Pains should be taken that all the

[44] Iain Crichton Smith "Shall Gaelic Die?" in *Towards the Human, Selected Essays* (Loanhead: MacDonald Publishers, 1986), 67.

[45] King of Belgium speaking of Belgian colonies amidst great Belgian expansion in Africa in 1897. Quoted in Laetitia Dujardin, *Ethics and Trade: Photography and the Colonial Exhibitions in Amsterdam, Antwerp and Brussels* (Amstrdam: Rijksmuseum, Niew Amsterdam, 2007), 39.
Anon., The Highland Complaint (Edinburgh, 1737) quoted in Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic Scotland: The transformation of a Culture Region* (1st ed.) (London: Routledge, 1988).

> inhabitants of this famous Isle should have but one language, and one Heart, one religion."[46]

The necessity this passage conveys in converting the entire population of the British Isles into English speakers reflects the politics of the time. There occurred from the eighteenth century onwards a trend to centralise the English language in the *Gàidhealtachd*, for the 'good' of its inhabitants (a similar trend occurring across colonial contexts worldwide).

Fig 17. Ishbel Murray, Progress, *c. 2009. Oil on canvas. © Ishbel Murray.*

The traumatic implications of this particular colonialist enterprise are made evident in the way Marnie Keltie uses the *Gàidhlig* language in her work *Beul-Aithris/ Oral History 1*, from 2013 (see fig. 18). *Beul-Aithris* is a mixed media canvas upon which there are semi-visible, semi-washed over lines of script in *Gàidhlig*, quoting another of Alasdair MacDonald's oral histories. The viewer can gauge Keltie's relationship to *Gàidhlig* from the clarity of the font –

[46] Quoted in Newton, 26.

or lack thereof. Individual letters erupt into elongated tendrils, the script takes on a ruin-like format and the text is almost illegible. Especially so when swashes of whitewash are doused across it – a tool which distances the viewer from the text by creating a literal barrier. This might convey to the viewer the uncanny sensation of being familiar with a language yet not comprehensive in it; close yet distant. This is not the only piece of Keltie's work which displays the *Gàidhlig* in this way – an intentional choice of style which references her familial language in which she is not actually conversant. She was not taught the *Gàidhlig* due to her family believing it was not progressive, choosing instead to raise their children in Edinburgh so that they might 'prosper.'[47]

[47] Keltie interview with writer (North Uist, November 2019).

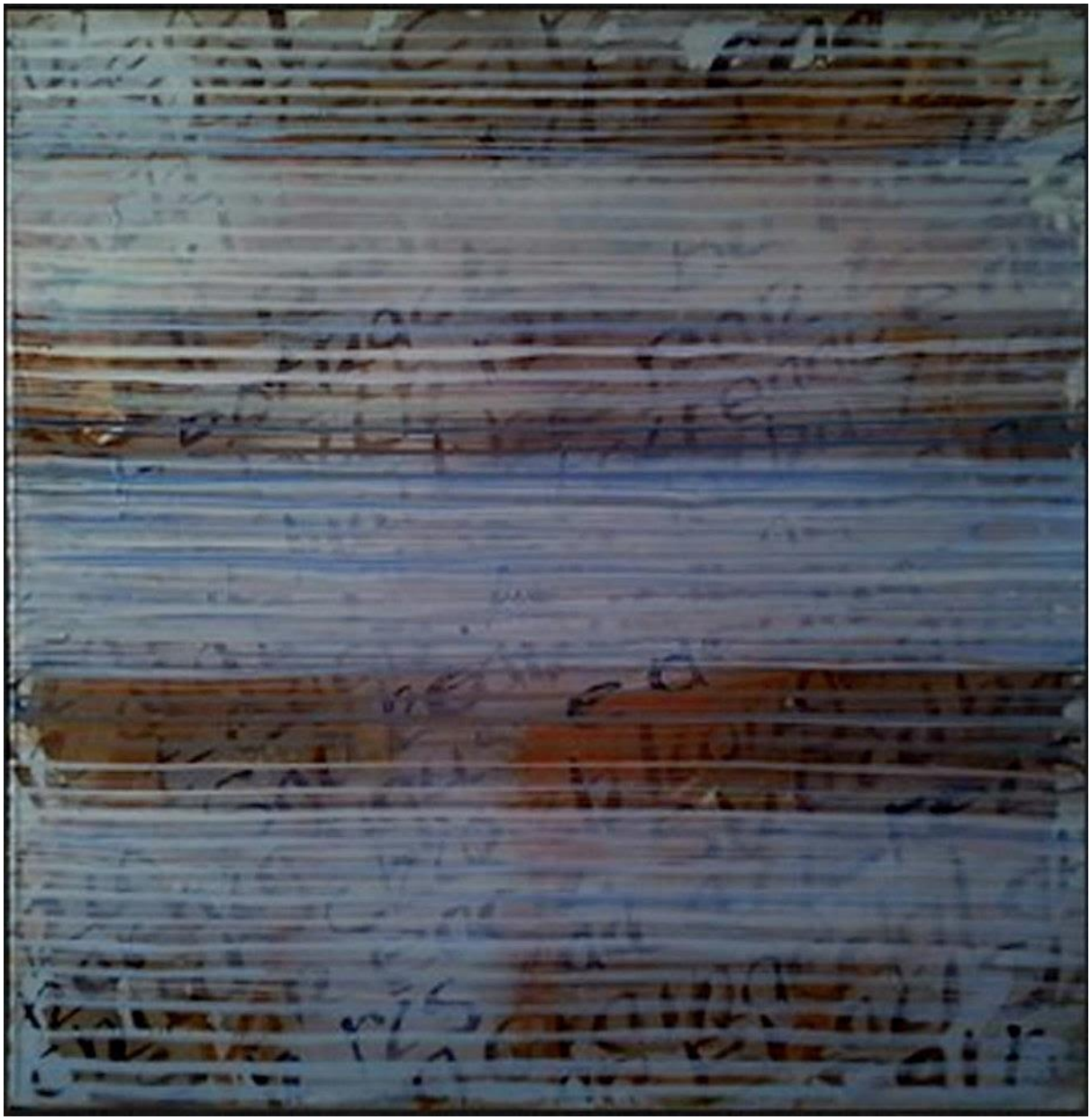

Fig. 18: Marnie Keltie, Beul-Aithris/ Oral History 1, *2013. Mixed Media. © Marnie Keltie.*

Choosing not to educate one's children in the familial language in favour of the colonial language is exemplary of what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o describes as the 'cultural bomb.'[48] Imperialism's greatest weapon, its bomb, Thiong'o despairs, is the potential to lessen any culture's confidence or belief in their own language. It makes the colonised, in his words, "see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and make them want to distance

[48] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Political Language in African Literature* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 3.

themselves from that wasteland."[49] This issue will resonate across the Celtic fringe, where Keltie's story of language estrangement is one of many. The cultural association of *Gàidhlig* with 'backwards-ness' and violence was a cultural hangover from the 1872 Education Act, which made English medium teaching mandatory across Scotland. It ended any *Gàidhlig* teaching even at primary level and, critically, conveyed to the public that *Gàidhlig* was not the language of learning and progression. If not implicitly understood from the act, the notion was beaten into youngsters in school by teachers who imposed the rule using corporeal violence. Even when the mandatory English facet of the law was repealed in 1918, *Gàidhlig* medium schooling did not reappear until the 1980s. Furthermore, corporeal violence was still implicated unto those speaking *Gàidhlig* in schools in the early twentieth century. All of these historical events are encapsulated in the personal story Iain MacKinnon tells of his own grandmother being maltreated in school for speaking her mother-tongue:

> "In my own family, when my maternal grandmother went to school on Skye in the early twentieth century she spoke only *Gàidhlig*. Although her teacher was a *Gàidhlig* speaker, he belted her and others in the class if he caught them speaking the language. Violence engendered a brokenness in our family's relationship to *Gàidhlig* which has fractured into the present day. It seems possible that stories such as these are fairly common in families, but have been repressed, as has been the case in other colonial contexts."[50]

The decolonising thread in Keltie's work can be seen by her need to address the brokenness MacKinnon describes at the hands of such corporeal violence, this fractured relationship to the *Gàidhlig* language. Her practice can be seen as one of reconciliation. Keltie's work becomes crucially important to the local community by disseminating these stories within the locale and further afield, disallowing them to be swept under the rug and creating awareness of what happened. As Iain Crichton Smith says, "he who loses his language loses his world," and Keltie's work speaks to the trauma of that loss when a child is severed from the familial tongue.[51]

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Iain MacKinnon, "Education and the colonisation of the Gàidhlig mind… 2," *Bella Caledonia*, 4th December 2019. URL: https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2019/12/04/education-and-the-colonisation-of-the-gaidhlig-mind-2/.

[51] Referenced in the epithet.

Keltie's work, then, connects the *Gàidhlig* experience of Cultural Imperialism to the work and practices of other artists exploring colonialism's impact upon minority languages. I think here of performance artist Rebecca Belmore describing how she sung the Canadian National anthem in French and then English while pulling a scarf around her neck like a noose to symbolise the effect that colonisation had on the Anishinaabe people and their language - and in particular on her family - with her mother not teaching her their familial language.[52] In the context of the *Gàidhealtachd*, it was believed that control of language was the best means of control of people, and as such the English language became a key weapon utilised in anglicising, and therefore controlling, the 'Barbaric Other of the North.' According to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in the early 1600s: "[t]he propagation of the English language appears to be a most effectual method of diffusing through these countries [parishes in *Gàidhlig* speaking Scotland] the advantages of religion and civil society. The erecting of new parishes, and the planting of schools, would be greatly conducive to this end."[53] The *Gàidhlig* was systematically pushed out; hence its decline in speakers. Similarly, and significantly, minority languages worldwide are declining at an astonishing rate worldwide, with 5% in danger of dying out.[54]

Why the 'cultural bomb' is such an urgent problem to address in 2022 is not only because of its legacy in the *Gàidhealtachd* or in other postcolonial contexts but because it is a political tool *still utilised* by ex-colonising countries to maintain neo-colonial power relations in geopolitics today. Language as a soft power tool has great political yield for neo-colonial powers, evidently, given that the French President Macron, in a time of Austerity, has recently invested millions into French medium schools in CFA countries, believing this to be the best way to ensure France's status as a world power in the decades to come. Similarly, The British Council still publishes papers as to why English language is a political tool, one which invites commerce and prosperity and as a soft power tool invites trust in UK citizens and policies. Joseph Nye, who has written extensively on soft power, notes that in our information age, soft power is actually more important than hard power because it is an

[52] Rebecca Belmore, "Global Feminisms: Rebecca Belmore," Talk at A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art Forum, Brooklyn Museum, 2007. Available on *YouTube.* URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhWkrHDZue4&t=702s&ab_channel=BrooklynMuseum.
[53] Quoted in Charles W J Withers, *Gaelic Scotland: The Transformation of a Culture Region* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 111.
[54] Springer "What protects Minority Languages from Extinction?" In *Science Daily*. (22 April, 2020) Accessed 05/05/2021. https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/04/200422112301.htm

effective and much cheaper investment than military might or financial aid. [55] The Arts form part of soft power in their display of a nation's strength - so the work of Keltie, Murray et al is, therefore, very much a subversive political act – one which speaks to the rights of minority languages.

Fig. 19: Ishbel Murray, Cho teth ri gaol seoladair *from 'Conversational Fragments' series, c.2012. © Ishbel Murray.*

Ishbel Murray's seemingly sweet and mundane teaset is a not-so-subtle political comment on the state of minority languages and their place in a modern world. Her 'Conversational Fragments' series (see figure 19, which is merely one example of a much larger set) seeks to repair the severing of the social and cultural worlds caused by being raised in a second language. This phenomenon Ngũgĩ describes as 'Colonial Alienation.'[56] Ngũgĩ observes that when the child's own culture is belittled, the child disassociates with the natural and social world; internalising narratives of their own culture as 'inferior.' Iain MacPherson talks of

[55] Joseph Nye "On Soft Power," Foreign Policy Association Extended Interviews, Produced by MacDara King 22 Feb 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_58v19OtIIg. Accessed 03/06/2021.
[56] Wa Thiong'o, 17.

such ‘ethno-linguistic gaslighting’ as evident in literature since at least the 1/700s.[57] He refers to the Skye writer Martin Martin, who joined the trend of the day to align his native tongue *Gàidhlig* to ‘erse,’ or ‘Irish,’ having internalised the notion of the day that his was ‘not a language of Scotland.’ Ishbel Murray writes back against ethno-linguistic alienation by insisting on the neccessity of her native language in her local area: her ‘Conversational Fragments’ series is a large selection of small white teacups, adorned with *Gàidhlig* proverbs coexisting with images of Hebridean landscapes. Murray’s cup-making can be seen as a practice of reconciliation whereby working *Gàidhlig* text into her work allows her to deal with the dislocation she felt as a daughter of *Gàidhlig* speaking parents in Lewis going through English medium education. Murray describes a phenomenon in such similar terms to Ngũgĩ when she says: “I think there was an alienation… *Gàidhlig* was something you were just taught, just a wee part of the day… It felt like a punishment; not something you used naturally.”[58] Like Ngũgĩ, she too describes ‘alienation’ in the jarring of social and cultural worlds.

Ngũgĩ’s antidote to Colonial Alienation was simply to proliferate art and literature in one’s own language. Murray has done this by making *Gàidhlig* texts the central focus of much of her artworks, and in particular this series of cups, each of which bears a different proverb. The cup, as a tea-drinking vessel of social ritual, symbolises the social position occupied by the *Gàidhlig* language in the twenty-first century in a mostly bilingual *Gàidhealtachd*: the language is declared inextricably linked to *communal* and *familial* practices. It is the primary language for use with friends, with family, in church service, within certain work domains and in certain entertainment and communal events. As such, it is the language of community; it symbolises and structures community identities.[59] Murray encapsulates how the language, like the setting down of a cup of tea before a guest, is an expected and necessary social custom, a social aid even without which there would be no social ritual. (It would be considered somewhat pretentious and uppity to speak English in the home).[60] If Murray went through a schooling system which did not support the *Gàidhlig* language, her work does the opposite by stressing its strong place in the twenty-first century.

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[57] MacPherson.
[58] Murray Interview with writer (online 3rd November 2020).
[59] Gordon McCoy Smith and Maolcholaim Scott “Intro: Gaelic Identities: Two Countries, Two Cultures?” in *Gaelic Identities/ Aithne na n Gael* ed. Gordon McCoy Smith and Maolcholaim Scott (Belfast: Queen’s University Belfast, 2000), 14.
[60] Ibid.

Murray made the cups available to anyone and everyone to buy (she said they were made with her students in mind), because they were priced at a reasonable sum and marketed to a wide audience on the online marketplace 'Etsy' (a crafter's trading website not just for those educated in the arts but used by the masses). As such, Murray's work supersedes simply *stating* the place of *Gàidhlig* in the *Gàidhealtachd* today but actually *facilitates* that position by being the object around which such conversations can actually begin. The cups can be used in the home to facilitate tea and conversation. She therefore successfully delivers Ngũgĩ's objective of proliferating culture in the 'Othered' language while encouraging the language use through the function of her art object. Her cups become active agents in the decolonisation of the mind of the Gael. They promote language revival and suggest that the revival must start in the home. This is certainly an idea which has directed the course of her life, considering she now works as a lecturer in Gaelic Medium Education in Glasgow with the intention of embracing, preserving, celebrating and sharing her mother tongue.

The specific use of proverbs in Murray's teacups deliberately stresses the idiosyncrasies which make each language special: the proverb can only exist within specific cultural contexts. In *Cho teth*, the proverb '*cho teth ri gaol seoladair'* is printed within the inner lip of the cup – to be seen while drinking from it – and translates as 'something which is extremely hot.' Or, in the (more entertaining) literal translation, 'as hot as a sailor's relationship.' Here we have lived experience, familial experience and humour (pointed towards the large fishing communities and sailors) tied together and presented as inextricable from the language. A poignant reminder that languages are so much more than just words. To repeat Iain Crichton Smith: he who loses his language loses his world. A language is a perspective, a worldview, the parameters through which we experience life. Language is often what makes cultures specific and this may be why she highlights humour, with humour often being location bound or rooted.

Murray treats her representation of the language with caution, though, given that there lies the possibility of representing the *Gàidhlig* language (even by its supporters) as nostalgic - and problematically, therefore, redundant. This possibility was evident by the reason the 1973 SNP Chairman gave for learning *Gàidhlig:* "as a symbolic representation of my being

Scottish."[61] His keeness to learn the language was undoubtedly taken on with good intentions, and likely reflects his political standing as a Scottish Nationalist (the more you feel 'scottish and not british' the more you support the language and vice versa). [62] Yet any relegating of the *Gàidhlig* to the realm of the symbol can be problematic. The implication that he might learn a language for symbolism alone suggests that he had little practical use for the language itself, which could reinforce harmful existing ideas of the language as dying. This creates a paradoxical state whereby the *Gàidhlig* language may be the 'quintessence of the Scottish people' but that it is stagnant; dying even.[63] In practice, this paradox means the tourist board might utilise the language in tokenistic slogans of 'ceud mille failte,' while not fully encouraging or initiating language tourism which could boost the language's status.[64]

Based upon the 1985 report from Dr Finlay MacLeod, *The Gaelic Arts: A Way Ahead,* the National Gaelic Arts Project was set up (now the Gaelic Arts Agency/ Pròiseact nan Ealan), which Malcolm MacLean (then arts development officer) says was committed to the promotion of arts *in synchronisation* with the promotion of the language.[65] Furthermore, all political parties in the Scottish Parliament, including labour and the liberal democrats who did not support Scottish Independence, unannimousl supported the 2005 Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act which set up a government agency, *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, with the task of promoting the use of the language. The *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* views the language as a symbol of unique-ness, as was evident when it declared 'the Gaelic language is a unique part of Scotland's national heritage.' The 2018-2023 National Gaelic Language Plan continues to support this. It can be concluded that the *Gàidhlig* language is considered a defining symbol of Scottish uniqueness (especially in nationalistic campaigns) and also a symbol which must

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[61] 1973 SNP Chairman quoted in Malcolm Chapman, *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1978), 12.

[62] Paterson, L, O'Hanlon, F, Ormston, R & Reid, S 2014, 'Public attitudes to Gaelic and the debate about Scottish autonomy', Regional & Federal Studies, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 429-450. https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2013.877449

[63] McCoy and Smith, "Intro" in *Gaelic Identities*, 12. This subject will be discussed further in chapter two.

[64] For instance, Gearóid Denvir proferred language tourism (as opposed to heritage tourism, for example, which he notes is problematic and destructive towards minority languages) as a means to boost the Irish language and this would be applicable to the *Gàidhealtachd* too. See: Gearóid Denvir, "The Linguistic Implications of Mass Tourism in Gaeltacht Areas," in *New Hibernia Review* 6 no.3 (2002): 23-43.

[65] Malolm MacLean, "Parallel Universes: Gaelic Arts Development in Scotland, 1985-2000" in Gaelic *Identities/ Aithne na nGael.* Edited by Gordon McCoy Smith and Maolcholaim Scott, 105-125. (Belfast: Queen's University Belfast, 2000), 109.

be represented with care, lest perpetuating problematic stereotypes. Murray's cups can be seen as a symbol of the language as integral to modern life and contemporary Island culture. The work fulfills MacLeod and Maclean's intentions of creating arts which support and promote language use.

The work of Anne Campbell is also intent on opening a conversation about the richness of the *Gàidhlig* language and what is at stake in its conservation. Her 'A-mach an Gleann/ A Known Wilderness' series, first exhibited at An Lanntair in 2007 and conceived with fellow artist Jon Macleod, aims to *celebrate* what she calls "the lost names of Bragar," Bragar being her local area in Lewis.[66] The aim of the series was "to document place names from the local moorland which had never been recorded on any map and [create an artwork for each]."[67] In short, the work was an act of resilience and one of cultural pride: to preserve and conserve the *Gàidhlig* naming tradition. Her recordings both parallel and predate similar academic pursuits of recording the local names and their accompanying stories (the journal of Scottish Name Studies emerged for this very purpose, though only in 2007). Placename databases are understood as an urgent requirement but, as I write in 2022, in the *Gàidhealtachd* databases have only been made of the Islands of Mull and Ulva. The reader might recall *Na Bughachan* (fig. 6) from the introduction of this paper, in which Campbell set out to record every name of every bend and every burn – showcasing the richly described minutiae of the *Gàidhlig* mapping scheme and how much there is at stake in this recording process.

Another piece from the series, *Tom Mhicni,* from 2006-2007 (see fig. 20), names, in map-like printed font, a small hillock which would not qualify to feature on any map for wont of value as a great landmark. To her family, though, it was of significance: it was remembered fondly by her father as he passed it on the way to his shieling for the summer. She affords this unassuming land-feature with printed, map like font and an entire canvas of its own – imbuing it with prestige. The layered oil paint in its opacity resembles a map's topographical key and contouring schema. *Tom Mhicni,* in its proud format, is a testament to community resilience and collective memory. Campbell celebrates the local naming system as an act of community spirit. Currently the small tuft of land is nameless; she reclaims it by giving it

[66] Anne Campbell "a-mach an glean: paintings," Gallery. URL: https://www.annecampbellart.co.uk/.
[67] Ibid.

back its name. There is a defiant, decolonising air to this process. The choice of thick, saturated oil paint for the series is also part of the reclaiming process. She uses cadmium yellow which shrieks against the deep crimson and swirls into fresh spring green, the richness of the opaque colours and tactile textures reflecting the richness of the language's vocabulary in describing the natural world.

Fig. 20: Anne Campbell, Tom Mhicni, *2006-2007. 61 x 61 cm, oil on canvas. © Anne Campbell.*

Her work is made with urgency, she says, as part of a larger cultural response to the sudden drop in numbers of *Gàidhlig* speakers in the last forty years. This sentiment of exigency is captured in Helen MacAlister's work *Census* (see fig. 21), which bluntly, and rather ominously, declares the number of *Gàidhlig* speakers left in 2006. The sparse frankness of font and delivery in MacAlister's work – cold black lines on a white canvas with no extraneous detailing - reflects the stark situation. The consensus widely provoked a general

belief that only radical action could make an impactful change on maintaining the language's status as a living one and it became clear to the authories that they had to do something for the language, or at least be seen to do so.[68] The consensus had, thankfully, put pressure on the Government to get involved. Unfortunately, only ever in lip-service, despite the effect 70s Gaelic language revival movement had. In 1981, a bill by SNP Donald Stewart allowing all institutions in the *Gàidhealtachd* to have legal protection of the language was talked down.

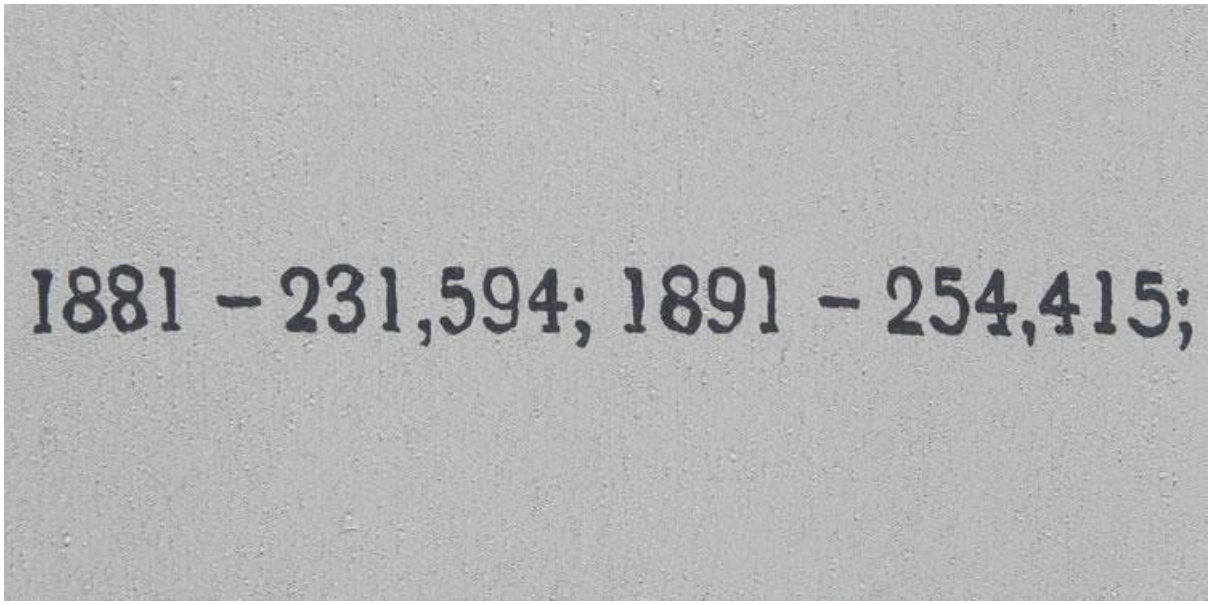

Fig. 21: Detail from Helen MacAlister, Census: The Number of Gaelic Speakers in Scotland, *2006. Oil on canvas, 148 x 150 cm. © Helen MacAlister.*

Campbell's 'A-mach an Glean' series encompasses the gravitas of MacAlister's Census with its series title 'lost names' but her individual works begin the task of remediating this situation by *preserving those names*. Campbell's urgency to preserve the local idioms seems ever more pertinent, given that she does so against the creeping negative opinion from some of the British population that the language is 'doomed.' An idea which is of course part and parcel of the Imperialist notion of progression, promulgated by 'Doomsday' press releases which regularly foresee the end of the era for *Gàidhlig* (and have been doing so for some fifty

[68] Maclom MacLean, "Parallel Universes: Gaelic Arts Development in Scotland, 1985-2000," in *Gaelic Identities/ Aithne na nGael* eds. Gordon McCoy Smith and Maolcholaim Scott, 105-125 (Belfast: Queen's University Belfast, 2000), 108.

years).[69] The same doomsday/ neo-colonial press bemoans acts of language conservation too, for instance begrudging funding being put into *Gàidhlig* medium services. Such was the sentiment of an article by Jenny Colgan who, as recently as 2003, resented the fact that *Gàidhlig* television receives broadcasting funding because the language is spoken as though the speaker 'has a pillow stuffed in their mouth,' even titling her article 'Gaelic Television is Shit' or "Tha Telebhisean Gaidhlig Cac."[70] MacKinnon goes as far as to say that cultural imperialism is now so "sedimented into public and private life in Scotland; it goes largely unquestioned," hence perhaps why such an article was even approved for publication in *The Guardian*.[71] The title of Campbell's series might at once appear polemical - 'lost names' – but this might be seen as intentionally polemical to draw attention to what could truly be lost if these names are not fought for. Campbell shows that this fight begins with taking pride in the *Gàidhlig* language.

Campbell's work also shows familiarity and alignment with activists for the *Gàidhlig* language. The hand scrawled place names and descriptions in her *An Talamh Briste* (see the detail from it in fig. 22), and other works in the 'A-Mach an Gleann' series, can be likened to the work of grassroots activists 'Ceartas' ('Justice'). In the detail of *An Talamh Briste,* the reader might note the faint turquoise wash of paint which is identifiable as a stream. Although an unnamed water source in the OS survey map, in *An Talamh Briste* the name is 'corrected' with a hand scrawled name upon it: *na Feadanan Gorma*/ the green streams. In her re-naming process, Campbell has referenced the process of grass-roots map correction. By taking the hand scrawled correction and typing it up in the corner of the map, it becomes an *official* title of the topographical feature. This process parallels the activist work of Ceartas, who, as a

[69] Doomsday titles such as: "Scots [sic] Gaelic Could Die Out Within a Decade: Study Finds" in *The Guardian* (by their Scottish Correspondent, Severin Carell, previous editor of *The Scotsman*, 2020), "Why No amount of Effort can now Stop Gaelic Turning into a Dead Language" in *The National* (by ex-Tory candidate Michael Fry, 2020) and "Gaelic Doomed as Speakers Die Out" in *The Independent* (by Robert Mendick, 2020).
URLS, Respectfully:
https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/02/scots-gaelic-could-die-out-within-a-decade-study-finds, , Accessed December 2020.
https://www.thenational.scot/news/18580251.no-amount-effort-can-now-stop-gaelic-turning-dead-language. Accessed December 2020.
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/gaelic-doomed-speakers-die-out-5369716.html. Accessed December 2020.
[70] Jenny Colgan, "Tha Telebhisean Gaidhlig Cac" in *The Guardian*, 2019.
[71] Iain MacKinnon, "Rights on the Margin of Existence," *Bella Caledonia*, 23rd May 2015. URL: https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2015/05/23/rights-on-the-margin-of-existence/.

collective, protested against the English (mis)spellings of *Gàidhlig* in the 1980s when Gaels fought for bilingual signs in Scotland. Those spelling mistakes began with the Nineteenth Century Ordinance Survey taking a lackadaisical, if not fully negligent approach, to name recording in which they wrote down *Gàidhlig* names in the phonetic English spelling. (The reader may note that their 'interesting' interpretations of both the *Gàidhlig* and old Norse are still present in road signs around Scotland).[72]

After the 1981 SNP bill was turned down (as mentioned earlier), *Ceartas* revolted with red paint; putting names into correct forms on road signs (with the hope that that their hand scrawled corrections would be made official). They also painted the slogan *Ceartas airson na Gàidhlig* (*Justice for Gaelic*) across roads. How did the authorities respond? The corrections were not made but the activists were penalised by the state. In the process though, they gained public attention and campaigned for their own rights to use *Gàidhlig* in the courts, which they won. In the case of the *Gàidhealtachd,* more often than not it has taken grassroots efforts to bring about change. For instance, the social and structural change necessary to gain *Gàidhlig* medium education was achieved through grasroots activism.[73] It was mainly the campaigning of Finlay Macleod which set up *Gàidhlig* playgroups. Campbell's work can be seen as continuing the trajectory of this grassroots activist approach. Her work is arguably her 'Justice for Gaelic.'

[72] The Ordinance Survey have stated they will update future editions when corrections of (misspelt) Gaelic are brought to their attention. Unfortunately, this comes a little as most name errors have by now become permanent fixtures.

[73] Certainly, to some it was a grassroots level push before anything else, as is suggested by Tormod Caimbeul in "The Politics of Gaelic Development in Scotland" 53-74 in Aithne nan Gael/ *Gaelic Identities*.

Fig. 22: Anne Campbell, An Talamh Briste (detail)*, 2006. Oil on canvas, 61 x 61 cm. © Anne Campbell.*

Re-Mapping: Map-Making as a Decolonising Tool which Reaffirms Indigenous Values and Aesthetics

"Birds' eyes see almost this, a tiny island...
But maps set margins.."
Alastair Reid.[74]

In Mary Morrison's *Road* (see fig. 23) and Anne Campbell's *Dealbh-Dùthcha* (see fig. 24) the two artists engage in a practice of (re)mapping to interrogate how Imperial powers asserted their influence over the *Gàidhealtachd* through map-making. As Finlay Macleod said of his gathering of material on (colonial) mapping of the Western Isles for the seminal exhibition *Togail Tìr: The Map of The Hebrides* (created by and premiered at An Lanntair in 1989), he hoped it would one day "become material for another art form."[75] In other words, he desired that the exhibition might be seen as a departure point for further interrogation of the subject. His words were almost a call to arms. In *Road,* Morrison heeds the call, investigating the colonial implications of mapmaking in Kyles Scalpay in the Harris, where she is from.

The canvas for *Road* focuses on a very small portion of Kyles of Scalpay; just the traced outlines of a croft, a few outbuildings, their fields and the road. By choosing the map as form, she references the historic trajectory of exploitative Island cartography: Imperial maps which dissected the Islands were made as an imperative post Culloden (1745) to assert dominance over Highland territories. Between 1799 and 1809, large scale estate maps were drawn up as part of the 'Improvements.' These maps detailed the land's topography and highlighted qualities which would attract potential landlords as buyers – qualities such as soil quality, field boundaries, what was farmed where, shelter belts, woods, placement of steadings and villages, the alignment of roads and construction of harbours and piers. Given the intention to

[74] Alastair Reid, "Directions for a Map," in Weathering (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1988), 6-7.
[75] Finlay Macleod, "Preface" in *Togail Tìr/ Marking Time: The Map of the Western Isles* ed. Finlay Macleod (Stornoway: Acair Ltd and An Lanntair Gallery, 1989), iii.

place sheep upon the land, crofts were not often marked onto imperial maps and where they did feature, they were often depicted as expendable and inanimate resources.[76]

Mapping has long been the prized tool of the coloniser, essential for colonial expeditions to exert control and authority over wild and unknown terrain and re-present the land as conquered. In *Road,* Morrison subverts the colonialist's favoured tool of control. In this work, and the rest of the maps in its vast series 'Mapping II – Croft Markings,' Morrison reclaims territory through her mark-making. This is because her mark-making *inverts* (and therefore subverts) the estate plan mapping method because *absent* lines define her cartography - highlighting that the harsh lines which imperial maps used to carve up areas for the conquest. This precludes the notion that maps often tell us more about history and the specific socio-political context in which they were made than they tell us about place itself.[77]

[76] Ibid.

[77] Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose "Introduction: Women's Colonial and Post Colonial Geographies," 1-25 in *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Post Colonial Geographies,* eds. Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (London: The Guilford Press, 1994), 14.

Fig. 23: Mary Morrison, Road, *2007-2009. 20 x 20 cm. Oil and collage on card. © Mary Morrison.*

If Imperial maps tell us what aspects of the land were important to Improvers, Morrison's 'Croft Markings' series suggests what mattered to the crofters themselves. She highlights topographical features such as the coast and the machair, homes, outbuildings, fields, the roads and bridges which allowed exit and entry to those homes and outbuildings and meteorological data - such as storms - which dictated daily life. The text which trails down the road in the centre of the composition reads "'S tha 'n òigridh rinn i àr – ach 'Nan suain 's an Fhraing fo'n fhòid," which translates loosely as 'and the youths which she raised are in their slumber under the earth in France' - referencing the sheer numbers of young men from the region who were lost to the First World War. (More Highlanders were lost per capita than any other region in the United Kingdom). The term expressing 'youths,' 'òigridh.' can also mean 'land' – suggesting that with the loss of young men came the loss of the way the land was used before 1914, what with the Islands' populations dropping post War.

By re-organising of territorial spacing to present the themes closest to her community's heart, Morrison's work is aligned with Community and Indigenous mapping of the 1990s onwards.[78] As well as employing cartographic tactics for empowering the community, Indigenous mapping places emphasis on how the indigenous person can retort against the broader political ramifications of colonialism. Morrison examines the broader relations of power across Lewis and Harris' history through her two series titled 'Mapping.' One work from the two part series titled *Seaforth I* develops works like *Road* by showing that land and the interests of the people were always defined in relation to the will of the Estate holders (see fig. 24). This is implied in the title *Seaforth I,* referring to Francis MacKenzie who attained the position of the Earl of Seaforth, proprietor of Lewis and Harris, in 1783. The political ramifications of his actions as Estate holder are called into question by other titles in the series, such as *Boundary* and *Territory,* which refer to the geographical ownership and exclusion Seaforth exerted over the land which had previously been unowned.

The *Seaforth I* map presents the area of the Park in Lewis, an area of lochs - one of which named is after Seaforth – whose influence was twofold. When offered double rent in Kintail for turning out local inhabitants he is quoted saying "he would not turn out his people for any consideration," modelling himself as the traditional and loyal Clan Chief. Yet while he was proprietor many clearances occurred, such as the Loch Shell Clearances of 1843, of which he was made aware.[79] Seaforth was also a plantation and slave owner in Guiana, and the map's ambiguous description of the man (he is referred to only in so much as he impacted upon land policy) implies a tension in understanding these Uneasy Subjects. Currently, the area has successfully experienced a community buyout. By choosing mapping as an artistic device, Morrison stresses that social and political issues are rooted in Geopolitics: in the land and its ownership, then and now.

[78] Joe Bryan, "Walking The Line: Participatory Mapping, Indigenous Rights, and Neolibrealism" in *Geoforum* 42 no. 1 (2011): 40-50.
[79] Finlay McKichan, *Lord Seaforth: Highland Landowner and Caribbean Governor* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

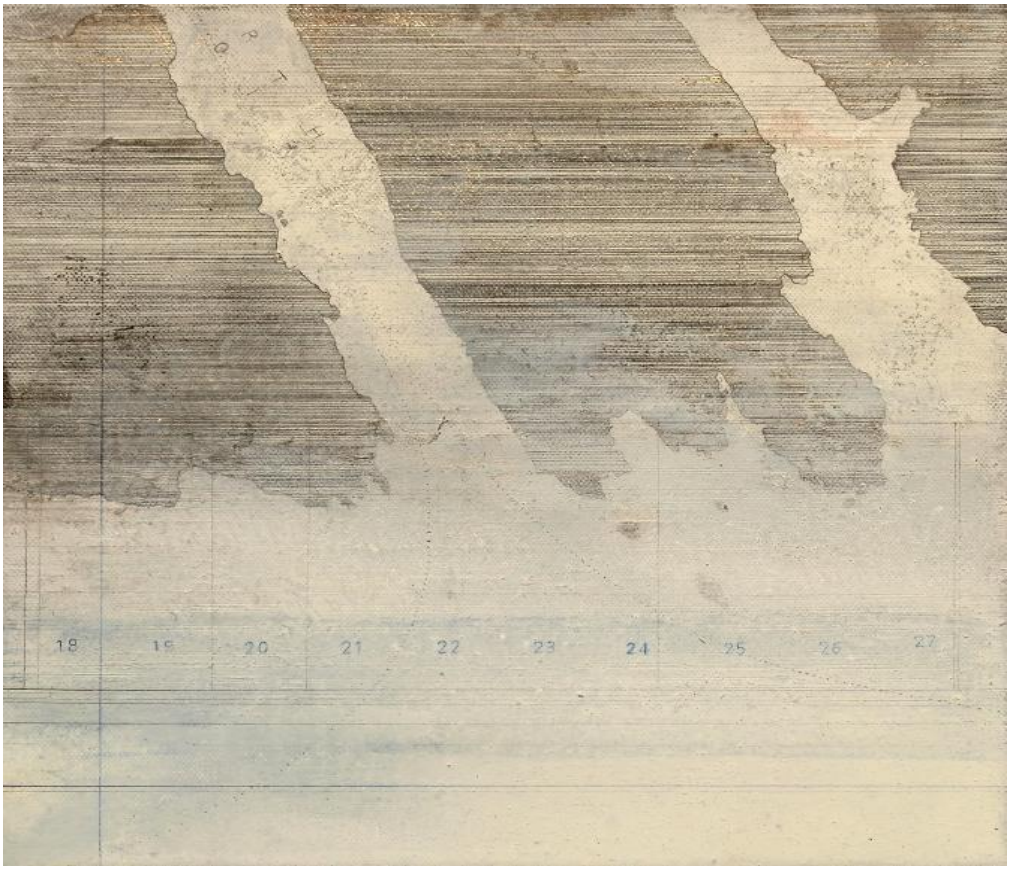

Fig. 24: Mary Morrison, Seaforth I, *2010-15. Mixed Media on Canvas, 30 x 30cm. © Mary Morrison.*

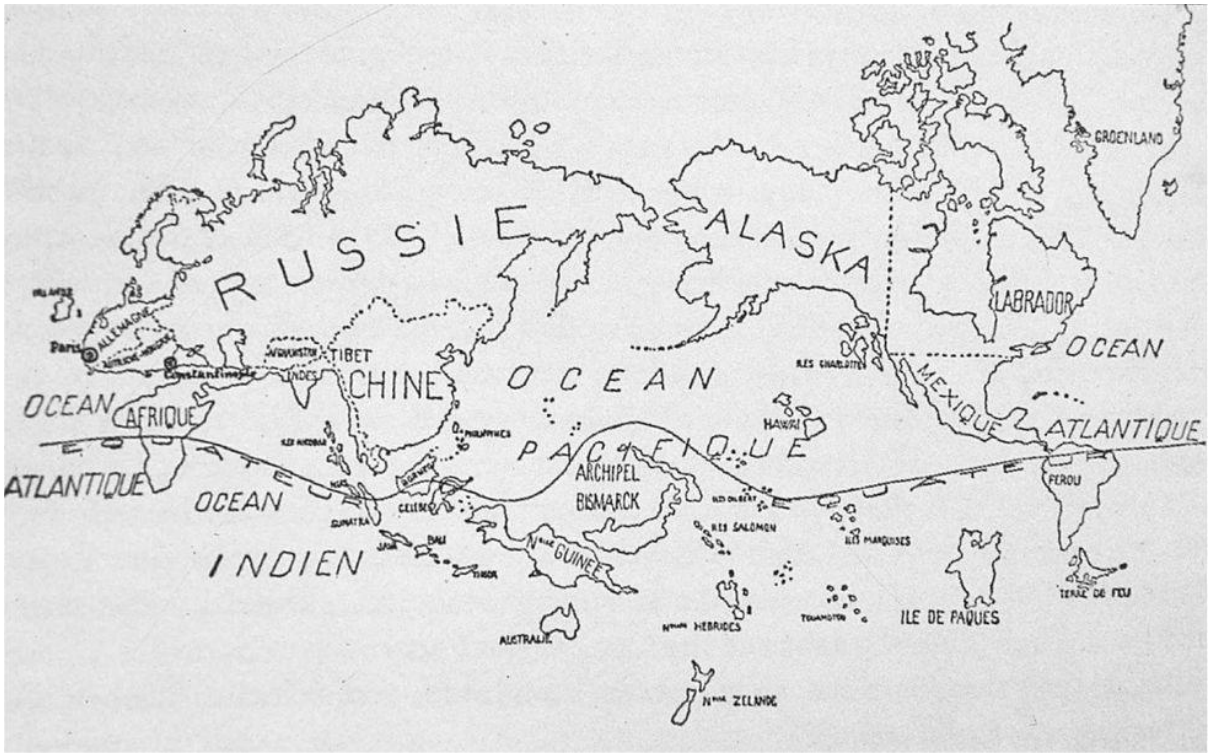

Fig. 25: Surrealist map of the world. *From Varieties, Brussels, June 19 and copyright of Denis Wood* The Power of Maps, *p 183. © Varieties Magazine.*

Morrison further indicates that Geopolitics not only dictate the social and political concerns of an area's inhabitants but that they establish mental conceptions of who and what becomes marginalised. Her *Centre-Periphery* from 2013-2019 (see fig. 26) allocates the 'centre' of the map through a target-like series of rings, drawing the focus of the canvas to an abstract area which shows no reason to be singled out. In doing so, she suggests the arbitrary nature of defining centres (and margins) of maps. Just as the Mercator projection purports cartographic imperialism in its placing of Britain at the centre of the world map, Morrison can be seen questioning which landmarks maps choose to make central in her choice to centre a seemingly non-descript area. By making this criticism she inserts herself into an existing thread of For instance, the Surrealists first challenged the perspective of the Mercator map (see fig. 16), twenty years before Gall Peter the academic officially did in 1940s. For the surrealists, the centre of the map is no longer London but the long-colonised Pacific Ocean, which looms large. As the poem by Alastair Reid *Directions for a Map* warns, "Maps set margins," they define who is the centre of importance and who is at the periphery.[80] Morrison asks the viewer whether projection and scale are ever really determined, are they ever truly objective and must they pretend to be so?

[80] Reid, 6-7.

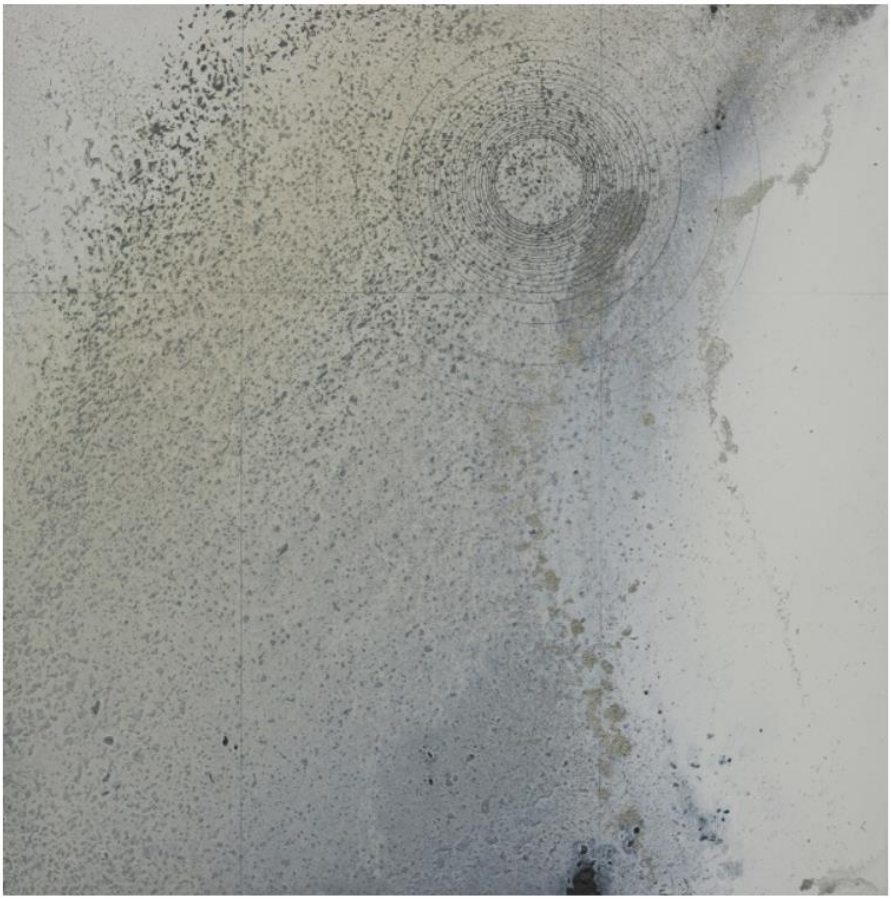

Fig 26: Mary Morrison, Centre-Periphery, *2013-2019. Oil and mixed media on canvas, 61 x 61 cm. © Mary Morrison.*

Morrison manipulates materiality to emphasise the fact that maps and their centres are not as 'objective' as they claim to be, and instead are authored by a subject who will inevitably have his own agenda and political viewpoints. To highlight that no map is objective, she makes her map highly subjective: the ethereal blurring and blotting of the fluid background creates an emotionally charged, and somewhat abstracted background, to her markings. Abstraction as an artistic movement is typically associated with dense subjectivity and the unique autography of the artist - so this is in part about stressing her own positionality. The ambivalence in texture this creates suggests the impossibility of the colonial mapping method, whereby to catalogue was to conquer, because complex and ambivalent textures deny the map being fully comprehensive. Thus, her work is suggesting that no land can be truly 'known' or 'owned.' She destabilises the tools of Empire which connote infallibility and highlights the non-scientific but artistic nature of cartography - an art form like any other.

Morrison's (re)mapping follows a similar logic to that of artists working in other post-colonial contexts. Kathy Prendergast uses mapping, like Morrison, to discuss the intention of maps to establish order over a threatening 'Other.' This is evident in her 'Body Maps Series' of 1983 where functioning feats of engineering are mapped across the terrain of a woman's body. For instance, in *To Alter A Landscape* (see fig. 27), a drill attempts to find a well in a deserted part of the female anatomy. This map mocks the notion that for the white male, the woman who remains a 'mystery' can be 'known' through objective, scientific scrutiny. *To Alter A Landscape* also mocks how powers of Empire treated Irish land as terrain which could be mapped and conquered. The work problematises notions of the Irish landscape which have colonial roots, because notions of women's identities are tied up in them as the rural and feminine uphold nationalistic rhetoric of Irish landscape and its women as 'pure.'[81] Prendergast, just like Morrison, shows how an alternative conception of space undermines longstanding cartographic 'fundamentals' originating in colonial power structures.

[81] Catherine Nash, "Remapping the Body/ Land: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender and Landscape in Ireland," *Feminist Review* 44 (1993): 39-57.

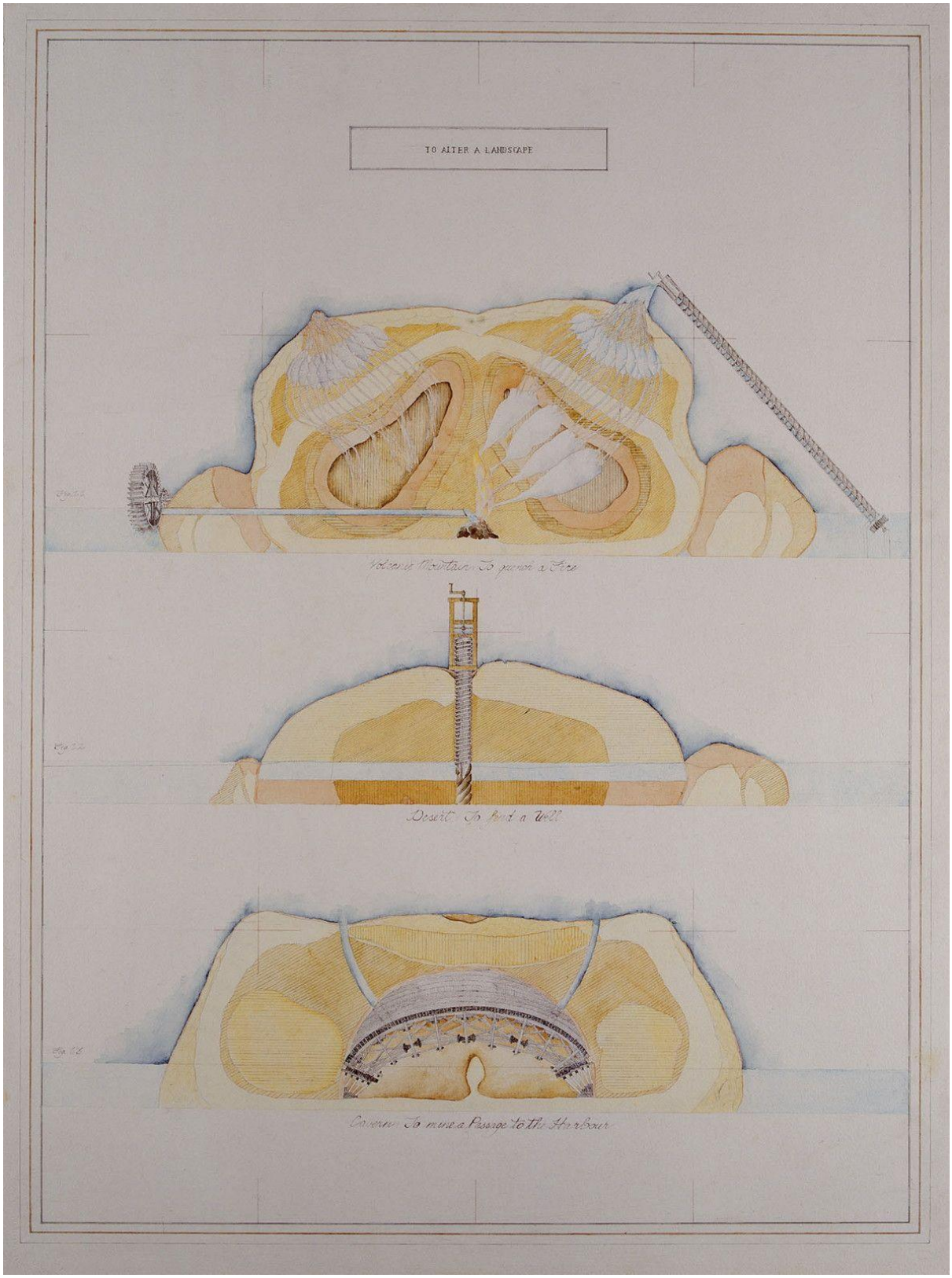

Fig. 27: Kathy Prendergast, To Alter a Landscape, *1983. Mixed media on paper, Dimensions not stated. Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin. © Kathy Prendergast.*

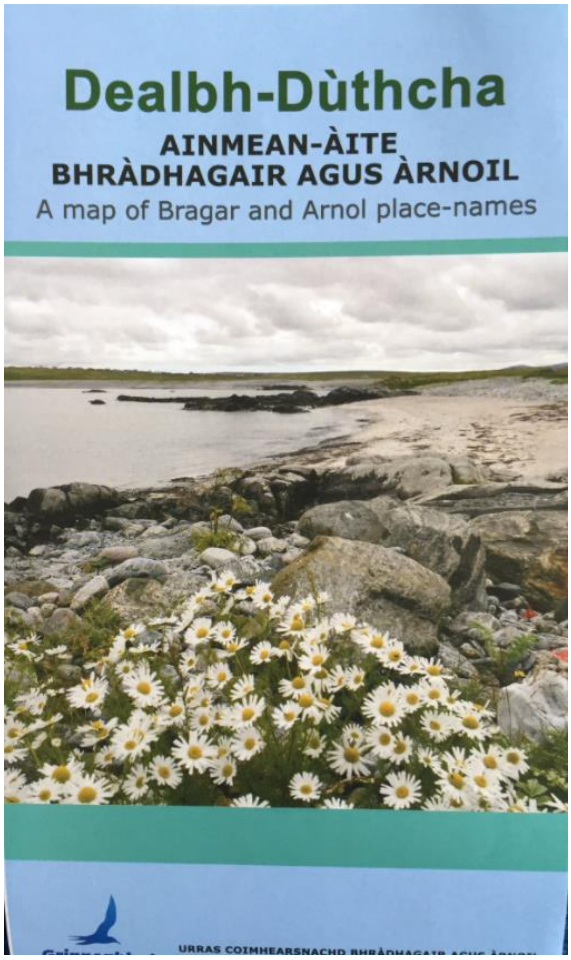

Fig. 28: Anne Campbell, Dealbh-Dùthcha: Ainmean- Àite Bhràdhagair agus Àrnoil/ A Map of Bragar and Arnol Place-Names, *2017. Sheet Map, folded. Paper.* © *Anne Cambell.*

Re-mapping is, for the artists analysed in this thesis, a decolonising strategy they explore through experimenting with the deployment of various styles - Campbell parodies the pictorial conventions of cartography with her functioning pocket map of 2017 *Dealbh-Dùthcha: Ainmean- Àite Bhràdhagair agus Àrnoil/ A Map of Bragar and Arnol Place-Names*. The front cover (see fig. 28) is like any map one would purchase before a trip. It deploys, with precision, the 'plain style' aesthetics of cartography - pedestrian fonts and crisp images arranged according to the standard composition of a map cover (titling above a single, central image). Her convincing mimicry of the Ordinance Survey map is a tactical choice – artists are expected to depict their worldviews whereas maps are positioned as objective truth tellers – an article supposedly without author or agenda. Her parody mocks this supposed objectivity. Given that her map has both a theme *and* an agenda, as will be discussed shortly,

Campbell mocks the supposedly diametrically opposed terms of 'map' and 'subjectivity.' In doing so, she addresses the fact that colonialist maps were constructed with Imperial agendas, masked behind claims of authority and "the immutability of scientific knowledge" implied by such plain-style aesthetics.[82]

The reclamation act occurs in her subversion of the plain style aesthetics to describe a different orientation scheme than that of the OS maps she parodies. Her map does not provide orientational aids of Bragar and Arnol (in Lewis) but instead conjures an alternative space constructed according to the descriptive mental mapping scheme of the Gael; whereby every inch of land is known by name (see fig. 29). In this descriptive mapping scheme, words conjure up territorial planes and provide verbal navigational aids, as well as recalling myths and local histories. In affording the indigenous (spoken) method of mapping with the same credentials as the standard accepted map form (written or drawn), she 'officialises' the indigenous system. Her map also questions *who* has the authority to decide *what* features on a map. While the original team of OS surveyors somewhat whimsically selected a choice of landmarks to record, she selects landmarks well known to locals through story. She therefore implies that what landmarks were important for past (Imperial) mapmakers does not necessarily align with what landmarks that locals have historically deemed important.

[82] Denis Cosgrove, "Maps, Mapping, Modernity: Art and Cartography in the Twentieth Century," pp35-54 in 57 no 1 *Imago Mundi (*2005), 36.

Fig. 29: Detail from Anne Campbell's map Dealbh-Dùthcha.

Critically, Campbell's map was made with deliberate intent to educate those outwith the Island. The availability of Campbell's map preludes this - it can be bought at a competitive price from corporations like Amazon and Waterstones. This accessibility implies the intention of reaching a wide audience. More specifically, Campbell says she wanted to deliver a message to those in power. The map was made at a time when she and others were vehemently protesting against a windfarm that was to be built in the area upon local peatbog and her was hoped to ascertain the value of her local landscape outwith the capitalist value attributed to it. Even the title reinforces the intention of her work: to give visibility to the peatlands and to highlight and their cultural and community value - despite politicians viewing the blanket bog peatland as a wasteland.[83] The title reads *Dealbh-Dùthcha* which translates as 'a picture of the land' - yet in the *Gàidhealtachd* there are many words for land. *Dùthcha* has connotations of intergenerational connection between certain people in a certain place. It connotes heritage and notions of land being in your blood. Compared to another possibility '*tìr,*' which has no such connotations, she specifically chose vocabulary which encapsulates that the land's value exists entirely in its relation to its inhabitants.

Campbell wanted to liken the situation of valued land being taken away from those who treasure it to modern day Imperialism - outside forces seeking to 'Improve' and intervene to 'progress' the island.[84] Her map highlights the cultural import of an area deemed to be without capital value (unless supporting a windfarm) by framing the land with translations of the local names. Each name is loaded with a rich history of stories, legends and history for every small area of Bragar and of Arnol. For instance, one example out of many, *Cnoc na Clàrsaich* is translated literally as the hill of the harp where An Clàsair dall (Roderick Morrison, the Blind harper) played his harp, the music being heard from as far away as Ness. She explains this in English in the section of the map where one would typically expect to find a key: indicating that the key to reading this landscape is via understanding its longstanding cultural value to the locals.

In celebrating the indigenous knowledge of placenaming, mental mapping and all of the stories and local knowledge attached to the names, her map could become a source of local pride, even affording Campbell's local community agency - as can be seen when comparing

[83] Anne Campbell in Interview with writer (online, February 2020).
[84] Ibid.

it to another artist's map of the Hebrides. One which similarly can also be purchased as a pocket map. This would be *A Walk Around Portree* by J. Maizlish Mole from 2012 (see fig. 30). Mole's map was commissioned by ATLAS Arts in partnership with The Portree and Area Community Trust to be a working map for the town's central information board, primarily as a tourist map (see fig. 31 to see the map in situ). Had Campbell's map been placed in a similar situ in the centre of the community of Bragar (albeit Bragar does not have a village square and is of course nowhere near the size of Portree), it could have invited introspection, sparked conversations and mental wanderings. Especially for the elderly, as many of the placenames were by now so rare or specific as to only be remembered by the older generation, said Campbell.

Campbell's map could have provoked deep emotion in the onlooker and become talismanic for her local community. Said the librarian of the National Library Scotland upon watching the Lewis man emotionally pouring over the names and titles in a map of Tolsta where he grew up, but which he hadn't seen since he left as a teenager with the flux of Islanders heading to Glasgow for work, "[h]is experience mirrors the powerful and magnetic attraction of a map."[85] Campbell's map impresses upon the viewer the rich lore contained within place names, which are powerful signs for Hebrideans.[86] In such a central location as a town board, Campbell's map would have provided accessibility for those not inclined to enter Atlas or An Lanntair; her work could have met them 'on their turf' as art for the community. As are the tenets of Community and Indigenous mapping movement of the 90s, Campbell employs cartographic tactics to achieve community resistance, resurgence and education through the pedagogical (and proud) approach her work takes to the *Gàidhlig* culture.

[85] Margaret Wilkes and Domhnall Domhnallach, "Lewis Revisited: Dà Shealladh" pp. 113-116 in *Togail Tìr/ Marking Time,* 114.
[86] Domhnall MacAmhlaigh, "Dè Tha Ann An Ainm…?" pp. 89-96 in *Togail Tìr,* 114.

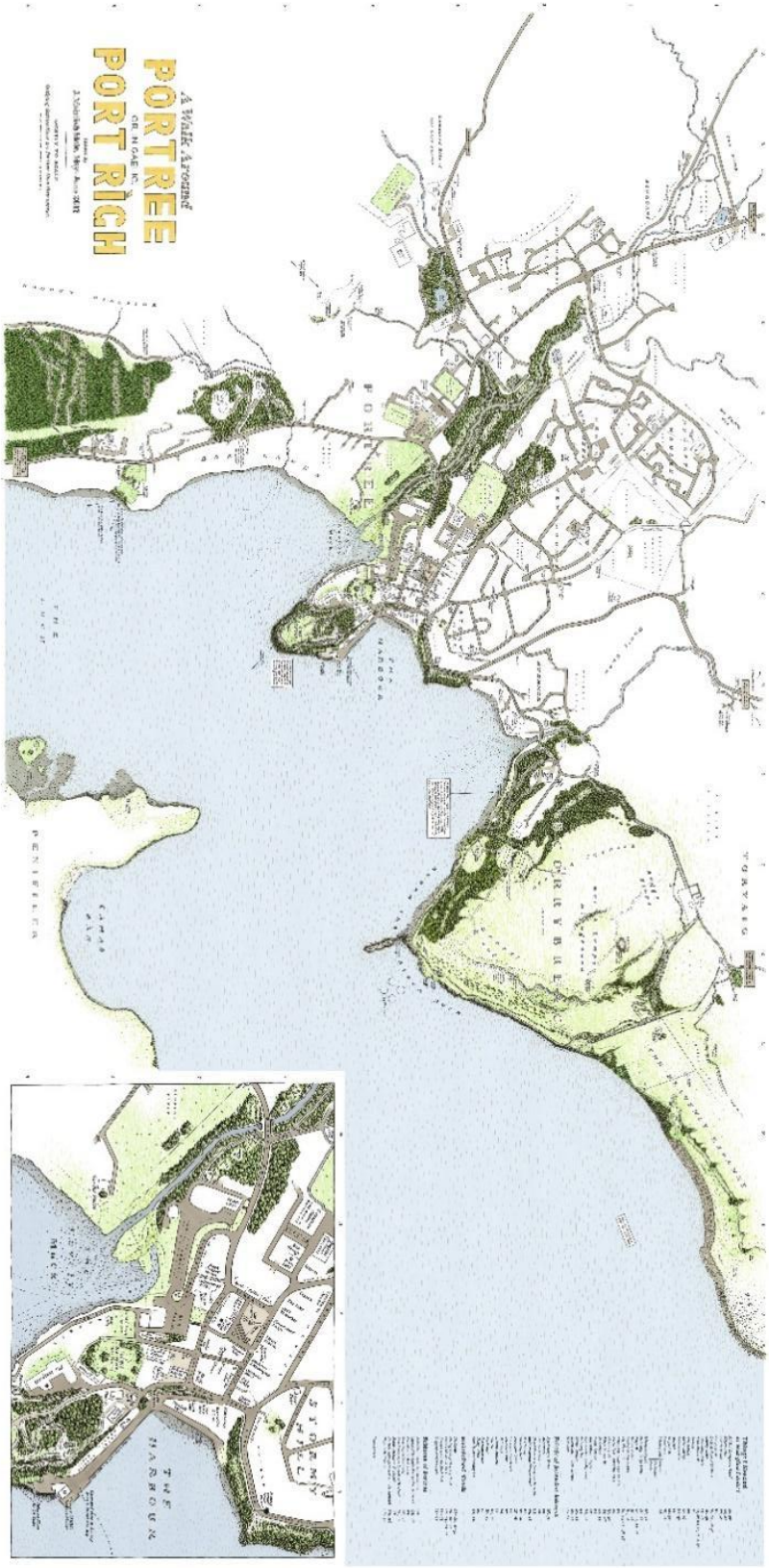

Fig. 30: J. Maizlish Mole, A Walk Around Portree, *2012. Pen on Paper, 89 x 173 cm. © J. Maizlish Mole.*

Fig. 31: Photograph Showing Location of Maizlish Mole's Map, Portree. © *Atlas Arts.*

If the use of *Gàidhlig* is compared with Mole's map and Campbell's, it becomes evident that her deliberate linguistic choices engage with the political pressure on the language and land. The profusion of work in her oeuvre (there are many maps, see for instance fig. 32 describing the Glean) celebrating and venerating the *Gàidhlig* language begins to imply an agitating, activist stance. Compare this to Maizlish-Mole's map. A potential tension is introduced between Mole's map and the map which held this position before, the OS survey map. Mole rretorts against the OS map through humor (naming a hillock 'many rabbits,' for example). Yet it gives a rather stereotypical outlook of Gaels and their culture. While it aims to be heuristic-touristic - going into the new land with no preconceptions - Mole's map can tend towards stereotypes. To mention the drug issues in rural Scotland (he quotes 'methodone place' and dubs the job centre as 'enter for a year') without contextualising *why*, his observations may cement some deep-rooted prejudices.

Mole's map is benevolent by all accounts - the purpose of this discussion is to highlight the ease of promulgating harmful discourse. In the words of Orwell, one may describe oneself as

anti-Semitist or anti-racist yet Orwell defies any one to look within their head and find no bias.[87] The moral obligation is *to be aware of* and try to understand one's own prerogatives. Arguably, to understand those of the culture and land one wants to describe, if describing another. Language was a hot political topic in Portree at the time Mole made his map (and still is), with the town opening its first stand alone *Gàidhlig* Medium school in 2018 (*Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh*, the third of its kind in the Highland council) amidst great controversy. (Read: several newspapers including The Herald publishing that English speakers were left feeling second citizens).[88] Yet Mole's map features very little *Gàidhlig*, and when it does it appears tokenistic when compared to Campbell's map who suggests that language holds the very value of the land. Or Morrison's map, which emphasised that language was important in the remapping and reclaiming of land. To evade using *Gàidhlig*, and thus to abstain from the theme of language at all, could be read as borderline negligent.

[87] George Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2018), 45.

[88] The 'objective' article lists funding received by *Gàidhlig* medium education and broadcasting - without comparing it to funding for English medium education and broadcasting thus giving false impression Gaelic receives so much more, more than it needs. Jody Harrison derides that *Gàidhlig* medium schooling is trouble in his "Isle of Skye's Gaelic-only school 'will divide community'" in *The Herald*. Accessed December 2019, URL https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/16174356.isle-skyes-gaelic-only-school-will-divide-community/.

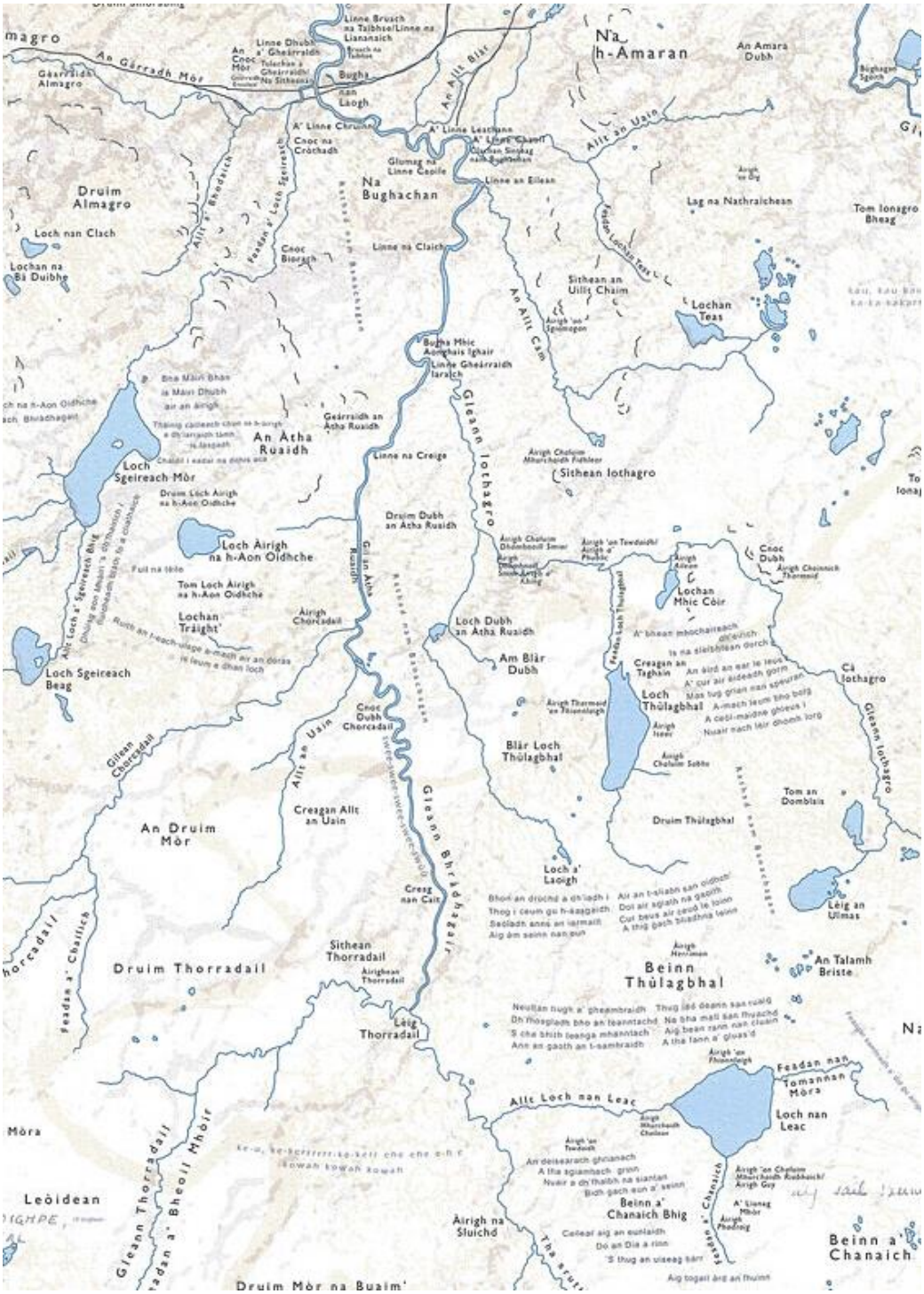

Fig. 32: Anne Campbell, An Gleann (detail). *Print, 2013-2014.*

Chapter 2 – (Re)Presenting The Un-boarded House

Deconstructing Panegyric Representations of the Gàidhealtachd *in the Colonial Imagination*

"The Images of the past are there:

images of the present are breaking against them. Out of that

clash can not a creative, vigorous literature be created?"

Iain Crichton Smith[89]

Fig. 33: Sir Edward Landseer, The Monarch of the Glen, c. 1851. *Oil on canvas, 163 x 169.8 cm. The Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh.*

[89] Iain Crichton Smith, *The Future of Gaelic Literature* (1961) quoted in *Real People in a Real Place*, 67.

Fig. 34: Anne Campbell, Dh'fhàg sibh mis am mòintich fhiadhaich/ You left me on a wild moorland*, 2011. Silver Gelatin photograph with text. © Anne Campbell.*

Having unpacked and interrogated the history of the symbolic house of Sorley MacLean, Keltie, MacLean, Morrison and Murray all set about decolonising representations of the house by re-presenting it. One problematic representation they address and seek to re-present is the landscape surrounding the home, a direct response to the trajectory of landscape art stemming from the Romantic Era of the 1800s which tended to omit the house and home altogether. As Malcolm MacLean notes, amongst Scottish public art collections, the Highlands are remarkably represented by an absence of people.[90] The Romantic Era saw images of Highland landscapes become widely sought after and diffused, in print form, across Britain. One of the most prominent of which is probably Edward Landseer's 1851 oil on canvas *The Monarch of the Glen* (fig. 33). A towering painting of 163cm by 169.8cm, this depiction of an eight-pointer stag is infamous in Britain, yet exemplifies one of the key ways painters in the Romantic Era tended to idealise the landscape of the Highlands into a dramatic, empty vastness – often at the expense of the inhabitants who were not included

[90] Malcolm MacLean, "As an Fhearann" 5-7 in *As an Fhearann*, 6.

within the compositions.[91] In Landseer's *Monarch of the Glen*, the deer is the only creature amidst great mountains. Influenced by Queen Victoria's purchase of Balmoral Castle as a holiday home in 1852, which she chose in part for her husband Albert's love of deer shooting, the notion that the Highlands were a great empty 'playground for the rich' became a fashionable concept. A concept promoted by the Royal painter for Balmoral, Landseer. In Monarch of the Glen, he offers the deer for conquest, for exploitation.

Anne Campbell presents a very different representation in her 2011 landscape *Dh'fhàg sibh mis am mòintich fhiadhaich/ You left me on a wild moorland* (see fig. 34). *Dh'fhàg sibh mis* is a silver gelatin photograph which depicts a bare foot; the artist's own given the first-person perspective of the camera angle. The white foot is starkly illuminated by the camera flash, in juxtaposition to the dark ground below. In Romantic works, the landscape of the *Gàidhealtachd* often became apolitical with the erasure of signs of humanity and community, and this notion of the *Gàidhealtachd* as an apolitical wilderness has been diffused widely, not least thanks to the conception of *The Monarch of the Glen* and its subsequent dissemination via everything from postcards to shortbread tins. I would argue that Romanticism becomes panegyric when the Romantic work rhapsodises the beauty of the landscape while glossing over the problems that exist there by refusing to mention them. By making an image in which her foot is central to her local landscape, Campbell is putting her proverbial foot in the attempts of romantic imagery to promote people-less 'apolitical' imagery by putting the local, herself (read: Gael) at the heart of her landscape. Given that her foot occupies a sizeable portion of the pictorial space, the Gael's centrality to the landscape is non-negotiable in this work, this work is about the living and denies any form of panegyric.

The way Campbell represnts landscape in the gelatin print suggest a very different perspective than that of the traditional Romantic work. Landseer's *Monarch of the Glen* delights in creating what we now tout as Romantic Highland grandeur and gloom, whereby nature is depicted with subliminal qualities seeking to enthrall and apall (the vast sprawling hills are pointed and towering). Conversley, only the title of Campbell's work tells the viewer that Campbell's foot steps on Island peatbog. Visually, the viewer is not given enough

[91] Anne MacLeod, *From An Antique Land: Visual Representations of the Highlands and Islands 1700-1880* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2012), 4.

information to discern this – one can only appreciate that she walks outdoors by the light spattering of grass stems and the few faint pebbles which surround her foot. What the viewer sees of the peat bog is so focused as to be undefined – there are no landmarks by which to identify exactly which peatbog this is. Compared to the Romantic works, the unknown does not strike fear in the viewer. The small stature of *Dh'fhàg sibh mis* reveals an intimacy with the land exhibited and there is proximity in Cambell's close crop. I'd argue that this proximity presents people and land in a symbiotic relationship, 'in step' with one another (pun intended). This denies the landscape being wilderness or wild; it may be rugged but it is inhabited and part of the photographer's livelihood. The reader might note that the notion of symbiotic relationship connoted in the work does not entail that Campbell is reducing the indigenous person's relationship with land to something 'intrinsic,' which would be problematic, just suggesting that she views the land with a different perspective to that which we are accustomed to viewing in imagery of the Highlands, and asks the viewer to consider the differences.

Even when Romantic painters of the Highlands attempted to broach the issue of the Clearances in their work, their work persisted in bolstering notions of 'timeless Highland grandeur and gloom' for contemporary audiences – so cemented in the contemporary imagination was this idea. This is pointed out by MacLeod when she shows that Romantic painter Horatio McCulloch, dismissed by Smout as ignoring rural realities, actually showed the changing Highland landscape as a result of the Clearances in his later work (perhaps due to his perspective expanding in respect of his wife who hailed from Skye).[92] This can be seen, Taken as comparison pieces, Macleod views McCulloch's 1864 oil painting *Glencoe* (fig. 35) alongside the sketch he made ten years previously; the latter showing a small dwelling and its flock of sheep, the former depicting the deer and emptiness occurring after the banishment of the people. Macleod takes this to be a comment on the effect of the Clearances and suggests his Glencoe should be read as such. While she says McCulloch's landscapes may remain vast and sublime, isolation inducing, even, they do go out of their way to show inhabitation and population – not emptiness. Yet despite this, the takeaway from his work tends to be one of a timeless, ethereal, fantasy landsape, she notes. One which the contemporary viewer, especially one living in an industrial setting, could enjoy as an escapism from life.

[92] MacLeod, 168.

Fig. 35: Horatio McCulloch, Glencoe*, 1864. Glasgow, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.*

So pronounced in the contemporary imagination was this reading of McCulloch's *Glencoe* that it has continued to influence photography of Glencoe aimed at tourists ever since. As can be seen images when comparing the image with photographs published on the VisitScotland Instagram page, a token example of which is figure 36. The Instagram image depicts a people-less landscape, despite that Glencoe is a tourist hotbed, usually teeming with activity. The viewer might - astounded, sceptical - note the quasi-deserted A82 promising passageway for the tourist to the Highlands; to adventure. The usually crowded road features a single caravan dawdling along, allowing the viewer to envision their own Highland holiday jaunt. For the burgeoning adventure travel market, 'unspoilt land' is a resource for "spiritual renewal," "aesthetic reflection" and "recreation."[93] The photograph does not include the town of Glencoe itself, nor of any other dwellings. The visitor requires the Romantic timeless image of the empty land to, in effect, time travel to a pre-industrialisation, 'anti-urban' life whereupon they might find 'unchanging certainty.' The photograph recalls a certain Scottish

[93] Bruce Braun *Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), ix.

National Heritage poster which created an air of melancholy when it referred to the Hebrides wistfully as 'Islands to the West of Time,' islands outwith contemporary life.[94] Just as the Romantics' 'sublime' sprawling hills were inextricably connected to colonial endeavours of discovering New Worlds, today, the reader ought to note that 'unspoilt' land is a term used frequently to 'sell' landscapes in wilderness tourism – 'un-walked land' ripe for the discovering of he who is adventurous enough.[95]

Fig. 36: Unknown Photographer, Glencoe, *featured on visit Scotland, Instagram, published 25th December, 2019. © Visit Scotland.*

Touristic imagery selling 'nature' as a commodity entirely separate from civilization belies the fact that these spaces *are* inhabited. They have their own set of political and social issuesl issues. Since lockdown and the staycation success, the media is now wholly saturated with

[94] Said poster was referenced in A. Fiona D. Mackenzie's 'Against the Tide': Placing visual art in the Highlands and Islands, Scotland." *Social and Cultural Geography, 7* no. 6 (2006), 971.
[95] Bruce Braun, ibid.

images taken along the NC500 which have come to represent the *Gàidhealtachd.* A large portion of which are pictorially constructed in the manner of the VisitScotland 'Glencoe' image. This shows the need for practitioners like Campbell to unpack the roots of such images. As Farish Ahmad Noor encourages, "while we are determined by history we need not be trapped by it nor made the victims of it."[96] In order to be rid of tired stereotypes, Ahmad urges, the observer must trace the trajectory of pictorial conventions to uncover the original image's Imperial roots. In addressing the colonial ideologies present in wilderness imagery, representations of the *Gàidhealtachd* can be unpacked and traced back to their romantic/ colonial roots. What Campbell's work seeks to then disrupts, then, is the Imperial roots of the tourist board images of the *Gàidhealtachd* which persist in describing it as 'a people-less wilderness.' There is little room for touristic rumination in what little landscape she provides the viewer with, and in this way, the Gael's voice might be heard uninhibited by the trappings of a problematic trajectory of images.

Campbell's landscape re-presentation also avoided the representational pitfall of describing her local peat bog through the terms of 'life as strife.' MacLeod notes that the two pillars of representation (Romantic/ Realism) came about in art depicting the *Gàidhealtachd* with the Napier Commission Report of 1884, which stressed the political and social issues affecting inhabitants of the Highlands. Compare the intention of *Dh'fhàg sibh mis* with the J.M.W. Turner *Peat Bog,* c.1808 (fig. 37). One of the three better-known artists to visit the Highlands and Islands, Turner set out to show 'cold, dark rain and dangerous labour.'[97] His figures are seen at work, cutting peats. Both his and Campbell's avoid indulging the landscape in a pastoral scene of pleasantry, of rural 'happy toil.' Says Rodney McMillian that as an African American he never viewed the American landscape as a 'pastoral' scene, as the Hudson River School painters depicted it, but instead saw it as "a space of work, a space of ownerships, as one of oppression."[98] Turner's peat bog nobly demonstrates the area as a useful, cultivated space of work and livelihood, though the weather and terrain imply conditions of hardship.

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[96] Farish Ahmad Noor, "Why is Colonialism (Still) Romanticized?" *TedTalk*. 13th July, 2020.
[97] Matthew Imms, 'Peat Bog, Scotland c. 1808 by Joseph Mallord William Turner,' catalogue entry in David Blayney Brown (ed), *J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours* (London: Tate Research Publication, 2008).
[98] Rodney McMillian, 'Art is… Decolonizing Landscape Art' in San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. May 13, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlYbStrFOuc

Fig. 37: J.M.W. Turner, Peat Bog, Scotland, *1812. Mezzotint printed in brown ink, 21 cm x 29.1cm. The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, Glasgow. © Tate Britain.*

The difficult conditions of the terrain shown in Turner's landscape imply classic connotations of the peat bog as a murky quagmire, an idea stemming from Gothic literature[99]. The bog has always been a signifier of the ambiguous and 'unknowable' landscape – the location of Difference and Otherness, in this case of the Gaels. Campbell's image presents an opposing perspective of the peatbog. Firstly, her peatbog is shown closely cropped and therefore comprehensible, thus shedding the gothic label of the bog as a murky mystery. Secondly, her bog is still the location of Difference though in her work this is not a negative connotation: the worth of her Island is rooted in the bog, she implies, which is host to many cultural artefacts. One of which is mentioned in the textual strip reading from top to bottom on the right-hand side of the photograph. The textual strip is a quotation taken from a version of the song 'Phiùthrag 's a Phiùthar,' a dark ballad about a jealous sister set in the *mòintich,* the *Gàidhlig* word for moorland or, in Hebridean usage, *mòintich* specifically refers to the peat

[99] Derek Gladwin, *Contentious Terrains: Boglands in the Irish Postcolonial Gothic* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2016, 3.

bog. On her website she emphasises that the song 'Phiùthrag 's a Phiùthar,' can be found in the *Carmina Gadelica*, a compendium of Gaelic material collected in the nineteenth century by Alexander Carmichael. By referencing the Carmina Gadelica and its great breadth of cultural material in relation to a tiny patch of peatbog, her work celebrates every patch of local land as deeply imbued with indigenous cultual significance.

Campbell's use of materials to describe the peatbog makes another assertion: that the peat bog is a social construct. The Gelatin print is abstracted, scratched into, worked and built from multiple sources (textual, visual, historical, musical, cultural). Always layered, always multifarious in source, land in her work is a pastiche of socially constructed meaning. Simultaneously we see the land, the person around whom it revolves and their culture. That the song text is overlapping the land and complimenting the position of the foot demonstrates that meaning is applied to the land by its inhabitants - *this* is the symbiotic relationship spoken of earlier. Land is understood to be *constituted* through social, cultural and historical discursive practices and therefore the meaning of the land is subjective and relative – not intrinsic. Which collapses notions of nature holding a decided, essential character. By printing a quotation from the song on the photograph and repeating it in the title, Campbell suggests that it is discursive practises, cultural *processes*, iteration and re-iteration, which give a place significance. This is exemplary of reading place as a construct: place as a process and in process.[100]

Campbell's description of place in constructivist terms is consistent with the ideology favoured by many contemporary Geographers. Denis E. Cosgrove apprises that worldviews are indeed projected onto the landscape, while Edward Relph confirms that land both absorbs and conditions meanings, attitudes and activities.[101] As Derrida noted in his seminal 1976 *Of Grammatology*, nothing can be known outside of cultural practices.[102] Thus it is crucial that artists are tackle cultural construction of land by, firstly, addressing the means in which the land is understood. To be able to deconstruct representations of place is essential to address

[100] M. Crang and N. Thrift, "Introduction," in *Thinking Space* Crang, M. and Thrift, N. (eds) (London: Routledge, 2010), 3.
[101] Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London: Croom Helm LTD, 1984) and Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976), respectively.
[102] This writer is referring to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatari Chakravorty Spivak (Maryland: Jon Hopkins University Press, 1976; 1998).

the cultural practices which have formed an image of those places in the cultural imagination. Especially because those practices are in turn influenced by the way the land is understood - concepts and notions have shaped the rural and how people behave in it. As Lucy Lippard succinctly summarises: "[o]ur concepts of place affect how we identify the living process within them."[103] Decolonisation, then, is impossible without understanding the significance and cultural meaning attached to a place and how it might affect the behaviour of the inhabitants.

So as not to essentialise place, Campbell employs a specific process of assemblage. The term 'assemblage,' Bruce Braun notes, is key in facilitating conception of the land as a "web of relations."[104] Other works by Campbell interweave material elements in a relational manner while also emphasising the intertextual objects constructing what it is that constitutes place. For instance, in her Screenprint branch of the 'A-mach an Gleann' series, she intertwines familial images, local anecdotes and photographs with memories and impressions of the land. In *Samhradh Cridheach* (see fig. 38), Campbell uses various sources to describe the *Shieling* her family went to in the summer, part of a local agricultural practice of moving cows around seasonally for grazing. The Shieling is recreated through a colloquial 'family snap' photo of her friend overlayed with a scribbled memory of her father's, Coinneach Isaac, which reads "cha robh cail a riamh a chord riumsa cho math ris an airigh/ I never enjoyed anything as much as the shieling." Recorded too is the call of a local bird whose presence was found in the season of summer and the words she can almost hear in its call: "samhradh cridheach, th e a' tighinn/ a hearty summer, it is coming" followed by her own scribbled descriptions of the flora. Place is described in a textual overlay of sounds, remembered fragments of conversation and distorted visuals which connote memories. In its simplicity, these items are collated on a stark white background giving the impression of a scrapbook, a collation of accumulated sources, which the viewer may take as her definition of the meaning of 'place.' Critically, it is as much collective as it is personal – the scrapbook is an aggregation of various family members' experiences, not just her own.

[103] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multi Centred Society (*New York: The New Press, 1997), 11.
[104] Bruce Braun, 3.

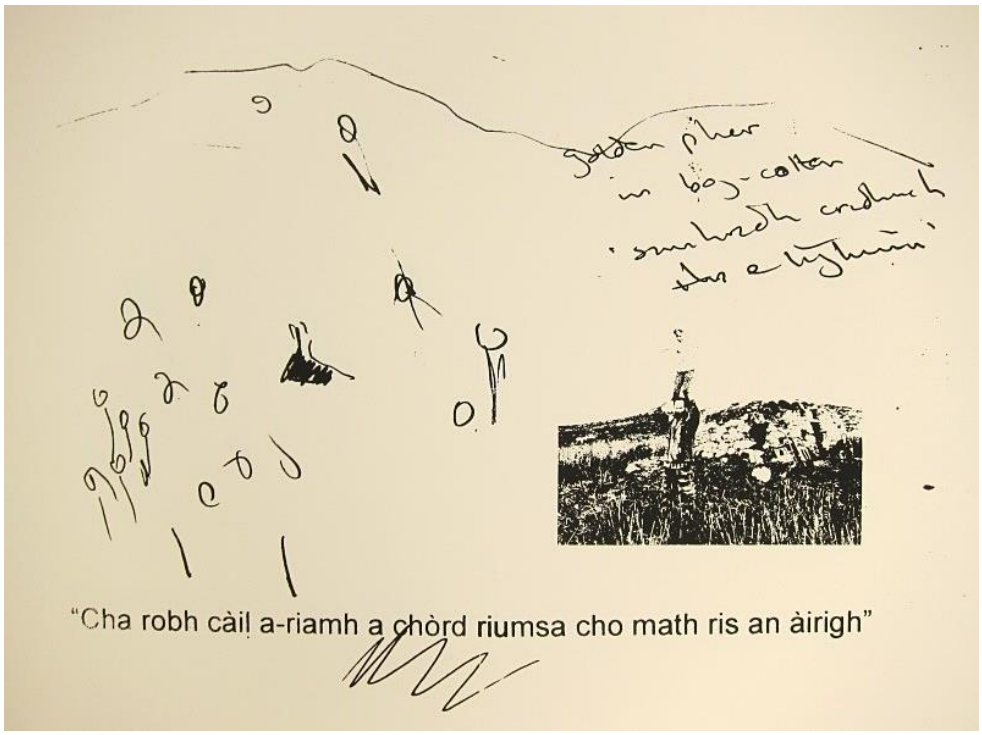


Fig. 38: Anne Campbell, Samhradh Cridheach, 2006-2007. *Screenprint, 58 x 42 cm. © Anne Campbell.*

It is to be noted that there are urgent and broader socio-cultural implications in considering Campbell's destabilising of the supposed 'innate' character of landscapes. Post-structuralism, while a commonplace methodology taught in universities, is rarely used to deconstruct 'lovely' rural scenes adored by tourists, worry Sarah Neal and Julian Agyeman. [105] This is despite the fact that the rural is a potent symbol utilised in underpinning discourses of nationhood – even coming to represent the 'essence' of the entire country. (Think of the posters of the First and Second world wars showing green pastures and the White cliffs of Dover urging men to defend the quintessence of English-ness.) For Scotland, we can liken this to the 2021 Alba campaign headed by Alex Salmond (see fig. 39). The campaign video detailed Robert the Bruce's Victory at the Battle of Bannockburn while presenting vast swathes of rugged hillside. The hills are seen from a distant viewpoint, without allusion to the

[105] Sarah Neal and Julian Agyeman, "Introduction," in *The New Countryside? Ethnicity, Nation and Exclusion in Contemporary Rural Britain*, (Online: Policy Press Scholarship, 2012). DOI: 10.1332/policypress/9781861347961.001.0001

city of Stirling nearby. Figures are shown, though they seem tiny on the vast hilltop. Wild and rugged landscape comes to symbolise Scottish difference.

Fig. 39: Still from ALBA Scottish SNP campaign advertisement video, *2021*. *©Alba Party.*

Why should Alex Salmond's Alba party campaign video be problematic, the reader may ask, why must one be sceptical of a nonchalant reference to rural space as a symbol of nationhood? Why is what Anne Campbell's work doing so important? There are two reasons for which the presentation of landscape as a pastiche of meaning, as opposed to intrinsically bearing national values, is timely and urgent. Firstly, because rural space in Britain and Scotland is often highly exclusive. For instance, it is often assumed to be white - this may be part of the reason only 6% of visible ethnic minorities choose to live in rural Scotland over urban areas and for that 6% a distinct lack of resources and research is dedicated to helping feelings of inclusion - because it is assumed that in rural Scotland 'Racism does not exist.'[106] Conversely, the assumed essential 'Britishness' or 'Scottishness' of the landscape opens it up to attracting those who wish to mould it not only into nationalistic propaganda but extreme Far-Right Nationalism – as was seen with the far right utilising National Trust Properties for

[106] Statistic taken from Philomena de Lima '"Let's Keep Our Heads Down and Maybe the Problem Will go Away" Experiences of Rural Minority Ethnic Householders in Scotland,' in *The New Countryside? Ethnicity, Nation and Exclusion in Contemporary Rural Britain*, eds. Sarah Neal and Julian Agyeman (Online: Policy Press Scholarship, 2012), 77.

meetings in 2019. (See figure 40 for evidence of these meetings in rural 'national treasures,' where the swastika is carved into a tree at a National Trust Property for a meeting).

Fig. 40: Neo-nazis hold meetings in National trust Properties and aim to 'take back' ancient rural sites. © *The Telegraph.*

Secondly, a key problem with seeing the character of rural landscapes as essential or intrinsic is the danger this poses on the representation of the indigenous person inhabiting this landscape, whose character can be read as an extension of that of the landscape. This can be seen when comparing *Cianlas* by Ishbel Murray (see fig. 41) to, say, the portraits of Gaels by John Pettie. In Pettie's 1878 *A Highland Outpost* (see fig. 42), a Jacobite soldier, a Gael, is depicted looking forlornly over the landscape. The mountains in Pettie's image stand as the marker of indigenous Jacobite character: the wilderness inevitably equating with barbary and masculinity in the colonial imagination.[107] The sharp, pointed peaks of the hills in Pettie's portrait sit as the backdrop against which the figure stands, the only description of character attributed to the figure other than his proud stance and sword salute. Pettie's Jacobite isn't assigned a name - nor is the landscape given a placename to locate it- thus the artist

[107] Martin MacGregor, "Gaelic Barbarity and Scottish Identity in the later Middle Ages," pp. 7-48 in *Mìorun Mòr nan Gall*, 14.

somewhat reduces the man to a symbol.[108] He is a two-dimensional character, an archetype. (An 'intrinsic' and archetypal indigenous character which the reader might note has always been politically contingent. For instance, by the Romantic Era, the Gael was viewed simultaneously as a feared Jacobite and political nuisance but conversely later became a valued military asset to the British Empire).[109]

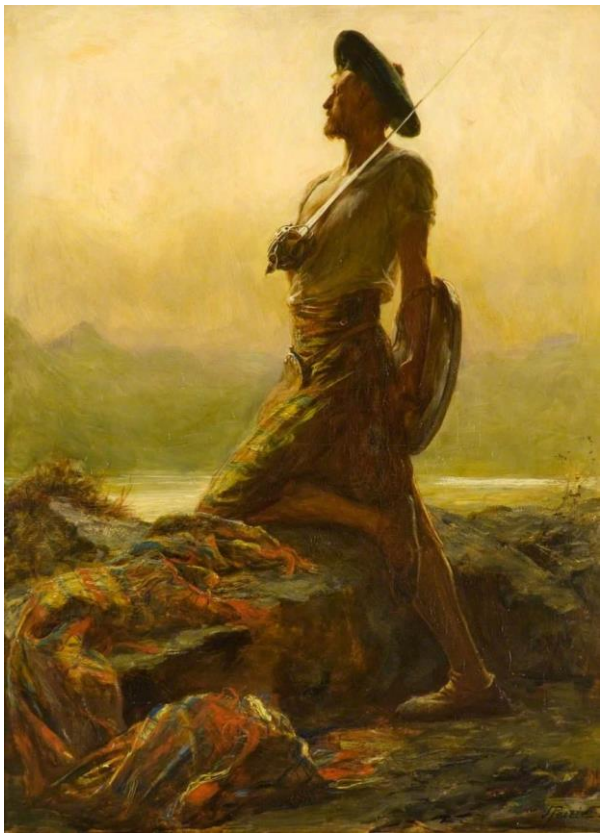


Fig. 42: John Pettie, A Highland Outpost*, 1878. Dundee, McManus Gallery. © McManus Gallery.*

Another problem of attributing an intrinsic character to nature is that it leads to externalisation of nature and the indigenous, notes Bruce Braun.[110] When nature has an

[108] One might note here that the trope of the Celt as bloodthirsty, along with work shy and good-looking, existed as far back as at least the early 1100s in literature and this work is 'cementing' that idea suggesting that the landscape is inherent to this trait, causing it, even. Martin MacGregor, "Gaelic Barbarity and Scottish Identity in the later Middle Ages," *Mìorun Mòr nan Gall*, 7.
[109] Silke Stroh, *Uneasy Subjects*, 18.
[110] Braun, *Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), x.

essential character it cannot be in the same ecosystem as an opposing essential character, therefore the dichotomy is birthed that 'nature is primal and the city is civilised.' Worse, it then follows that the two are mutually exclusive. The effect this has, Braun worries, is that the indigenous person does not fit into this neat binary and is therefore collapsed into the nature/ primal category. Emily Martin adds that there is also a feminist and racial concern here, that reconciliating the externalisation of nature addresses patriarchal exploitations of Other because patriarchy begins with domination over nature.[111] Hence the importance of unpacking this phenomenon.

Pettie certainly seems to collapse his subject into the landscape, I'd argue, through his use of oil paint, the preferred medium of the Romantics, to create a dewy, misty quality of paint that serves to conjure mistiness and mysticism – *misticism* we might call this phenomenon. Pettie hazily blends his paint upon the canvas to render the figure in a dreamy manner as though he may be only a figment of the imagination, to highlight the Gael's status as a symbol. Not a man of presence, of reality or real problems. Pettie rather indulgently glosses over the political issues which affected indigenous inhabitants of the Highlands at the height of economic issues afflicting the area - the painting precluded the Napier Commission Report of 1883 by only six years (the report, brought about by necessity, invesitgated the poor living conditions of cottars and crofters in the Highlands). Blended oil-paint hills merge into the background as though under a veil of mist are almost disappearing into the clouds; a mystery to the viewer. Murray's *Cianalas* refutes and subverts such *misticism*. She does so through her use of oil paint in a clinical manner which denies any notions of the melancholy. She subverts the tradional use of blending oils, instead applying hers in dense colour-blocks with the result that her lines are crisp and clear. Like a Warhol, in *Cianalas* Murray has taken out the hand of the artist and created a machine-like, 'screen printed' quality.

[111] Emily Martin, "Fluid Bodies, Managed Nature," in *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium,* eds. Bruce and Noel Castree (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 64-83.

Fig. 41: Ishbel Murray, Cianalas*, c. 2009. Oil on canvas 100 cm x 100 cm. © Ishbel Murray.*

As an antidote to the mythologising, reductive character profile Pettie portrays, Murray affects a different reading of the Gael, whom she suggests through multiplicity. In *Cianalas*, the lives of the *community* are symbolised by the two boats featured: people are suggested through the *work* it is implied which takes place on such fishing boats. This might also be considered anti-essentialist in its suggestion that community is created primarily through a relation to land denoted by working said land (and its surrounding waters). The titling of the work is also frank and de-mystifying, or de-*mistifying.* A term associated specifically with the Outer Hebrides, the *Gàidhlig* word *Cianalas* signifies a deep-seated sense of belonging and longing for the place where your roots lie. Despite connoting nostalgia, the word itself is specifically *not* about melancholy. It is a matter-of-fact observation of the relational ties between the land of the *Gàidhealtachd* and its people. The rationality of the word's meaning

is conveyed in the manner in which the word is painted across the image; the font is perfunctory, prosaic.

Murray emphasising that the landscape is of such paramount importance to the identity of Gaels that there are words to describe the phenomenon which are non-existent in English. 'Cianalas' does not find a direct translation in English and perhaps only finds a parallel in the Welsh word '*Hiraeth.'* In a land where, as mentioned in chapter one, the language is constantly being attacked as 'dying,' this work shows how the language is indispensible. Crucially, this negates notions of both the language and landscape as being mystical and mythical or symbols of an endangered culture, as "[v]isions of an ancient and romantic country [fit] well with notions of a dead or dying race."[112] The demystified landscape together with the rationally put forward idea that language is essential in understanding this specific landscape puts to rest the Romantic notion of 'the last of' the Gael and his language. This 'dying race' trope is resonant across other postcolonial contexts, with films such as 'The Last of the Mohicans' or poem 'The Vanishing Red Man' by Robert Frost. The 'Dying Celt' is a dangerous notion which, if not put to bed, can trickle into contemporary cultural representation until it becomes an accepted truth. From high-brow culture to brow raising, as in the case of the 'Time Travel Romance' fiction series of Claire Delacroix, which relies on the stereotype of the (hypermasculine and virile) 'Last Highlander' (see fig. 43). Such literature relies on a stereotypical military masculinity whose lasting effects will be dealt with by our artists in the artworks looked at in the next section.

[112] Macleod, 155.

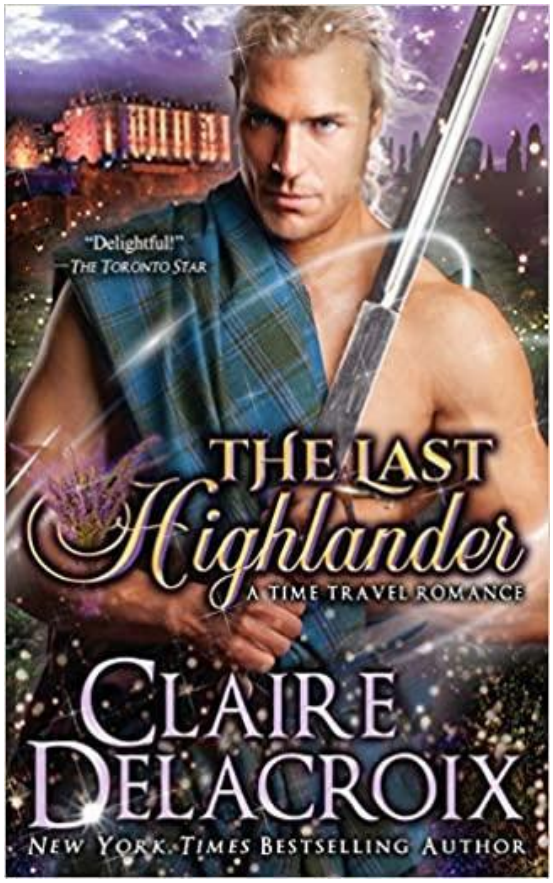


Fig. 43: Front Cover of Claire Delacroix, The Last Highlander: A Time Traveller's Romance *(Deborah A. Cooke, 2012). © Claire Delacroix.*

Against Anglocentric Images: (Re)Presenting the Gael

"*Cò sgrìobh mi? Cò tha deanamh*
bàrdachd shanas-reice de mo chnàmhan?

Togaidh mi mo dhòrn gorm riutha:

'Gàidheal calma le a chànan'/

Who wrote me? Who is making a poetry

of advertisements from my bones?

I will raise my blue fist to them:

'A stout Highlander with his language'"

Iain Crichton Smith[113]

Moira MacLean's Buisneachd' exhibition of 2012 reclaimed indigenous control of the representation of the Gael by (re)presenting the woman inhabitant of the now-empty blackhouse within the gallery space of An Lanntair (see fig. 44). 'Buisneachd' echoed Crichton Smith's question "Cò sgrìobh mi?"/ Who wrote me?" as MacLean asks who has the authority to determine the representation of the Gael. Within the installation, her 'raiding' practice was extended from 'pirating' scraps of wallpaper to dragging entire pieces of furniture retrieved from abandoned houses across Lewis into the gallery space. The installation recreates the interior of the blackhouse, and revolves around a great wooden hearth. The hearth - whose earthy, wooden frame appears ever more 'homely' contrasting against the white cube of the An Lanntair exhibition room - is adorned with a colloquial, heart-shaped decoration suggesting that home is where the heart(h) is. (The idea of *cianalas* resurfaces). The recreation of the hearth references the generational historicity of the blackhouse, whose hearth was very much the centre of the home; where inhabitants gathered and where someone would always be found to ensure the peat fire never went out.

Revolving the exhibition around the hearth also ensures that, upon entering the space, the viewer is aware that they are being invited into a highly charged personal space, domestic and intimate. The hearth conjures the familial and the daily activity of inhabitants with its assorted cumulus; upon the mantlepiece are scattered books, a doll decoration and a handbag. The latter rests upon the mantlepiece ledge, rather whimsically, as if the inhabitant had just returned home and plonked it down moments earlier, emptying its contents of titbits into a scattered heap upon the mantlepiece after a busy day. The anachronism of such a gesture (the handbag belonging to a more recent era than the blackhouse) references the multiple generations who might have lived alongside this hearth and connects them to it. Upon two cabinets flanking the hearth sit two skulls; acknowledging the work outside of the home

[113] Iain Crichton Smith, "An t-Oban/ Oban" (1976) quoted in Malcolm Chapman, *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), 160-161.

which sustains it; crofting. Given that this is the skull of the black faced sheep - the livestock which was introduced bin place of people during the Clearances - and given that there is also a deer skull - the deer shooting both a sport of the wealthy in the Highlands and taking back deer was a central act in the Deer Raids in Pairc - the domestic sphere is explicitly shown to be framed both socially and politically. The viewer is reminded that the domestic history of Lewis cannot be represented aside from its colonial framework.

Fig. 44: Moira MacLean, Still from 'Buisneachd,' *2012. Mixed media. Shown at An Lanntair, Stornoway. © Moira MacLean.*

From these wider political parameters, MacLean then narrows focus and becomes primarily interested in retelling specifically *women's* histories. By making a historical enquiry into the everyday life of a woman, MacLean, as stated in the introduction, also avoids the pitfall of Highland history-telling in which "the cliches of Scottish history such as clan battles and endemic internecine strife" are re-hashed, in order to explore the more nuanced histories of the Isle of Lewis – which ultimately can be more insightful and indicative into true

representation of local history.[114] The practice of collecting objects pertaining to a specifically local and woman's history MacLean calls 'memory mining.' To these found pieces Maclean adds new artworks to create resonances and spark dialogue. For instance, in the cabinet, (see fig. 45), two sets of rotund, hand-knitted breasts appear to stare at the viewer like pairs of eyes. Between them sit a milk bottle – a comical reminder of the 'labours of love' which would have taken place across generations within the space of the blackhouse, and latterly the Island whitehouse. Labours which would be currently taking place in her own home in Stornoway, given that this installation was (phenomenally) made only eleven weeks after she gave birth.

Fig. 45: Installation shot of the cabinet from Moira MacLean's Buisneachd. *© Moira MacLean.*

The humour provoked by her jovial additions deny any reductive views of the lives of wives and mothers who inhabited such homes – this is not a museum of 'internecine strife.' The lives implied by the objects are nuanced. They do not pertain to notions of rural hardship nor

[114] Hugh Cheape "Introduction," in John Lorne Campbell, *A Very Civil People: Hebridean Folk, History and Tradition* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2014; 2000), ix.

idyllic, rural simplicity. The conversations sparked surrounding labours of love are timely in academia for women globally, and MacLean inserts her subjects into feminist discourse in a way which their struggles are relevant and shared by women globally. In this discourse MacLean references the many aspects of motherhood from the saccharine to the savoury; delicate and dainty golden baby shoes pull heartstrings while the nearby midwifery trolley topped with a chamber-pot of cleaning water - now red with blood (see fig. 46) - make birth viscerally apparent in all its pain and drudgery. The exhibition title 'Buisneachd' means witchcraft, sorcery or enchantment - the term of witch often ascribed to women in lieu of understanding them. The exhibition sets out to rectify this and understand the women of Lewis who lived in the blackhouse with authenticity. Moira makes this a self-portrait, too, by including her own baby tag. In doing so, she suggests that memory and representation of the women of Lewis is collective and intertwining.

Fig. 46: Installation shot of midwifery trolley in Buisneachd. © *Moira MacLean.*

MacLean addresses the tensions in describing the women of Lewis amidst an anthology of literature describing, and conscribing, the male Gael. The viewer is introduced to this tension via MacLean's particular placement of objects and their associative connotation. *Leabaidh de Ròsan/ Bed of Roses* (fig. 47) is a marital bed, whose adornment of red roses suggests happy marital coital bliss. It is framed, however, by *Peacach/ Sinner* (see fig. 47 also), a wall display of identical white angels uniformly laid out line after line – the perfection of the pattern broken only by the stark presence of a single, crimson red angel. The piece, she says,

refers to a formative event in the life of Marilyn Monroe whereby the fundamentalist church had her, and many other girls, reveal their purity in a spectacular flipping of red cape to white. Marilyn refused to cooperate and was physically beaten. The angels therefore connote the puritanical expectations placed upon young girls by the church. In MacLean's re-telling of this story there may be read a parallel between Monroe's fundamentalist church and the Free Presbyterian church prominent in Lewis, which expresses a conservative and orthodox social outlook. Given that the anguish of Monroe's tale is caused due to religious and gender-based pressures and that this tale has been inserted into a history of women in Lewis, MacLean appears to be making a comment on the effect such behavioural dictums had on shaping a woman growing up on her Island. The idiomatic expression of life as a carefree 'bed of roses' seems posited to sneer at the notion of growing up under patriarchal and religious systems as anything but.

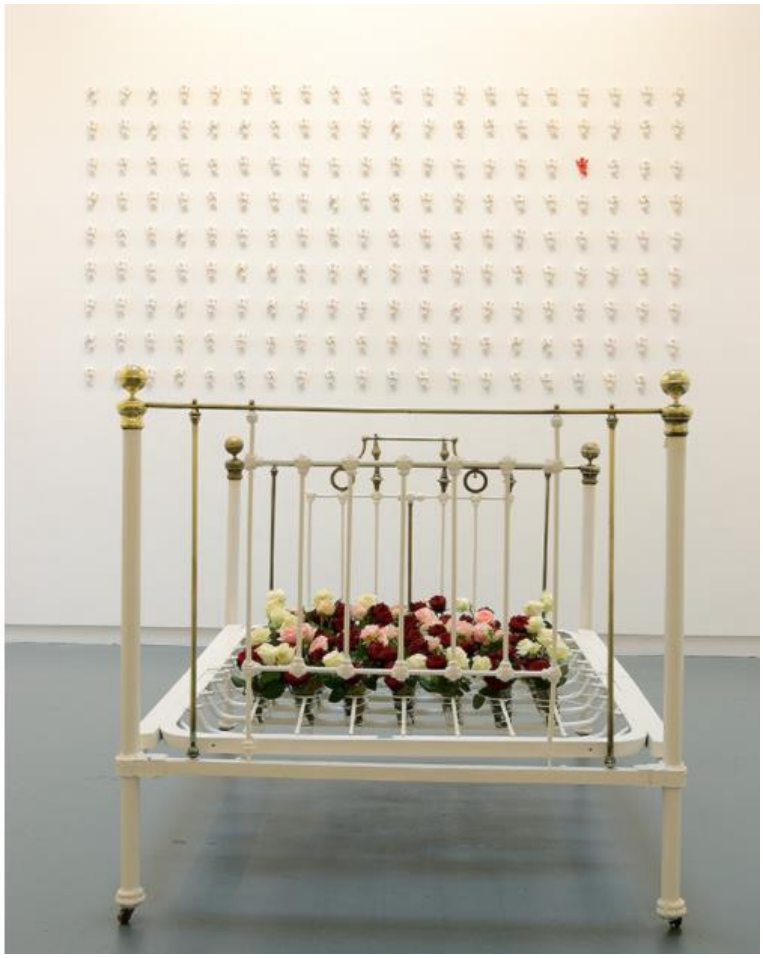


Fig. 47: Installation shot from Moira MacLean's 'Buisneachd' exhibition c. 2012-2013. At the forefront is Leabaidh de Ròsan/ Bed of Roses *and behind is* Peacach/ Sinner. © *Moira MacLean.*

MacLean might have felt compelled to draw attention to power imbalances in representations of men and women historically in the *Gàidhlig* because of the image of the Gael in the colonial imagination as the hypermasculine warrior – think of Pettie's portraits. For example, Pettie's *Disbanded* of 1877 shows the Highland warrior returning home as typically muscular while also gruff, grumpy and aggressive (see fig.48). Evidence suggests that this masculinity trope has persisted into the modern day in visual culture – with Esther Breitenbach and Lynn Abrahms noting that in the media there is a distinct privileging of hypermasculinity in Scottish icons and hero-worshipping (she cites the infamous depiction of William Wallace in Braveheart).[115] Such has the trope 'stuck,' that the very same Abrams still wrote an article titled "The taming of Highland Masculinity" which discussed hyper-masculinity as a pregiven (whose antidote was the influence of lowland restraint).[116]

Fig. 48: John Pettie, Disbanded, *1877. Dundee, McManus Gallery. © McManus Gallery.*

[115] Lynn Abrams and Esther Breitenbach "Gender and Scottish Identity" in *Gender in Scottish History Since 1700,* ed. Lynn Abrams, Eleanor Gordon, Deborah Simonton and Eileen Janes Yeo (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 17. Pp17-30.
[116] Lynn Abrams, "The Taming of Highland Masculinity: interpersonal violence and shifting perceptions of manhood c.1760-1840," *Scottish Historical Review* XCII, 1 no. 233 (2013): 100-122.

In a drive to disarm and dispel motifs like the masculine warrior of *Disbanded*, the male literary stars of the Celtic Revival of the second half of the twentieth century configured themselves a new Northern masculinity based upon intelligence and detachment. Sandy Moffat visualises this 'new' Highland masculinity in his *Poet's Pub* (see fig. 49). The painting depicts the hubbub of literary prowess; a diligent circle of enthusiasts gathered around Sorley MacLean, including Scottish poets Hugh MacDairmid, George Mackay Brown, Sidney Goodsir Smith, Edwin Morgan, Robert Garioch, Alan Bold, American art critic John A. Tonge and *Gàidhlig* poets Iain Crichton Smith and Norman MacCaig. The weight of intellectual contemplation is practically palpable in the intensity of contemplation across the faces of all present. Their gaze meets nothing in particular, they remain oblivious to all but their own thoughts, existing wholly in a cerebral realm. Moffat's picture is consistent with a fairly universal post-colonial or anti-colonial trend whereby self-representations of masculinity respond to images created by colonialists by creating new images of opposition; stressing virility, warrior prowess or working-class hardness.[117] Or, for the stars of the Celtic Revival, their masculinity had to be re-envisioned on intellectual premises, not upon muscles (given that in the colonial imagination the Gael's value rested upon his muscular military might). Hence, to Moffat's revival stars, matters of the flesh are unimportant.

[117] Silke Stroh, *Uneasy Subjects*, 26.

Fig. 49: Alexander Moffat, Poet's Pub, *1980. Oil on canvas, 183 x 244 cm. Edinburgh, Scottish National Portrait Gallery. © National Galleries of Scotland.*

One may note that none of the Celtic Revival heroes in the painting have noticed any of the half-clad women in their vicinity. From the quasi-nude women, however, we can understand what space is left for femininity, what parameters women workers in *na Eilean Siar* are working within in response to the masculine spaces already carved. This can only be described as the double colonisation, the twofold effect of Imperialism and patriarchy. While venerating Scottish and *Gàidhlig* men in this way, women are resigned to being merely temptations, distractions from the moral work of men. Certainly not part of the revival literary movement itself. From Murray's installation of plates and cups conjuring images of the blackhouse dresser to MacLean's very literal reinstalment of the hearth in the gallery space, the potency of the found object to describe woman's experience is capitalised by our artists. The personal, excavated object provides a tangible link to past stories and creates an immersive and emotive link to a doubly colonised subjectivity. MacLean creates room for women's stories in contrast to all of the discussions of Highland masculinity. Literally, MacLean has created Woolf's 'Room of One's Own,' a space in which the viewer might consider the legacy of Lewis women.

At this point, an objector might ask how MacLean approached representing the feminine and the historical without indulging in overt raptures of nostalgia, thus ensuring that Buisneachd was not self-exoticising - nor parodying *Gàidhlig* culture. A fine line to tread in a world where 'authenticity' is a precarious word in relation to 'culture.' Edward Said notes that, over time, culture becomes an identity (heralded largely in a xenophobic manner) and active 'returns' to culture are often fundamentalist and nationalistic (neocolonial/ imperial).[118] For instance, see the indicative 'warrior-esque,' colossal figure used to advertise Scots Oats - whereby Highland products employ Highland stereotypes for capitalist gain (see fig. 50). Authenticity breaks down in the instant cultures come into outside contact, which is constantly, and thus all cultures are fraught to be 'inauthentic.' To emulate one's own culture is, then, to hark back to it romantically while to abandon it is to side with the colonial discourse. In essence, to parody one's own culture. This quagmire can be described as such: "As a narrator she is narrated well. And in a way she is already told, and what she herself is *telling* will not undo that somewhere else she is *told*."[119] Effectively, finding a way to describe oneself outwith the ways one has already been circumscribed in narrative is difficult, especially when MacLean is working with narratives and storytelling.

Fig. 50: A&R Scott, Advert for 'Scott's Porage Oats' *1980s. © National Library of Scotland.*

[118] Said, xv.
[119] Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thebaud, *Just Gaming: Theory and History of Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 41.

MacLean finds a solution to this problem through the abundance of objects that she encompasses into her installation, which ensure that reductive narratives cannot be taken from the exhibition. In their diversity, and lack of cultural trope, they stress the multiplicities and conradicions her culture is made of, which any culture is made of. In his exhibition 'Culloden 1746,' Andrew Gilbert destabilised historical notions of Highland culutre and masculinity - as represented by tartan - by having his kilt clad Highland warriors don BDSM black PVC boots (see fig. 51) below their kilts. The rest of the exhibition links tartan to Imperialism further afield. He shows awareness of materiality's loaded symbolism aquired through culture, and parodies the sign and symbol to question the authenticity of the meanings loacted in cultural artefacts. Similarly, MacLean presents an awareness of the tendency to self-exoticise or be exoticised through objects via her tactical omission of any object particularly clichéd. Or which might render her museum space a spectacle. Hence, no tartan, no pipes, no 'expected' *Gàidhlig* items – which may well have existed in the original space. It is known that all Gaels are, exhaustedly, aware of their exoticisation. Anthropologist Susan Parman noted that when she arrived in Lewis to study people, those she met joked about whether she had "run out of south sea islanders to study," or had "come to study the primitive natives of Gaell", on Lewis.[120] They knew the tropes. They viewed her with vexation. Parman said that "in attempting to define themselves, crofters are continuously confronted with the image of themselves as marginal members of a fringe society."[121] MacLean's addresses this by circumventing it altogether, her entire ouevre shows not the merest hint of an object which has become culturally representative of her Island – thus seeking to find new objects to represent that culture.

[120] Susan Parman, *Scottish Crofters: A Historical Ethnography of a Celtic Village* (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1990), 15.
[121] Ibid.

Fig. 51: Andrew Gilbert, Installation Shot of 'Culloden 1746*,' 2012. Power Galerie; Hamburg, Germany. © Power Galerie.*

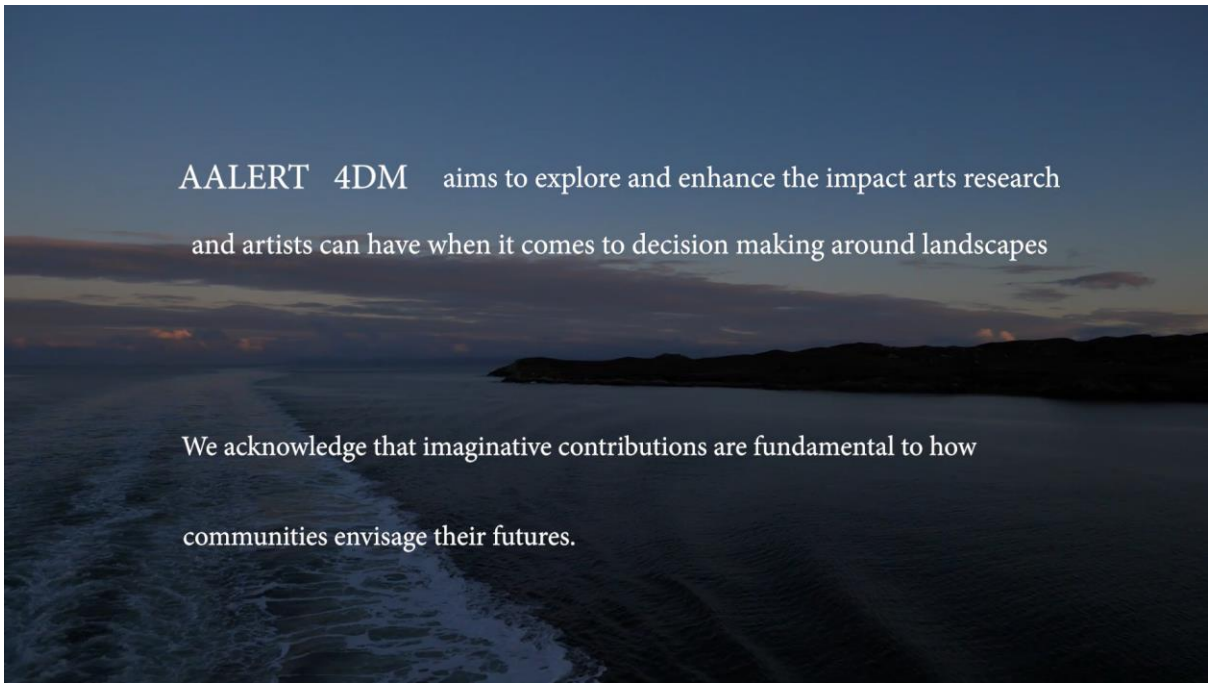
Producing New Imaginaries of Hope

"Even if dominant narratives insist that rural spaces should be relegated to a space-time that can only undergo involution, there are many practices — theoretical, artistic, agricultural and technological — that attest to rurality's potential resistance."
Rural Futurism Manifesto[122]

While the last section looked at representation in terms of Spivak's Darstellung, (representation as portrayal) this section will investigate how our artists engage with Vertretung (political representation) – and the relationship between these two concepts.[123] As has been discussed, the artists in this thesis have produced work detailing personal stories to represent the Gael and this section will argue that this form of representation is valuable in its

[122] Leandro Pisano and Beatrice Ferrara, *Manifesto of Rural Futurism* (2019). Accessed August 2021, URL: https://ruralfuturism.com/assets/temp/Manifesto_eng.pdf.
[123] Ella Shohat, "The Struggle over Representation: Casting, Coalitions, and the Politics of Identification" in *Late Imperial Culture*, eds. Roman de la Campa, E. Ann Kaplan and Michael Sprinkler (New York: Verso, 1995), 173.

capacity to affect policy making and provoke political engagement. In the UK, between 2018 and 2023, over ten million pounds has been allocated to supporting interdisciplinary research on landscape decision making, with artistic representations viewed as foundational to this research.[124] Several conferences have been hosted about the topic. Marnie Keltie herself partook in the short film 'Art is not an Island,' made by Ewan Allison and Maria Rudd for AALERT 4DM – a video looking at how local artistic practitioners influence land policies.[125] Amongst other practitioners, the video focused upon Marnie Keltie and her contribution to the local community. As the video opens, it underlines the premise in a stark white font contrasting against the landscape background: "imaginative contributions are fundamental to how communities envisage their futures" (see fig. 52 for the opening shot). The premise of the film is that new imaginaries of hope can be produced in how artists describe their landscapes, and that artists are the best individuals to represent the themes pertinent to their communities. The fact that this statement was not just alluded to but given to the viewer in sharp opaque text as a preface to the film suggests the urgency the makers felt in conveying this take-home message, given its timely appeal.



[124] The Strategic Priorities Fund Landscape Decisions Programme.
[125] *The Creative Conversations Scoping*, Hosted the 20th February 2021. The writer was a facilitator. For more information see: https://research.reading.ac.uk/aalert/aalert-4dm-scoping-workshop/.

Fig. 52: AALERT 4DM, Still Shot from Art is Not an Island*, 2020. Film. © AALERT.*

In the various works made for her 'Memories of a Village' series, Moira MacLean generates representations which engage with political issues imminent to her locale. She does this through emphasis on listening to personal stories and really focusing on the inhabitants of the lands under discussion. Her colourful, vibrant paintings of the villages are mixed media. Both the windows of homes and sections of the land are pasted with carefully cut and layered sections of her 'mined' wallpaper scraps – instantly impregnating the work with generations of stories and histories. Recently, personal stories have been identified as crucial in understanding place, especially in political issues relative to the *Gàidhlig* such as 'repeopling.' To mark the centenary since the Resettlement Act of 1919, The Scottish Land Commission hired James (Jim) Hunter the historian to put together a collection of personal stories across the *Gàidhealtachd* to see how the land was used and how best to understand the challenges facing rural dwellers so as to best understand how to support and repopulate areas whose population is in decline.[126] "The Story is the umbilical cord between past, present and future," observed Terry Tempest Williams and unpacking personal stories is key to understanding politics which have affected the areas, so as to know how to fix problems affecting the *Gàidhealtachd* in the present and in the future.[127] Critically, it was hoped that stories might ignite public debate and invite conversation, thus implying that collaborative thinking was necessary in designing any hopeful imaginary.

This idea, too, is echoed in Moira MacLean's work. In her Memory of a Village series of 2012, in particular *#12* (see fig. 53), the houses are brought closer together than geography might have them. They can even be described as forming a curved amphitheatre whereby the houses are not built in a straight row but seem to curve around the composition and, inidentally, the land. If the amphitheatre analogy may be accepted, we may say that as the

[126] Andrew Thin, "Foreword" in *Repeopling Emptied Places* (Online: Scottish Land Commission, 2020) URL: https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/downloads/5dfa010b1cfab_Centenary%20of%20Land%20Settlement%20Act%201919%20December%202019%20Comp.pdf

[127] Terry Tempest Williams, *Pieces of White Shell: A Journey to Navajoland* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983; 1987), 130.

houses face the land like an audience, curved around to listen to the stories it has to tell. In this way, MacLean can be seen as producing a symbol of the land ethics she feels her community adheres to – and to which policy makers might take heed. This would be a land ethics based around community which encompasses and listens to the landscape and its needs. This theory of land ethics is well articulated by Aldo Leopold when he describes the ideal relation to land as such: "When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."[128] Love and respect for the land comes from valuing the dialectical and reciprocal relationship between communtiy and land, the human and the more-than human. MacLean creates an imaginary of hope when her representation of community listens to land and her representation is taken onboard by the powers that be. Listening to land assumes the land has a voice; is animate. We feel more responsible towards the animate than the inanimate object, so this shift in perspective is arguably a crucial one for taking care of the landscape which sustains rural communities.[129]

Fig. 53: Moira Maclean, Memory of a Village #12, *2012. Mixed Media. © Moira MacLean.*

Such representations are particularly critical in response to concurrent strands of ideology which affect policy making in the Islands – such as the phenomenon of 'rewilding.' The 'rewilding' zeitgeist makes a general call to 'return to the wild' as an ant anti-establishmentarian and anti-capitalist act. While rewilding critically encourages the adoption

[128] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987; 1949), viii.
[129] The need to accept the animacy of the natural world is discussed in Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (London: Penguin Books, 2020; 2013), 56-59.

of long-ignored indigenous knowledge of the natural world and indigenous practices, it relies on the notion that the 'wilderness' is a pre-capitalist haven and, as Bruce Braun notes, criticism of such a haven is seen as blasphemous. Why? Because if 'widerness' is considered by many to be quasi-sacred, this is an example of neo-colonialism as the middle classes are not willing to help the indigenous person if it means losing their weekend wilderness playground.[130] In practice, this can manifest itself as the environmentalist who wishes to protect the visual not the industrial, giving precedence in policy making to natural sites of beauty and scenic corridors but not traditional fishing practices.[131] 'Wilderness Tourism' says Braun's of his studied region of British Colombia, Canada, and it may be similar in the Scottish Highlands because the NTS revealed statistics detailing that BAME do not use national parks as much as their white counterparts. (While BAME individuals make up around 10% of the national population in Scotland, they represent only about 1% of visitors to National Parks).[132]

The rural as an escapist playground for he who admires the visual more than the existent community is an existing notion, one which appears in pop-culture artefacts such as the 'Sign of the Times' music video of popular singer/songwriter Harry Styles. This lyrics 'getting away from here' are sung whilst flying over areas of (unpopulated) Skye, proffering the Hebrides as the ultimate refuge from civic society (see fig. 54). Neo-romanticism and neo-colonialism slip into these images in the unpopulated, endless hills of Romantic images and the Sublime drama of the Sunset. Assuming that the Highlands are escapist and for tourism precludes, Braun says, that they are apolitical or pre-capitalist (again the nature/ civilised dichotomy). Assuming any region they exists outwith contemporary capitalism distances them from central policy-making by assuming they do not engage with politics. To challenge this, MacLean's rural vision - through its emphasis on personal stories, histories and community presence - articulates notions of a community-centred landscape. This is critical as: "[i]t becomes apparent that rurality today cannot be seen merely as a geographical space; rather, it has to be seen as an expression of "positionality", in terms of an actual political

[130] Braun, 12.
[131] Ibid.
[132] "Engaging BME Communities in National Parks," *Natural England*. Accessed February 2021, URL: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/10637194

position."[133] MacLean's work assumes a positionality which is community centred and speaks to the relation between land and people – echoing the land ethics of Leandro Pisano and Beatrice Ferrara who formed the 'Rural Futurism' Manifesto to find ways to use culture to grasp the intricacies of the rural space and to challenge capitalist narratives which overlook these areas.[134]

Fig. 54: Still-shot from Harry Styles, Sign of the Times, *2017. Dir. By Yoann Lemoinne. © Harry Styles.*

'Rural futurism' challenges notions attached to the rural suggesting its rurality as authentic, utopic, anachronistic, provincial, traditional and stable -and the binaries that support such discourses (belonging vs. alienation, development vs. backwardness).[135] Similarly, the work of Moira MacLean's 'amphitheatre' aims to show Lewis as a place of great performativity, and therefore the perfect place to think of new visions of rural living. Island life is worth listening to as Islands are a place for radical conversations precisely because they are already radical on their own terms. Island innovation is evident globally – for instance as models of generating their own electricity and becoming completely sufficient in renewables. (El Hierro in Spain, just off the African Coast and the smallest of the Canary Islands, was the world's first energy self-sufficient Island as of 2014. Similarly, the Islands of Mallorca, Madeira and Orkney are at the forefront of modelling entrepreneurial energy schemes from which larger land masses can copy strategies). The very act of making art in, or about, the Islands dispels

[133] Pisano and Ferrara.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.

the myth that 'marginal' communities are becoming ever more invisible. In their local practices, MacLean et al show their working spaces as agents of future change for more sustainable and eco-centred practices.

While important in agitating change in policy making, 'new landscapes' such as MacLean's also create narratives of resistance for the community themselves. They create new imaginaries of hope not only on a wider political stage but for the communities they reflect. This, as the epithet suggests, affirms rural resistance.[136] We see this in Keltie's *Wheelbarrow* for the 'So much depends upon' exhibition, shown at Nunton Steadings in Bernera in 2015. The piece was made for an Atlas Arts' project for Taigh Chearsabhagh asking artists on the Uists and Barra to explore the wheelbarrow as "a creative catalyst to share stories and ideas" and explore crofting and Island life. In response to the brief, Keltie's wheelbarrow took a deconstructive approach: dismantling the barrow, setting its pieces upon a raised platform and framing the pieces in a body of text (see fig. 55). By physically unpacking the pieces of the barrow she asks us to unpack agrarian food production, its history and what food production means to those involved. She frames the barrow in its context by quite literally encasing it in a box which is inscribed with a very detailed text describing the history of local food production.

Keltie's 'barrow evidently wished to serve as a pedagogical tool for the local public, as the text is printed in an accessible font facing the viewer to maximise legibility. Surrounding the dismembered barrow are stories of the resistance of indigenous people and their capacity to self-sustain. This piece is testament to how Islanders have quietly resisted against Imperial interventions, collectively sustaining a livelihood through political, social and economic engagement with the specifics of their landscape. Hebridean artist Hector MacInnes suggests that Highland practices and processes *must* be reactive in order to respond with the best solutions to questions regarding the rural.[137] Questions which will define its future. In its reactive response to the agrarian food history on Uist, Keltie's wheelbarrow becomes a tool in provoking community spirit and questioning how local traditions and methods (in this case, sustainable agrarian methods of food consumption) can be explored in a more globalised world without opening them up to abuse. To deconstruct the rural in a means

[136] Pisano and Ferrara.
[137] Hector MacInnes, "Sound Futurism in the Highlands," talk for *ATLAS Arts* (February 22, 2021).

which is non-nostalgic denounces the adjectives often attached to the rural: ‘stable,’ ‘traditional,’ ‘disappearing’ or even ‘remote.’ Instead, her wheelbarrow connotes themes open for discussion: sustainability, methods of food production and climate activism. Only in destroying the old lexicon can a new vocabulary be created and instated. One which locates Uist and its food production in a wider, timely global discourse in the wake of monocrop farming methods.

Fig. 55: Marnie Keltie Wheelbarrow *from ‘So much depends upon’ exhibition, 2015, Nunton Steadings, Bernera. Mixed Media, 2015.*

Keltie creates a specifically *local* new imaginary in the strip of pattern which sweeps across the barrow and connects it visually to the underlying platform (see fig. 56). In a truly poignant and sensitive manner, this pattern describes the machair beside her house in Baleshare by recording every colour the artist has seen there, collecting a database of samples, displayed in intimate hand-painted gestures in hues of grass green, sky blues and heather purples. In celebrating what is specific to the machair and linking it to discursive themes which are global, her work repeals the tide of thought that work form the province is provincial. Mary Morrison does something similar in her work. In the abstracted scattered sands disappearing off the edge of the canvas (as though just washed by a wave) in her *Tide*

Markings I (see fig. 57), the particularity of a life on the edge of the sea is conveyed through abstracted forms. Lists of miscellaneous numbers reference tidal charts and imply the ever moving sea as the natural force which dictates the daily lives of inhabitants of Harris, where tide levels determine whether boats can go out and which routes they can take. Abstract annotation in the form of staves overlying the tidal charts describe how the rhythms of the sea form part of the lives of the locals, affecting their quotidian lives. Keltie's rigorous method - almost scientific – of recording her observations of the machair and Morrison's capacity to convey the extent to which the elements affect daily life where she lives show the validity of artists as sources of knowledge and how policy makers could indeed utilise their work, due to the diligence shown in their practices of paying attention to how the land itself affects its inhabitants.

Fig. 56: Detail from Marnie Keltie, Wheelbarrow. © *Marnie Keltie.*

Fig. 57: Mary Morrison, Tide Markings I*, 2008-2013. 12cm x 12cm oil, mixed media on board, Private Collection. © Mary Morrison.*

Chapter 3 - Repopulating

Inhabiting the Boarded House

"I will go down to Hallaig,

Where the dead are frequenting,

Every generation gone"

Sorley MacLean[138]

In this chapter, I propose the final stage of 'Un-Boarding.' It will be suggested that the house facing the West could be viewed as a metaphorical container with which to host the work of Campbell, Keltie, MacLean, Morrison and Murray. So far, I have presented the boarded house as a symbol of the palimpsest of histories of the *Gàidhealtachd* and discussed how its representation has historically been complicit in cementing preconceptions of the Highlands and Islands and the power of new representations. (Re)Filling of the house could be viewed as a reclamation of the space, a re-inhabitation. Inhabiting it, however, does pose questions such as how will the artists restore the space; will they reconstruct it? How will they cohabit with the histories the space is pregnant with? How might the artists be deployed collectively in the process of filling this space to allow their work to engage in a cross pollination of ideas? What might emerge in the meeting of their practices? I will go on to show that the artists are deploying temporal and spatial tools to best assert a viable space for the indigenous person. In comparing the indigenous space the artists create to the metaphor of the house, the term *dùthcha* is very useful. *Dùthcha,* the *Gàidhlig* word for home which, as discussed in relation to Campbell's work in chapter one, is a looser term than its English counterpart and defines 'home' as inclusive also of the surrounding area and community. This term is preferred as we see the artists concerned not just with reinhabiting the home but how to reinhabit the house and te surrounding land, both being formative to one another and to Island identity.

[138] Sorley MacLean, 118.

In her 2012 ‘Bulk Feeder Photographs’ series, Keltie’s work finds a solution to reinhabiting a space while negotiating its historical tensions. Keltie’s *#23* (see fig. 58) discusses how physical spaces of colonial scarring can be recuperated. The photograph is composed entirely of the structural framework and stairways of the internal space of a disused and disregarded bulk feeder fishing boat. The boat - situated in the sound of Harris just North of Bernera – suggests a long history of displacement and migration from Imperially organised fishing towns. The sea where this boat is situated was once well known in indigenous knowledge. However, it is now little known because passage across it by boat is more or less redundant; roads elsewhere linking the archipelago of islets which make up Uist and much of the Outer Hebrides.[139] The image’s closely cropped frame is nearly totally comprised of only two colours: the auburn brown of the boat’s rusting, decaying metal and the rich verdant green of the growing mould. The two merge seamlessly in the interior of the bulk feeder boat. Given that from the meeting point of nature and industry doth grow this scene, this image exemplifies Bhabha’s notion of hybridity. The two cultures cohabit a space and in a way which goes *beyond* the realms of each individual culture. As Bhabha wrote: "the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation."[140] He is referring to the productivity and possibility conceived of in the moment of hybridity, of the meeting of supposedly opposed cultures. Likewise, Keltie’s photograph is an homage to Hybridity and the convergence of cultures in which the artist states she finds great beauty.[141]

[139] The boat remains near Berneray, just North of North Uist, where forty crofting families were cleared in 1848 by factor MacDonald and moved into fishing jobs in and around Harris.
[140] Homi K. Bhabha, “The Third Space. Interview with Homi Bhabha,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd, 1990), 211.
[141] Keltie said to writer in Interview in email.

Fig. 58: Marnie Keltie, #23 from 'Bulk Feeder Photographs' Series*, 2012. © Marnie Keltie.*

This convergence exemplifies the *hither and thither* Bhabha admires in Renée Green's 1990-91 'liminal' staircase (see fig, 59). In Green's work, the staircase provides a habitable corridor between white space (above) and black space (below) and the implied infinite movement between the two. This movement denies belonging to either a wholly essential black or white space – her life is defined by fluidity between the two. Green describes this fluidity as creating "migratory systems" of cultural flux.[142] Keltie too can be seen creating migratory, *otherwise* systems within the tension of cultural flux, where the processes of algae bloom and the boat's entropy are represented in equal measure and what is celebrated is the cultural product of this flux. Here, as in Bhabha's definition, hybridity is a solution to the meeting of cultures (literally, live cultures like Algae). What is productive about emphasising the hither and thither in both Green's and Keltie's work is that this denies essentialist labelling of space, which could problematically become neocolonial. In doing so, Keltie can be seen pondering the same perplexity as Derrida's Aporia: the multiple vs. the single and

[142] Renée Green, "Shifting Mental Spaces," *Spectrum*. Accessed November 2021. URL: https://spectrum.mit.edu/spring-2013/shifting-mental-spaces/.

how to transcend while also not compromising the 'Otherness' of something.[143] Keltie embraces the supposed impasse posed by the potentially jarring convergence of multiple threads of different or opposing ideologies cultures (that of the Imperial overriding culture and the indigenous). She does so by celebrating the harmonising beauty of bringing these contradictions and paradoxes into the open. Her abstract work transcends 'clashing' Otherness through a muted, gentle palette of delicate fading textures; peeling and revealing. Often the algae cedes into the metal, yet the forms remain distinct and uncompromised.

Fig. 59: Renée Green, Sites of Genealogy, *16th December 1990- 9th June 1991. New York City, Museum of Modern Art. © Museum of Modern Art.*

Marnie teases several ideas out of the tensions located at the crux of this cultural flux. Bulkfeeder photograph *#19* (see fig.60) displays a piece of machinery in disuse and decay -

[143] In Jaques Derrida, *Aporias* trans. Thomas Dutoit (California: Stanford University Press, 1993), Derrida poses the question "My Death – is it possible?" which reveals a concern in the specificity of experience, where it is located and if it could be found in the singular, the multiple, the linguistic or the trans-national all while honouring the fact of that these different experiences *are* different while looking at their points in common.

though not so old as to be quaint. Bhabha exhorts practitioners to make work which privileges hybridity and paradox because doing so creates a dynamic 'Third Space' – a space much like our artists are creating. Said Bhabha of the location of the Third Space: "The theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity."[144] What he is suggesting is that hybrid moments birth the location of the Third Space, and the utility of such a space is its ability to go beyond polarised notions of culture. Marnie suggests that it is continued experience of the tension between two cultures which heals. She specifically refers to the natural organisms as "colonising" the boat, an organic colonising which performs a decolonising act. [145] "It is the inbetween space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture," Bhabha extols, "and by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves."[146] Keltie finds and investigates this inbetween space of two cultures meeting and focuses on the beaty of what merges. It is time and continued interaction which causes the beauty her photographs capture, the effect of the many years of melding the natural cultures have had upon the metal. This suggests she belives it is a lengthy process required for practicing existing in the Third Space, a sustained practice.

[144] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 56.
[145] Marnie Keltie in interview with the writer over email.
[146] Homi K. Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences," *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin (New York: Routledge, 2006): 155–157.

Fig. 60: Marnie Keltie, #19 from 'Bulk Feeder Photographs,' *2012. © Marnie Keltie.*

Photograph *#2* gives a particularly literal, visual articulation of space as read by Bhabha (see fig. 61). Bulk Feeder *#2* creates a disjuncture between the postcard-perfect emerald green hills, grey rock and crystal sea of the Outer Hebrides, the 'typical' first space or indigenous space with the disused bulk feeder which is representative of the second space, the imposed colonial space.[147] The doorway of the bulk feeder leads the eye to the land. Keltie is quite literally framing the land by the work which went on to sustain it, and which bears a hybrid identity across the last few generations. Marnie frames the landscape by an aspect that tourists do not want to see on their Hebridean holiday – signs of capitalist/ industrial rubbish.[148] (I think of the story by Bruce Braun where he observed a group of middle-class white individuals on an exclusive guided trip into Clayoquot Sound to view the Nuu-chah-nulth only to be disappointed, nay, disgusted, to watch them consume coca cola and mashed potatoes – activities viewed as contemporary and American, exactly those which they had

[147] Historical information from an account by Alick Morrison translated from his *Orain Chaluim* in "Troubled Years: Berneray During the Mid 19th Century." https://www.hebrideanconnections.com/historical-events/76676. Accessed 25/11/2021.
[148] Edward Ardener "Remote Areas: Some Theoretical Considerations," in *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2 no. 1 (2012): 519-533.

wished to avoid on their 'trip into timelessness').[149] Keltie is using the medium of photography to explore *existing* third spaces within the landscape, discussing where we might locate an alternative space or moment of newness.

Fig. 61: Marnie Keltie, #2 from 'Bulk Feeder Photographs,' *2012.* © *Marnie Keltie.*

In their evocation of a third space, all of our artists pay special attention to *time* and its portrayal (from Murray's recreation of the Blackhouse dresser, which represented generations of domestic history, to Campbell's pastiches of place, which collated and scrambled memories of place from different time spheres). Concern with time is plainly visible in the

[149] Braun, 120.

work of Moira MacLean, too. For instance, in *#5* from her Beachscapes series (see fig. 62) the space of the beach spans generations of people through the scraps of wallpaper she has mined and pasted into the scene. This is congruent with Bhabha's 'temporal caesura,' an idea he believes key to greater subaltern and postcolonial agency.[150] What Bhabha was suggesting is that a Hegelian notion of an unfolding progressive time trajectory (Bhahbha calls this a "myth") is corollary to notions of colonial 'progression.' Ergo, rejection of progressive time is a strong decolonising strategy. The temporal disjuncture in Moira MacLean's work is created by ensuring she used no foreshortening and creating no depth to the work. This she achieves through the application of solid blocks of colour or strips of cut wallpaper. The effect is that the past coexists – and is interchangeable - with the present time.

Fig. 62: Moira MacLean, #5*, 'Hebridean Beachscape,' c.2000-2007. Mixed Media © Moira MacLean.*

This specific strand of non-progressive time mirrors the time structure Sorley suggested in his poem *Hallaig* for replenishing and repopulating the village:

"…I will go down to Hallaig,

[150] Bhabha, *Location of Culture,* 341.

to the Sabbath of the dead,

where the people are frequenting,

every single generation gone.

They are still in Hallaig,

MacLeans and MacLeods,

all who were there in the time of Mac Gille Chaluim

the dead have been seen alive."[151]

As an act of resilience, Sorley MacLean believed the power of the bard was to preserve the past by keeping it alive in the present through his words. He achieved this by making his characters recede and emerge temporally as he seamlessly threaded past and future into a poem written in the simple present. Moira MacLean similarly immortalises the memory of Lewis' inhabitants - as opposed to allowing it to fade along with their house. She does so just as Sorley challenged the vision of Hallaig as a deathly, empty space by posthumously filling the space with people and their merriment: "there is only the congregation of the girls keeping up the endless walk… their laughter in my ears."[152] Likewise, Moira introduces the vibrant and noisy collage of scraps which might be thought of as accumulative of the generations of background noise to the daily scenes which had unfolded in front of them, and they bring this soundtrack to the quiet of the beach. The emphasis on the dead being seen alive is recreated in Moira's work by the retouching of paint to bring the original scraps of gathered materials 'back to life.' If Sorley opens his poem with "*Tha tìm, am fiadh, an coille Hallaig*/ time, the deer, is in the wood of Hallaig," with the deer being a symbol of wildness (the name for deer in *Gàidhlig* is Fiadh, literally derived from the word for wild), he proposes a temporal that is wild (and therefore ambiguous) in the sense that it is free from constraint.[153]

Time is a wild deer portrayed withot constraint and with much ambiguity in the work of the artsists studied in this thesis. Like MacLean and Keltie, Ishbel Murray proposes a fractured

[151] Sorley, *Hallaig*, 118.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.

time rooted in the fragmented, the broken. Her practice which begins by collecting fragments found on the shores of Lewis. Or in collecting 'fragments' of speech overheard in mundane conversations by those in the community, as was done for her ceramic series (see fig. 63 for examples of both). Murray chortles that the collection process of these fragments is a clichéd beachcombing activity of 'typical islanders,' like collecting beach flotsam.[154] Yet this 'clichéd' process becomes political when the works she makes from the fragments invites a theorizing of time which actualises Julia Kristeva's 'presentism.'[155] 'Presentism' is untimely time which denies progressive – totalitizing – time. Kristeva, much like our artists, is concerned with the effect totalitizing time has upon notions of geography and state. She suggests that notions of a stable state rely on '*bildung'*: a neat, straight trajectory in time and collective memory. The best disruption for this, she notes, is drawing diagonal lines across time and place between identities. Murray's fragmet collecting process collates items from across multiple times and places. Keltie, too, can be seen doing just that in her *Untitled* (see fig.65), an oil painting which bears a cast of a creel tag she found. The tag had crossed the Pacific from Maine, arrived on the beach in Uist and bore the name of Phil Durrell (see fig. 64). Keltie then contacted the U.S.A. Fisheries Dept., explaining what she had found and leaving her details for Durrell. To her delight, Durrell responded to her and they shared many stories comparing fishing livelihoods in Uist and Maine. The artwork celebrates the forged global connections across time zones and state lines that such a tiny object and chance occurrence can cause.

[154] Interview with Ishbel Murray.
[155] Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time" transl. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake in *Signs* 7 no. 1 (1979): 13-35.

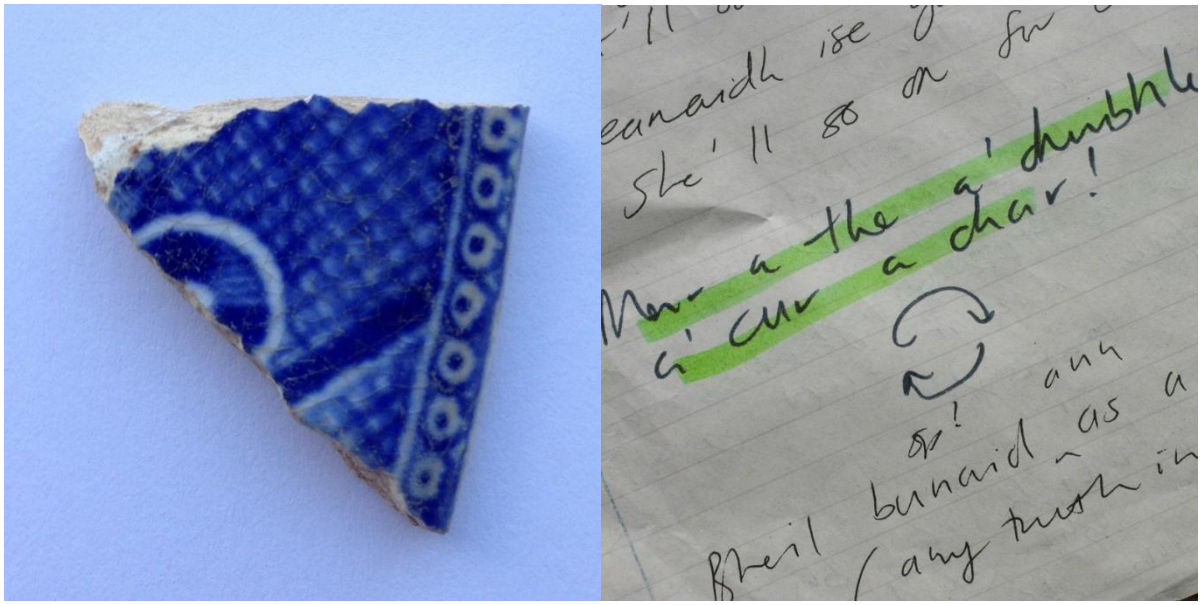


Fig. 63: Ishbel Murray Fragment *(Left)*, Scrap of jotted down text *(Right). © Ishbel Murray.*

Fig. 64: Creel Tag with fisherman's name, Phil Durrell, of Maine, c. 2012. © Marnie Keltie.

Fig. 65: Marnie Keltie, Untitled, *c. 2012. © Marnie Keltie.*

We might notice that in all these creative expressions of time there is a focus on the sea, on its cyclical rhythms and the objects it drags and deposits hither and thither. This is especially evident in the work of Mary Morrison whose oeuvre is pregnant with notational staves and gestures overlaying abstracted seascapes. For instance, the canvas of *Wave* (see fig. 66) encompasses a dark and brooding sky merging into the sea and framed by the musical notation underneath. *Wave* takes an abstracted, aerial perspective which renders the sea almost unidentifiable; just an ambiguous, frothing mass. 'Presentism' is visible in the abstract background which is not time stamped and eludes geographical or temporal location. The pull of the moon is referenced in the distant perspective and in the celestial deep blue while a spattering of white markings gives the impression of stars. As though a title to the work, the musical staves run from one side of the canvas to the other, literally underlining the seascape and thus the idea that the sea's rhythm is the backbone to the whole painting. Consequently, the backbone to life on Harris. This image is only one of a larger series 'Sea Music II' - and its prequel series - which further explore the rhythmic yet irregular ebb of tides and seas, often looking at their existential qualities, interested in the sea's mysterious and celestial connections. Morrison says her work is metaphor abound and therefore we may read into the 'musical metaphors' experiences of musical time; suspended time, motion, rhythm, pauses,

changing tempo and metre.[156] These are implied physically through the layering of tracings with washes of oil paints and screen prints. As such, *Wave* illustrates Kristeva's cyclical 'Women's Time.' By this, Kristeva means the specifically 'unreal' and anti-totalitizing method of marking time through the specifically feminine – the gestational or the menstrual.[157]

Fig. 66: Mary Morrison, Wave*, c.2010-2016. 15 x 15 cm. Mixed Media. Private Collection. © Mary Morrison.*

[156] Mary Morrison, "Mary.Morrison Art," *Instagram.* Accessed November 2021, URL: https://www.instagram.com/marymorrison.art/.
[157] Kristeva, 13-16.

How tides mark time as a central theme in Keltie's work. Keltie remarks that the tide takes prominent form in her work through the form of the repeated line, marking the rhythmic intervals of tides.[158] Such lines become the central concern of *Wall Painting*, 2011 (see fig. 67), where the artist made up her own egg tempera to adorn the walls of the Royal Scottish Academy (RSA) with a series of lines running horizontally on a strip up the bare wall roughly twenty by fifteen feet. A few months later she exhibited her *Fresco Fragments* (fig. 68), the broken scraps of *Wall Painting* she kept after the exhibition culminated. In this piece, the fragmented scraps from her destroyed work were piled upon a plinth for the viewer to inspect like the debris of a storm. There is a metaphor here for the fragility and instability of any time-keeping method – an emphasis on the instability of trusted time keeping methods.

Fig. 67: Marnie Keltie, Wall Art, *2011, Homemade pigment on plaster board. © Marnie Keltie.*

[158] Interview with Marnie Keltie.

Fig. 68: (Left) Marnie Keltie, Fresco Fragments, *2011. Handmade pigment on plaster.* © *Marnie Keltie.*

Fig. 69: (Right) Detail of Fresco Fragmanets. © *Marnie Keltie.*

If *Fresco Fragments* is compared to *Becoming Alluvium* (2019 ongoing) by Vietnamese artist Thao Nguyen Phan (see fig. 70) it becomes evident that the theme of destabilising colonial progressive trajectories of time is occurring in other postcolonial contexts. In both works, time is not represented as chromatic. In Phan's work, ecological and economic problems on the Mekong River are explained via fragmented footage of herself interweaved with scraps of mythology and the history of industrialisation in the area, the root of the problems linked to colonialism through the included animation of illustrations by French naturalist and explorer of the Mekong River, Louis Delaporte. Phan chooses to create an immersive room to showcase her video by introducing her "Perpetual Brightness" paintings opposite the large screen projection of the film – so that the viewer is surrounded. In being surrounded, the viewer is implicated. The space makes a request of the viewer: the video isn't bemoaning the ecological change, it is rooting the problem and requesting resolve through collective efforts. Keltie achieves a similar effect in utilising a plimth to display her fragments – a first in her ouevre. Keltie and Phan, though their master medium is painting, aim to take the viewer from the cerebral realm of the flat artwork and transport them into immersive bubbles or pockets of space. To do so they insinuate through the immersive experience that these spaces are performative and created by the artist and viewer alike.

Fig. 70: Installation shot from Thao Nguyen Phan, Becoming Alluvium, *2019 ongoing. Single Channel colour Video, 16 mins 40 seconds. Produced by the Hans Nefkens Foundation. Image from Chisendale exhibition 2020. © Thao Nguyen Phan.*

For Bhabha, the performative, as proposed by Phan and Keltie, introduces the 'in-between' temporally. Which then corrupts a static nation narrative which defines a state's people as homogenous. Aptly naming this idea 'DissemiNation,' Bhabha optimistically proposes that performativity is key to deconstructing institutions like the nation.[159] There is, therefore, a political and postcolonial goal in establishing new temporal and spatial set ups within these artists' practice. Beachcombing is no longer a cliché activity but the departure point for this conscientious building of a radical third space. We can see that in the (re)habitation of the *Dùthcha,* the artists are relishing the opportunity to set new ground rules on how the space is constructed and how time within it might be marked, how one might behave in the space. These women are (quietly) proposing a new symbolic order. As Kristeva asks, what happens when women refuse this society and establish a parallel civilization governed by a new set of

[159] Bhabha, *Location of Culture,* 209-214.

ideas?[160] The repopulated house, then, becomes a locus of potential - the development of a new space-time continuum, even.

The Diasporic Third Space: Spatial tools of Resistance

"The relationship between the individual

and the landscape that has shaped them…

[Is] a 'Geography of the Mind'… [A]lways shifting."

Mary Morrison[161]

In asserting this new, temporally and spatially radical third space, our artists resist recreating neo-colonial space through an assertion of what Avatar Brah calls 'Diasporic Space.' For Brah, diasporic space is a concept (not the historical events of diaspora). Brah considers diasporic those who have migrated (and their descendants) but *equally* those who are indigenous.[162] As such, the concept of Diaspora Space foregrounds the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put.' Murray's *Thàinig boile oirre airson a dhol dhachaig* (see fig. 71) exemplifies how both the stories of the indigenous and the migrated person are heavily entangled. She does this by producing a work whose perspective is simultaneously both the migrated and that of the indigenous. The title conveys this, with *Thàinig boile oirre airson a dhol dhachaigh* translating loosely as 'a sudden frenzy came upon her to return home.' Murray makes work about returning home from her self-declared 'home' of Glasgow but in conversation she always refers to returning to Lewis as returning 'home,' too, suggesting the ease with which she can occupy two positions. Edward Said remarks upon the advantages of the exile position: "Seeing 'the entire world as a foreign land,' makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise

[160] Kristeva, 26.
[161] Mary Morrison, "Artist's Statement," Mary Morrison. Accessed October 2019, URL: https://www.marymorrison.co.uk/Biography.
[162] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 181.

to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions."[163] This capacity to imagine different dimensions and uphold a multiplicity of perspectives is perhaps that which facilitates the possibility of creating a new space which not only reclaims and restores an indigenous space but considers the agency of the indigenous actor in imagining and creating a new future, a future space formed and organically led "by way of our own lights" as Iain MacKinnon suggests.[164]

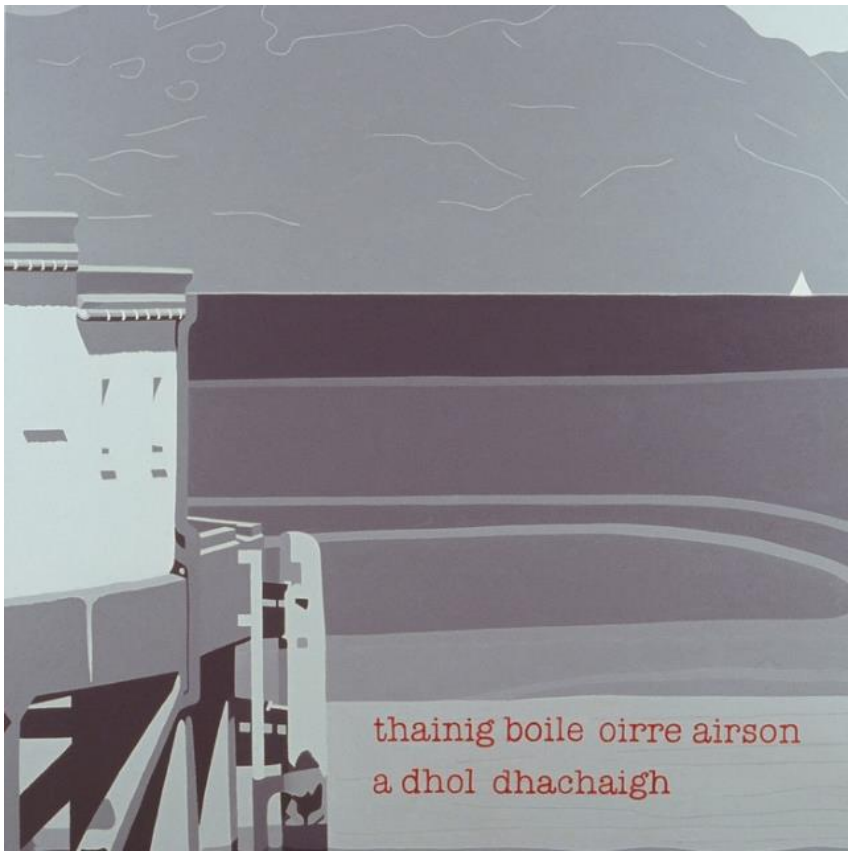


Fig. 71: Ishbel Murray, Thàinig boile oirre airson a dhol dhachaigh, *c. 2009. Oil on canvas, 100cm x 100 cm. © Ishbel Murray.*

Thàinig boile shows a hilly mountain landscape viewed from the ferry pier, separated by the sea but with a small sailing boat suggesting the longing for a passage home. The hilly landscape might be the idealised Lewis, imagined and dreamt of, as in reality the Island is not

[163] Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 2000), 186.
[164] Mackinnon, "Colonialism and the Highland Clearances," 41.

actually visible in this form from the ferry ports of either Ullapool or Uig. Specifically, Murray did not use the *Gàidhlig* word for home '*taigh*' but the more general word *dhachaigh*, which in Hebridean usage often refers more to one's homeland, the Island. It links the indigenous person with the community – the longing to go home refers to returning to the community and landscape. The work states the way the diasporic person carries their memory of the Islands with them and carries this sensation with them, rather than painting a scene of great loss or melancholy. This is important in finding new ways for the diasporic to write their experience - too often in postcolonial or 'multicultural' literature the only form of accepted diasporic work is work which deals with an alienation, rootlessness and homelessness only resolved by forming stronger links to the place of birth or idealisation of a homeland.[165] Here, beauty and even serenity is found in this sensation, there is acceptance and not pain.

Murray further blurs the line between the 'stayed put' and the 'migrated' person with her 2021 *Tea Picket* cup (see fig. 72). Just as in the 'Fragments' teacup series, with her *Tea Picket* cup she mixes her usual blend of blue watercolour images and printed *Gàidhlig* text, which lines the internal rim of the teacup. Commissioned by the Nicolls Gallery of Glasgow to make a piece related to the location, she discovered that the Gallery was next door to where the 'Tea Picket' protests in Partick occurred in 1915. These were rent strikes conducted by women in a brave response to the landlords' exploitation of tenants through illegal evictions after World War One. This was due to demand for housing in the area (which is close to the Glasgow Shipyards). Given that many Gaels migrating to Glasgow found themselves either in Southside or Partick, her excavating practice of *Gàihdlig* history is extended to include the spaces of diaspora settlement. For this reason, it is again a *Gàihdlig* text inscribed inside the lip of her teacup: "Chan òrdugh bat' aig bàillidh," translating as 'A Bailiff's staff is not a decree.' This teacup series, then, embodies the mixed narratives of the indigenous and the emigrant.

[165] Lynne Pearce, "Introduction" in *Postcolonial Manchester: Diaspora Space and the Devolution of Literary Culture*, edited by Lynne Pearce, et al., Manchester University Press, 2013. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gla/detail.action?docID=6371095. 2021-09-25.

The manner in which she finds roots in both places emphasises why diaspora space is productive: because it denies originary absolutes. The figure Murray paints on her teacup to represent the tea picketing women resembles the fierce Marianne figure from Eugene Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* of 1830 (see fig. 73). While Delacroix's figure is explicitly French, Murray's 'Marianne' – the viewer infers from the text - is a Glasgow Gael. She brandishes not a flag but a tea pot, insinuating it is *actions* not blood or birth which define belonging. As Brah describes it, the diaspora space belongs to *whoever is narrated into the story*.[166] This is crucially inclusive as it incorporates whoever is narrated into the story *next*, wherever they hail from. This is an important function of the diasporic, it stops any space from being exclusive. Pushing the seam between the two spaces emphasises hybridity, with hybridity issues very visible in emigrant and diasporic literature and the Gael's status as 'transcultural.' The use of postcolonial theory on transcultural geographical areas is highly useful for debating power structures and cultural multiplicity, enthuses Silke Stroh, *while avoiding terminological preferences*.[167] Thus, for the reader who is still sceptical of applying postcolonial theory to a landscape which cannot be officially confirmed as a postcolonial space, thinking of the *Gàihdhealtachd* in terms of diasporic or 'transcultural' space might allow such a reader to circumvent issues regarding terminology and still reap the analytical benefits of these discourses.

[166] Brah, 183.
[167] Silke Stroh, Gaelic Scotland in the Colonial Imagination (Illinois: North Western Uni Press, 2017), 22.

Fig. 72: (Left): Ishbel Murray, Glasgow Ceramic, *2021. Ceramic. Nicoll Gallery, Glasgow. © Ishbel Murray.*

Fig. 73: (Right): Detail from Ishbel Murray, Glasgow Ceramic. © Ishbel Murray.

Brah's writing proposes a "diasporic community," with Diasporic Space open to a flux of fluid migratory identities – the contingency of which is explored in the work of Mary Morrison.[168] Works like *A Scattering - Diaspora V* (see fig. 74) are part of the artist's general aim to explore the relationship of the individual and the landscape that has shaped them. *Scattering* shows the topographical markings of a map interlaced with grid lines and an abstracted blue space that could represent the ocean across which a diasporic community might cross. One could assume that the work is about the nineteenth century diaspora of the Western Isles, given the rest of Morrison's oeuvre. However, Morrison gives no indication that this is indeed Harris. Nor is any indication of chronology given. The viewer is made aware that there is no specific single event being referenced. *Scattering* is, therefore, a universal statement regarding diasporas. The scattering suggests that the diasporic community is united by their relation *to diaspora itself*, to one another, as opposed to place of origin or place of arrival. Titles in her oeuvre like *Crossing, Journey* and *Drift* combined with *Diaspora* confirm the declaration in her artist's statement that her work is about the *flux* of community, about the 'always shifting.'[169]

[168] Ibid.
[169] Morrison quoted in this section's epithet.

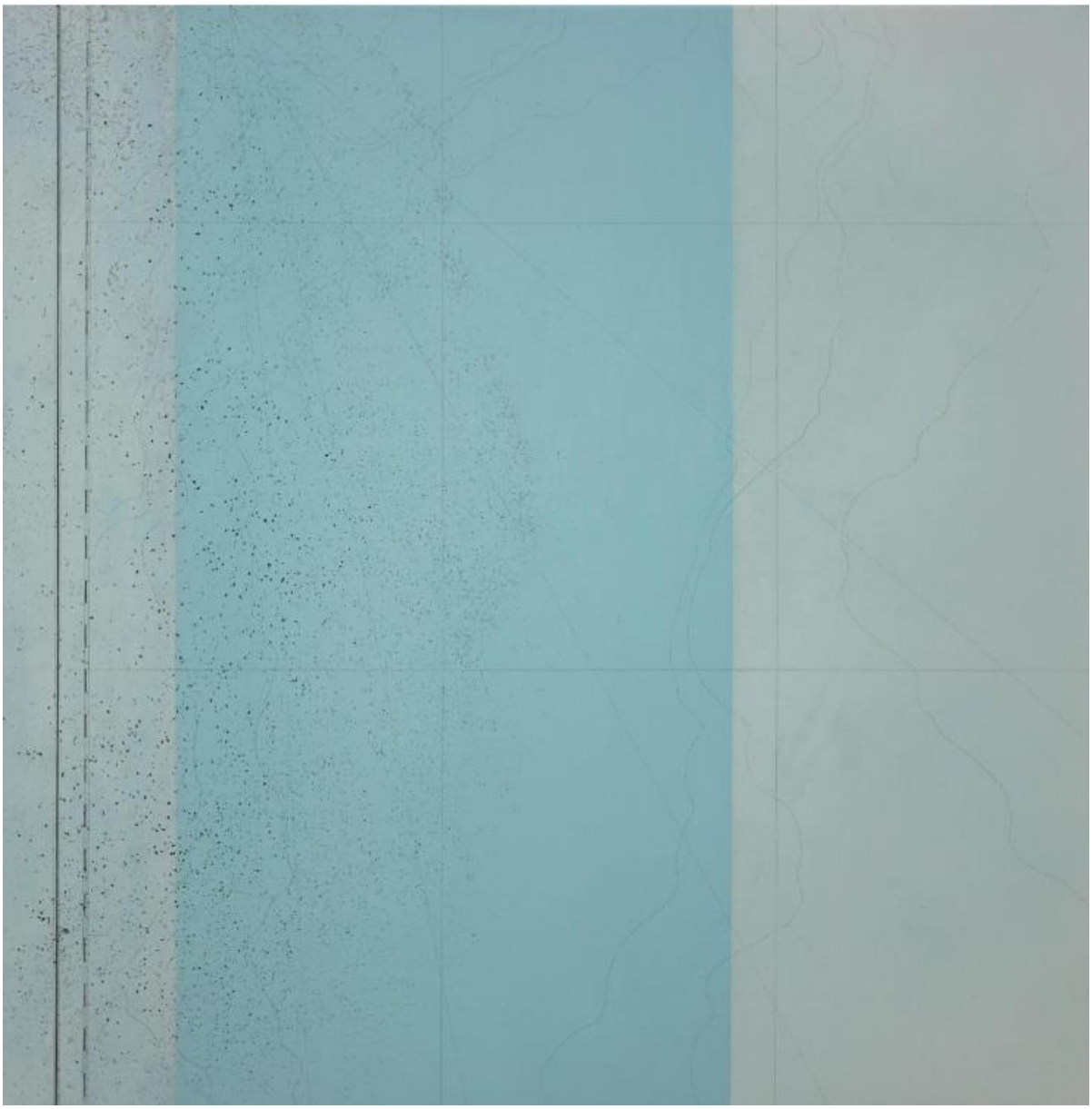


Fig. 74: Mary Morrison, A Scattering – Diaspora V, c. 2015-2021. *Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas, 100 x 100cm. © Mary Morrison.*

Thinking of the community of people ascribing to a Diasporic community is a discursive theme present in the work of practitioners in other postcolonial contexts. For instance, in *Atlas*, 2016 (see fig. 75) Kathy Prendergast promoted inclusivity when she imagined a Europe freed from territories, boundaries, frontiers, and networks of roads and rivers. She did so by setting one hundred copies of the *AA Road Atlas of Europe*, each open to a different page and each page painstakingly coloured black except for settlements. One travelled between the settlements via the trestle tables the maps sat on. Thus, in the viewer's

engagement with the maps, cultural differences were levelled. No boundaries existed and movement between places was not restricted by existing routes. In amongst these lands and maps, the viewer becomes somewhat displaced in their movement, part of a flux or of a journey alongside the other gallery visitors. This creation of a feeling of displacement resonates with the premise of "Imaginary Homelands" in which Salman Rushdie proposes that we are all displaced, if not physically then temporally.[170] In Rushdie's account, everyone is displaced in time from a 'glorious' national past they might want to go back to. Thinking of a united displaced peoples is useful as it disposes of any national identity but in compensation everyone becomes heirs to all cultures of the world and can create our own cultural identity of transformation. Hence the necessitation of our artists to invoke the specifically diasporic in their reconstruction of space.

Fig. 75: Kathy Prendergast, Atlas*, 2016, 100 road atlases, ink, trestle tables, dimensions variable. © Kathy Prendergast.*

Global displacement is also the central theme to Keltie's 2011 work *Dislocation* (see fig. 76). We can see how Keltie would identify with Rushdie, given that she straddles both the worlds of Edinburgh and the Hebrides; someone whose work embraces displacement as a beautiful thing. Keltie has said that she sees the sea's waves and the way they move flotsam as a

[170] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1992).

parallel to the waves of immigrants washing onto shores across Europe and the movement of people worldwide.[171] Such was the principle of *Dislocation*, where the artist painted a canvas in tactile, almost anthropomorphised thick paint in abstracted pattern. She then divided and separated the canvas into pieces, pieces which were then sold on individually or exhibited separately so that the severed sections would be diffused geographically. The process mirrors the displacement of peoples across the world. The idea of afterlives in the new habitats is referenced too in the various new locations the works go on to inhabit. As Gloria Anzaldúa rightly notes, 'Borderlands' are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other but *also* between races, classes, genders and sexualities – and her solution is not to exasperate these differences but *celebrate them* by bringing them together: any "space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" she writes poetically.[172] Keltie's work is a tentative toward transcending borders of gender, sex, class and indigeneity/ diasporic/ otherwise. In diminishing borderlands and forging global connections, the diasporic community breaks down identity barriers (while celebrating differences) by imagining their shared connections through a connected migratory experience.

[171] Keltie to the writer at an interview in her studio, November 2019.
[172] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The new Mestiza*, (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

Fig. 76: Marnie Keltie, Dislocation*, 2012. Oil on plaster and board 33.02 cm by 33.02 cm. © Marnie Keltie.*

MacLean further transcends the borders between peoples by bringing the viewer into the diasporic space through the use of mirrors in her Buisneachd exhibition (see fig. 77). Nikki Gregson notes that any space is brought into being through performances.[173] In Buisneachd, the viewer is critical in bringing this third space into existence - they are made to become an active performer. When entering the Buisneachd exhibition, the viewer might note that in this representation of a domestic interior there are no bodies present. The body is presented via its absence, its negative presence. (This reflects the work of all of our artists, who the reader may have noticed tend to omit any figurative descriptions in their work). The only body who *is* present is that of the visitor. The visitor is made to realise this via the wall of mirrors reflecting their presence back into the space. The visitor of the exhibition becomes the inhabitant, if temporarily. Their positionality is welcomed to the space and sparks new reactive discussions through the associations they produce with the existing objects. The presence of newcomers ensures that, as a third space, the house is hospitable and not insular - ensuring it is multicultural and that its future is defined by those who choose to visit the space and form a reciprocal relationship with it. This can be seen as a metaphor for not only re-

[173] Nikki Gregson "Taking Butler Elsewhere: Performativities, Spatialities and Subjectivities," in *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* 18 (2000), 438.

inhabiting the once boarded house of Sorley MacLean but for repopulating the *Gàidhealtachd.*

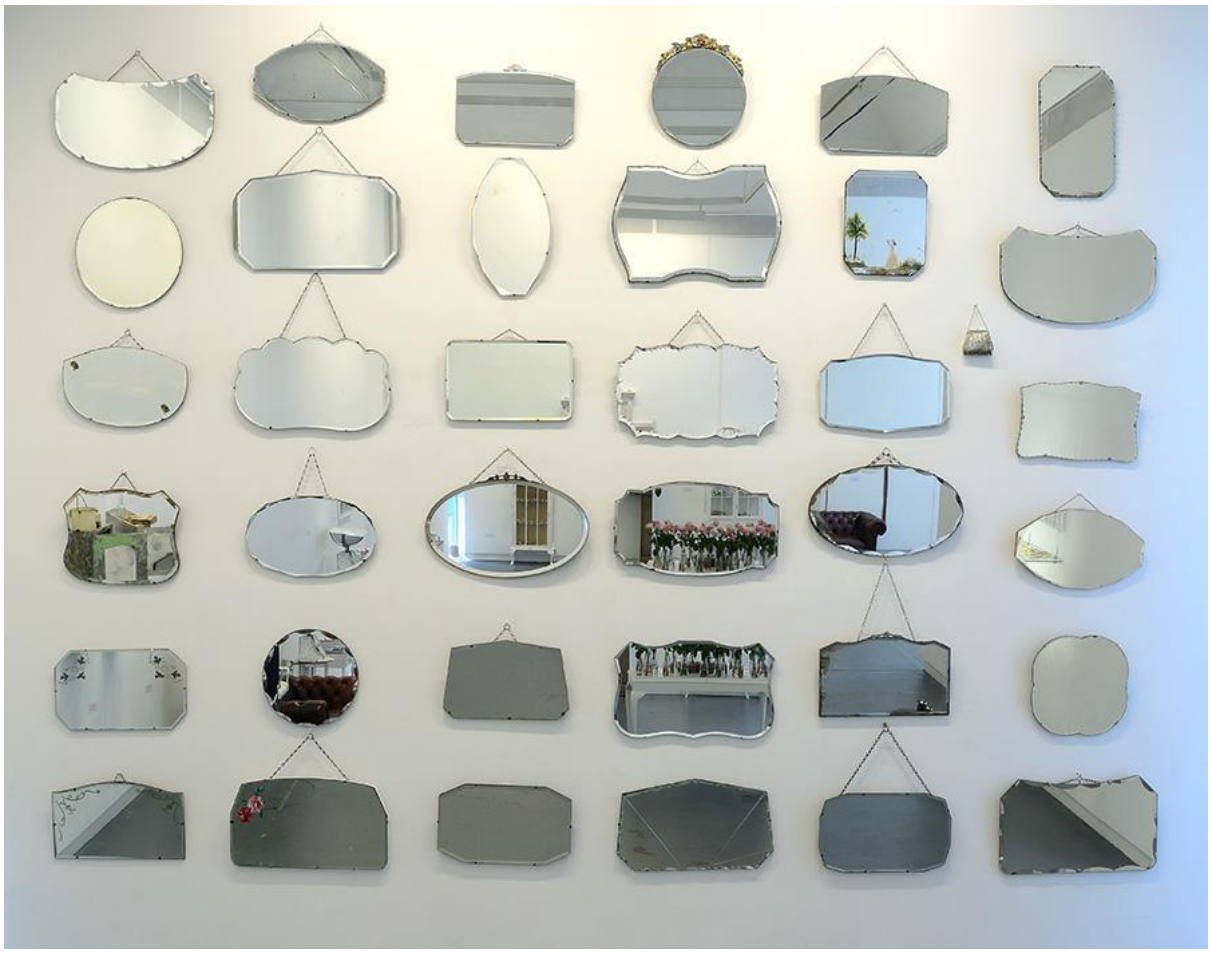


Fig. 77: Moira MacLean, Mirrors, *detail from Buisneachd*. © *Moira MacLean.*

Furthermore, conceiving of the space of the artists' work in the public as diaspora space and hospitable space has big political implications too. Diaspora space stresses *difference,* emphasising that those subscribing to the space are not a unified nor heterogeneous group but connected only through the narrative of migration. In his 1994 text, *Diasporas,* James Clifford asked, "[w]hat is at stake, politically and intellectually, in contemporary invocations of diaspora?"[174] If we've already shown that intellectually: it allows our artists' space to not be homogenised or singularised in narrative, then politically it allows us to think of solutions to that difference. Lucy Lippard rightly observes that community policies develop best when

[174] James Clifford, "Diasporas" in *Cultural Anthropology*, 9 no. 3 (1994) 302.

working *with* differences and being open to how differences change and evolve over time.[175] From a political standpoint, as Iain MacKinnon and Liam Campbell discussed in their Reflections on Community Mapping, community-centric land reforms are the correct way forward for the *Gàidhealtachd* but implementing them relies on appreciating difference between individuals in that community.[176] Collective ownership means different things for different individuals – all of whom may possess varied investments in varying ideologies. An inclusive and multicultural space which acknowledges and integrates difference is key to attaining productivity.

The House as a Safe Space: Giving Back

"Let our three-voiced country
Sing in a new world."

Iain Crichton Smith[177]

This section will propose the final process of 'un-boarding' the Abandoned House: envisioning it *as a public space*. The trajectory of ideas discussed so far in the paper finds its logical culmination in bringing these artists together collaboratively, in real time, so that an active conversation develops out of the themes in their work. The Abandoned House may serve as a metaphorical container in which to house their practices, allowing them to develop their emergent temporal and spatial strategies in collaboration. Furthermore, to explore them to their full potential. As Murdo Macdonald said of trying to set out an exhibition of 'Highland Art,' the aim was to show the culture from the very perspective of the home from which it pertained, specifically, the perspective from the interior of the home gazing West.[178] To locate a public intervention and collaboration of Campbell, Keltie, MacLean, Morrison and Murray within the metaphorical house looking West from which the artists have

[175] Lippard, 23.
[176] Iain MacKinnon and Liam Campbell, "'Isteach chun an Oileain': reflections on community mapping." *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, vol. 19, no. 2, autumn 2010, pp. 97+. *Gale AcademicOneFile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A396615414/AONE?u=anon~475c60ad&sid=googleScholar&xid=0ffd4d9a.
[177] Iain Crichton Smith, "New Day, in *Variations on a New Song: poems from the Holyrood Poetry Link Scheme* (Edinburgh: Scottish Poetry Library, 2000).

[178] Murdo Macdonald, "Towards an Exhibition of Highland Art," in *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 15-23 (2009), 164.

extracted objects, ideas and histories with their subsequent work and practices would facilitate a hybrid space hithering and thithering between past and present. This fully realised Bhabha-nian model of a hybrid space would then, ideally, be realised as a safe space in which the artists might feel their work can be represented in context. Such a space would continue the exhibtion proposed by Murdo Macdonald.

The necessity to push this thesis into presenting itself in a public manifestation is primarily the fact that this thesis is the first to connect all five artists together in any form. Prior to 2022, only Anne Campbell and Ishbel Murray had exhibited together publicly.[179] As it stands, the written space of this paper is insubstantial as public space because the address of this thesis is most likely a small academic readership. By utilising the research as a foundation upon which to build a public interaction of all the artists, the research can reach a wider audience – critically, the *Gàidhlig* speaking community about whom it concerns. Thus ensuring that the research gives back to the researched community and allows a "three voiced country/ [to s]ing in a new world" in the words of Iain Crichton Smith; allows the community to reap the benefits of this analysis and use it to 'sing' or speak to the topical issues of today - and of tomorrow. It is a bare minimum requirement for a researcher to 'give back,' as is rightly noted by Moyra Keane, Constance Khupe and Maren Seehawer - given that from an indigenous standpoint the researcher is accountable.[180] The collected reasearch thus far must have an action orientation, and seek to collaboratively bring about political change.

Written in regards to the museum, this statement by Olga Viso in the *New York Times* in 2018 could equally apply to the researcher/ curator:

> "If museums want to continue to have a place.... They must position themselves as learning communities, not impenetrable centers of self-validating authority."[181]

[179] I have since facilitated a public conversation between Ishbel Murray and Marnie Keltie, the event took place as part of 'The Dear Green Bothy Conference' (June, 2021) held over Zoom and run by Minna Torma with myself as admin. The two both presented and then a discussion was held.
[180] Moyra Keane, Constance Khupe and Maren Seehawer "Decolonising Methodology: Who Benefits from Indigenous Knowledge Research?" *Educational Research for Social Change* 6 no.1 (2017), . pp12-24
[181] Olga Viso, "Decolonizing the Art Museum, The Next Wave," *The New York Times* (2018) URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/01/opinion/decolonizing-art-museums.html

The researcher/ curator, just like the host space, must not be a self-assured centre of un-challengeable authority on any subject, they should be listeners first and foremost, facilitators of conversations and learning. Likewise, the narrative of this paper might be all the more productive if serving as a departure point for the opening of a conversation on the themes discussed. By creating something in tandem with the artists and respecting the collaborative practice of performative engagement they have been participating in thus far, my own research would be developed based upon what they create and how they develop and expand the existing narrative in this text.

The notion of the house is useful in understanding how the artists see themselves represented in the history of this building - just as Moira MacLean declared in her Self Portrait: Window to the Soul, a photograph of herself reflected in the window of an abandoned blackhouse (see fig. 78). The title window to the soul suggests that any manifestation of this space may begin with the historical inhabitant who looked West but speaks of the artist who looks inward through the projection of herself into the space, the baring of a soul. This picture encompasses the window of the blackhouse, the flowers on the sill but also the reflection of the landscape outside the house and Moira herself, though her face is not visible due to showing a secondary reflection of the window. This photograph epitomises the ongoing process of reflection such an Un-Boarding installation would esteem to, bringing together the artist's work in order to look backwards, inwards and also forwards.

Fig. 78: Moira MacLean, Self Portrait/ Window to the Soul, *2017. Photograph courtesy of the artist.*

Like MacLean's 'Buisneachd' installation which invited the viewer into the space through the use of mirrors, a critical element of attempting to make public this research is the invitation of the viewer into the space. The ideas in this paper can be developed further in communication with how the communities concerned navigate the space, how they feel represented by the artists in question and how they feel represented throughout my line of enquiry. Community feedback on such topics would reinforce the creation of the 'house-as-container' as a safe space to those to whom it serves, as it takes full accountability of itself. Furthermore, community feedback would then influence this researcher's work and the very basis of this paper and how it could be developed and improved. Tuhiwai Smith comments that when reading texts, the indigenous person is often excluded and when they do see themselves represented, they often do not recognise the representation.[182] Thus her book

[182] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* 3rd edition (London: Zed books, 2021; 1999).

specifically places the experiences of indigenous peoples at the centre of the story, valuable because Maori experience is often marginalised in the New Zealand context. Similarly, this paper has centred around artists telling personal stories so any vocalisation of their work must prioritise the primacy of the personal story, and the materiality of the work and how richly it communicates that tale. Creating a safe space is critical so that the indigenous person contributes to her own representation, and thus sees herself in it.

Difficulties may arise in creating a safe space for a specifically "indigenous" community as this very word can be problematic in that it appears to collectivise many vastly different experiences. Many in the *Gàidhealtachd* do already identify with the term ‘indigenous,’ or various other terms in postcolonial lexicon, yet a good many will not. Many scholars like MacKinnon are dedicating time to instructing fishermen in the Outer Isles as to why understanding indigenous laws and theories is applicable and helpful, but the term is still loaded. Local leaders on the Isle of Lewis have asked to have the Gaels recognised as indigenous people and therefore be able to avail themselves of the rights under the United Nations declaration of rights for indigenous peoples - so the movement to link Gaels to indigenous peoples is in motion. The word ‘research,’ too, is still very much a dirty word in the indigenous community. Allowing the practitioners and their work to speak to the communities involved through their work may help resolve this, certainly it could be helpful in facilitating discussions on the topic. Of course, the term ‘safe spaces’ can also become problematic regarding issues of inclusivity or exclusivity, where safe spaces can become exclusive in their tendency to pigeonhole identities. The artists’ tendency to focus on migratory connections and creation of Diasporic spaces ought to eschew this.

Curating a convergence between the Un-boarding Artists in such a way that draws parallels between the *Gàidhealtachd* and other post-colonial contexts would be an extremely fruitful use of definitive public space. Such a curation would be a critical first step to showing overlapping histories and cementing the need for an application of postcolonial theory to the *Gàidhealtachd*. For the community, this could be a discursive base from which to analyse regional ecological and agricultural problems - problems which arguably stem from the same (colonial) root. Furthermore, such a curation could assuage fears of those who are still unconvinced that postcolonial theory is applicable in the *Gàidhealtachd* due to debates over

whether it is an ex-colony. Such was the case for Cameroonian and Senegalese curator Koyo Kouoh when putting together the Limerick Biennale EVA in 2016, 'Still (the) Barbarians.' The Biennale considered the centenary of the Easter Rising in Ireland to look at Ireland through the lens of colonialism, due to Ireland being what Kouoh called "the first and foremost laboratory of the British Colonial Enterprise.[183] Comparing the enduring manifestations of colonialism in modern day Ireland with Cameroon and Senegal, Kouoh explained that he curation aimed to unpack the correlation between physical forms of Colonialism's oppression (how it affects the envisioning of civic spaces and landscapes) and the enforcement of mental domination via social and political institutions such as language, social organisations and religion.[184] (She primarily addressed this imposition by having the catalogue translated into Irish, the first Irish catalogue for an art exhibition).

In her curation Kouoh juxtaposed works about Irish colonisation against those by artists from further afield discussing what it is like to live in a post-colonial ('post' colonial?) world. The installation produced many interesting tensions - such as the introduction of Hera Büyüktaşçıyan's 2015 *Destroy Your Home, Build Up a Boat, Save Life* in the foreground of Mary Evans' 2016 mural *Thousands are Sailing* (see fig. 79). With its rolled Persian carpets, Büyüktaşçıyan's work suggests that one can start a new home by unravelling a rug upon which to claim a space. Mary Evans' mural, meanwhile, depicts crowds of disparate people waiting anxiously for the boat to emigrate and begin their new life ahead. The title is a reference to the Irish band 'The Pogues,' who released a single of the same name, which is a ballad about the emigration of Irish in the 1800s. (Past) Irish and (current) Nigerian migration are thus set in comparison for the viewer's consideration, and this reference is outstretched to worldwide immigration by the rugs sat in front of the mural connoting all displaced people. What the reader can take from Kouoh's astonishingly clever curatorial comment is the myriad of topical discussions which can emerge from the resonances of the physical interaction of artworks. Relevant artists who might be brought into the space with the Un-

[183] EVA International Biennial of Visual Art, "Koyo Kouoh appointed as the curator of EVA international Irelands Biennial in 2016'. Accessed February 2020, URL: https://www.eva.ie/koyo-kouoh-appointed-as-the-curator-of-eva-international-irelands-biennial-in-2016.
[184] Alice McCool "Artists explore postcolonialism in Britain's first colony at Ireland's Biennale," in Africa Okay (2016). https://www.okayafrica.com/koyo-kouoh-eva-international-ireland-biennial-still-the-barbarians.

Boarding artists might be those already drawn into comparison: Will MacLean, Thao Nguyen or Phan Kathy Prendergast, for instance.

Fig. 79: View of EVA International: "Still (the) Barbarians," Limerick, 2016. Foreground: Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, Destroy Your Home, Build Up a Boat, Save Life, *2014–15. Installation (carpets, ropes), dimensions variable. Background: Mary Evans,* Thousands Are Sailing, *2016. Craft paper installation, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artists, Rampa Istanbul, Tiwani Contemporary, London, and EVA International, Limerick. © Miriam O'Connor.*

Curation also has the power to contextualise links between historical events and contemporary issues, an important tool with which to gift to the local community, and giving back to the community is a key goal. While aiding the local community by voicing the issues in this paper of relevance to them, the political act of making these inferences publicly can also elevate *Gàidhlig* Visual arts into a topic of national interest sparking not just local but global conversations. This was proven by the 'As An Fhearann' exhibition which drew links between the 1886 Crofter's Holding Act and the inequities of contemporary land

management in the late 1980s. The exhibition also highlighted that art was both implicit as in the political exercise of power in the past (as we saw in chapter one) as it is imperative in the act of resistance in the present (as has been shown especially in the works of chapter two). In 2022, just as in the 80s, for an Art institution in the *Gàidhealtachd* to vigorously examine place and its construction, and to do so specifically within the heartland of the *Gàidhealtachd*, the Outer Hebrides, could bring these lesser-known personal stories, and their huge political implications, known much further afield and the impact of the collaboration begin dynamic global dialogue across postcolonial contexts.

The space of the metaphorical house as literal container could host exhibitions that would continue the legacy of Malcolm MacLean's advocacy of the 'exhibition' of art and poetry in the 2002 publication of *An Leabhar Mòr/ The Great Book of Gaelic.* Given MacLean's choice of stating near the beginning of the introduction that the book focused on Ireland and Scotland's shared history as well as language, the book takes a postcolonial stance in its invitation of comparisions between the different (post or fringe colonial) contexts.[185] The book placed language conservation at the forefront of its concerns, just as any exhibition featuring the artists this thesis analysed must also do in order to expound on the themes their work wishes to highlight. Similarly, the manner in which the book manages to discuss the local while simultaneously linking the local to wider European and worldwide concerns is the template which I would wish any exhibition to be based on. *An Leabhar Mòr* delivers the perfect metaphor for this: the artwork Kate Whiteford submitted shows two pieces of waste tweed at the junction of a loom. The halves are joined but their patterns remain different and celebrated as such. This symbolises what my proposed installation would eschew: where the identity of th Gael and the Highlands as place are celebrated as an individual but also shown as they are joined to wider cultural narratives and issues.

This metaphor also applies to the institution of exhibition, the metaphorical container of the house or a physical space to house an exhibition of the Un-Boarding artists' work. Seeing rural institutions as different yet connected to something larger would aid in the general fight to frustrate assumptions of the rural as 'traditional' or 'irrelevant.' Assumptions which must

[185] Malcolm MacLean, "Introduction," in *An Leabhar Mòr/ The Great Book of Gaelic*, ed. Malcolm MacLean and Theo Dorgan (Edinburgh, Canongate Books, 2002), 2.

be done away with in order to reframe the "remote" as an art hub, to recentre it at the heart of political discussions.[186] The potential in displaying the work of artists Campbell, Keltie, MacLean, Morrison and Muray's altogether would reinvigorate 'remote' areas of production as relevant and different while and affirming their having global currency and connection. It can be concluded, then, that the 'un-boarding' practitioners re-constitute definitions of rurality. They arguably do so in a way which goes 'against the tide' in the words of Fiona Mackenzie, which she explains:

> "[A]s people actively and collectively sustaining a livelihood through a profound engagement - socially, politically, economically, spiritually - with the particularities of place."[187]

Describing their practices as 'against the tide' highlights their collective engagement with the specificity and speciality of place. Thinking of sustaining practices which are 'against the tide' is a nice way to imagine how the artists would create their hybrid, safe space: by continuing to focus on what is specifically local and special about where they are first and foremost and seeing that space in its global context. In repopulating the space of Sorley's blackhouse, the artists would have the potential to construct a safe space which asserts a radical new order, one which goes against the tide.

[186] Myvillages (Kathrin BÖhm and Wapke Feensta) "Introduction," in *Documents of Contemporary Art: The Rural*, ed. Myvillages (London: The MIT Press), 12.
[187] A. Fiona D. Mackenzie, 965-985.

Conclusion:

At the start of this paper, the question was posed as to whether woman, as a doubly Othered subject, had more determination to 'Write-Back' in a post-/colonial context. Certainly, the objects mined from the Abandoned Blackhouse often illuminate specifically women's histories and insert them into a decolonising narrative, reflecting work in other post-colonial contexts. Exploration of feminist concerns was shown as essential to any rigorous Un-Boarding process. The use of found objects allowed a direct writing-back against the mistold histories of the Gael, even a first attempt to write the stories never told. Highlighting specifically *women's* concerns, and those of women continuing to live in the *Gàidhealtach* as well as those who have moved there or those who have emigrated, showed there were different, nuanced shades of 'postcolonial' experience within the *Gàidhealtachd*. By dissolving notions of any singular Gaelic experience, our artists highlighted that there are differences in 'postcolonial' experience between diverse gendered, historical, geographical, and cultural contexts.

While not a homogenous experience, many parallels could be drawn between the specific concerns of the Un-Boarding artists and those of other artists whose practices engage with decolonising in other post-colonial contexts. Practices which overlapped included the way our artists utilised material to make personal stories tangible, emphasising the political import of the personal, drawing links between language and identity and seeking to remediate colonialism's marks on the land through mapping. Analysising how the artists' work and practice engaged with these themes would not have been possible if not for the plucking of postcolonial theory from the writings of Bhabha, Said and Stroh. Thus - whether or not the reader takes the position that the *Gàidhealtachd* is an ex-colony - it certainly proves that postcolonial theory is resonant and relevant to texts emerging from the region. Clearly, then, postcolonial theory is relevant in analysing territories which might be described, if not as ex-colonies then 'fringe' regions. Its application here proved useful in identifying internal hierarchies and discursive patterns of Othering outwith simple binarisms of coloniser/

colonised. The metaphor of ‘Un-boarding,’ it seems, might be extended to the unveiling of deep-rooted hierarchical infrastructures in other fringe contexts.

The notion of process, implied in the use of the metaphor’s gerund tense – Un-Board*ing* - helped stress the artists’ *active* and *ongoing* practice of extraction and investigation. It also highlighted that it is their practics, not just their work, which has facilitated the successful ‘Un-Boarding’ of the blackhouse. The idea of process and continuity is key in that many of the themes they discuss have current implications: one of the key ways in which our artists exposed the ongoing hierarchical infrastructures was through the representation of the Blackhouse as a symbol in popular culture now. By relating contemporary images of the house to artworks created with colonial pictorial conventions and whose roots were colonial showed the ongoing trajectory of such images – and the role they play in sustaining Othering. The procss of unpacking images and their colonial roots is one in which we all must engage in and on a regular basis. One of the salient points which emerged in this exercise was that unpacking (harmful) contemporary representations is critical to creating awareness of the now-ubiquitous Imperial pictorial conventions in images of the *Gàidhealtachd*. Only with such an awareness can new representations which do not repeat the same pitfalls. What the unpacking also highlighted, though, was that the construction of male and female representations in the *Gàidhealtachd* had historically been problematic and that this had repercussions in the current era, with the mythologising of hyper-masculine warrior-Gaels (leaving little room for representation of the *Gàidlig* woman, hence our artists drive to represent her). The surface of this issue was merely skimmed upon by this paper, due to the frame of focus, but ‘Highland Masculinity’ and the (under)representation of the *Gàidlig* woman is undeniably a topical and under-researched issue which begs further consideration and study.

What was critical in the dismantling of representations of the *landscape* in the *Gàidhealtachd* was that artists like Campbell showed how landscapes are traditionally presented as ‘essential’ in character, and that this ‘innate character’ is transferred to the inhabitants. Campbell dismantled this notion and purveyed a series of landscape works which stress that landscape is created in a constructionist manner, through reiteration and repetition and discourses pinned on it. This has serious global consequences: the race issue in ‘essential’

British or Scottish landscapes will directly affect immigration policy in its tendency towards far-right nationalism. This thesis looked only at Scotland but a more detailed study into the effects of the correlation between essentialising images of landscape and far right politics on a global scale would be a highly topical endeavour. Similarly, further study into the reciprocal relationship to nature the artists often conveyed and the idea that MacLean might have proposed that we ought to listen to nature would make for a wonderful study into how to change our perspective towards the natural world for the benefit of its conservation. A timely study that would be indeed.

In a truly postcolonial epiphany, MacLean and Keltie proposed *reinhabiting the Boarded House* as the answer to how one could occupy one's homeland when there are many contradictory labels heaped upon it, and much historical scarring. Their proposed re-habitation involved creating a 'safe space' conceived in radical spatial and temporal terms - terms laid out by the artists in their work and practices. Terms which might serve as a template for creating truly post-colonial spaces of a new order. Murray could be seen emphasising the importance of the diasporic perspective as it negated the possibility of continuing to label spaces or perspectives in the singular (indigenous/ emigrant, Islander/ visitor) and instead encouraged a multiplicity of voices. Furthermore, creation of 'diasporic space' precluded that the safe space is never neo-colonial nor exclusive. Thus, ensuring that the space succeeds as a viable functioning centre of artistic productivity. One which continues to celebrate hybrid identities and refuses to repeat standardised binary notions of identity. (Re)Inhabiting the abandoned home has allowed the artists to reconcile past and present by constantly engaging with the histories the space is impregnated with. While a finalised solution to the exact terms of re-habitation may never have been declared by the artists, their initial dedication to this idealistic ambition paves the way for such terms to be litigated henceforth.

What this paper wished to do with the artists' work was just that: to incite litigation and dialogue surrounding what can be best described as the 'uneasy subject' of Imperial relations in the *Gàidhealtachd.* Properly diagnosing the colonial power relation balances in the Western Isles, while a tense subject of study, is essential in resolving political contestations there today. I believe that the public exhibition of the combined work and practices of

Campbell, Keltie, MacLean, Morrison and Murray could be a step in this direction. The strength of their work is enough to merit this but the potential dialogues caused from the works coming together in dialogue would be very powerful. Consider the themes which arose within the small scope of this paper when bringing all five artists together - *Gàidhlig* medium education, funding for broadcasting, language conservation, land ownership and policy-making, to name but a few. The postcolonial themes they engaged with were also vast and wide-ranging; from writing back, indigenous remapping, adressing indigenous representation, reinforcing the value of ingigenous knowledge systems, valuing the indigenous language and culture – the list goes on. There is no doubt that bringing the artists' work together would have a dynamic outcome and a global impact, which just leaves ensuring that the curatorship (if it is indeed my pleasure to be able to curate such an event) successfully honours their brilliant work.

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