TOWARDS A REPARATIVE GEOGRAPHY OF THE MOTHER TONGUE

Multiculturalism, Migration and Minoritised Languages in the Outer Hebrides

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Abstract

The central question carrying this PhD thesis towards a reparative geography of the mother tongue is how, to what extent and with what implications the relationship between language and place might be detached from the colonial structures of nation and race and articulated instead through forms of multicultural, translational, translocal relation.

To this end, the thesis analyses geographies of multiculturalism, migration and minoritised languages in the Outer Hebrides, an archipelago of 15 inhabited (and over 50 uninhabited) islands off the northwest coast of Scotland. Typically thought of as the 'heartlands' of Scots Gaelic – a minoritised Celtic language with 57,000 speakers in Scotland as of the 2021 census – the islands also babble with the dialects, idioms and registers of many other tongues. Not only a landscape of leaving, clearance, even evacuation, the Hebrides' ripples of machair, expanses of knolled moorland and fractured coastline of sea lochs, lochans and inlets have long been a complex site of arrival, with the more recent (and highly mediatised) resettlement of Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian refugees across the archipelago complementing longer, diverse but often hidden or unseen histories and geographies of rural migration, multilingualism and multiculturalism.

In analysing these language geographies through the intersecting thematic lenses of (*i*) language and relation, (*ii*) language and territory and (*iii*) language and embodiment, the thesis makes several original theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions. Complementing a broader interdisciplinary integration of human geography and sociolinguistics, the thesis advances interdisciplinary scholarship on 'new ethnicities', rural multicultures and emerging geographies of translation and multilingualism. It additionally intervenes in perennially relevant political debates that are nonetheless particularly salient in the current context of hardening nationalism and hostility towards racialised cultural otherness, regarding the reproduction of 'translational' forms of political identity and community formed with and through, not in spite of, difference.

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contributions of others, this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Eleanor Chapman

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CHAPTER ONE

‘THIS CONNECTION, THAT’S ALWAYS UMBILICAL’

AN INTRODUCTION

‘Is there anything else you’d like to add?’, I asked Màiri as our conversation drew to a gradual close, we picked distractedly at the last few straggling chips and the waitresses bustled around us with dishcloths, anxious to finish the lunchtime shift. ‘Maybe about how we feel about our culture and our homeland,’ she replied:

> I think many of us, erm, are incredibly tied to our culture. Well, maybe my age group – I don’t know what the young people say now… but when you’re away from it, when you’re in other parts of the country or in other countries, you yearn for it. And I would go as far as to say that you yearn for it in Gaelic. […] I had to go with my husband and my daughter to Venezuela, because it was work. And I was incredibly homesick, incredibly sad. I was in a country where I couldn’t speak the language, I was at home on my own all the time, because [my daughter] was at school and my husband was at work. And the only thing that kept me sane was singing Gaelic songs to myself […]. English songs wouldn’t have satisfied me at all. They just didn’t feel powerful enough, the emotions didn’t feel powerful enough. I just felt so connected to my culture and my language, so far away, and that was the only way I could have kept from being, I dunno, losing it? [laughs] I was sad. You know, eventually learnt to love living in Venezuela and began to think of it as home for a while, but there was this connection, that’s always umbilical.

She was, essentially, addressing the central aim of this research project – the relationship between language and place, what objects these connections or attachments might coalesce around (cultures, nations, ‘homelands’, songs…) and what they might (alternatively) promise. I was, in particular, struck by her use of visceral, maternal metaphor – the umbilicus – and how it recalled but subtly shifted the typical formulation of this relationship in terms of ‘mother tongues’ and ‘motherlands’.

The notion of a ‘mother tongue’ to describe someone’s ‘first’ language, their ‘native’ language, has been rigorously problematised, in particular as a historically contingent product of colonial nation-building during the age of European imperial expansion. Although, as I discuss in Chapter 2, its roots can be traced further back to medieval European Catholic Mariology, the maternal metaphor of the ‘mother tongue’ has been the subject of much academic critique for its role in propelling a fundamentally racialising ‘monolingual paradigm’ (Yildiz 2012: 2), whereby:

> individuals and social formations are imagined to possess one ‘true’ language only, their ‘mother tongue,’ and through this possession to be organically linked to an exclusive, clearly demarcated ethnicity, culture, and nation.

And yet, in everyday usage, as well as in international policy discourse, the metaphor persists, often to counter these very same ideologies of territorialised linguistic and cultural homogeneity. UNESCO, for example, every year celebrates 'International Mother Language Day' to promote awareness and practice of linguistic and cultural diversity. While there have been some preliminary attempts not only to *de*construct but to politically responsibly *re*construct or repair the metaphor of the mother tongue – in continental philosophy (Castore & Dal Bo 2023; Eng 2023), contemporary art and feminist poetry (e.g. Friis 2019; Sedira 2002)[1] – geographic and sociolinguistic scholarship, as I argue in the chapters that follow, have been marked by limited engagement with people's enduring need for an attachment, 'a connection that's always umbilical', between language and place. Neither poet nor philosopher, my hope is that this thesis might go some way towards addressing this lacuna, setting out routes towards a 'reparative geography of the mother tongue'. Put otherwise, it aims to interrogate how, where and to what extent the relationship between language and place might be detached from the colonial structures of nation and race, and articulated instead through forms of multicultural, translational, translocal relation.

In moving towards this overarching reparative aim, I argue that an interdisciplinary approach is necessary. While there have been welcome calls from geographers over the past several decades for the fracturing of the Anglophonic hegemony of geography as an academic discipline (for example, Desforges & Jones 2001; Garcia-Ramon 2004; Gutiérrez & López-Nieva 2001; Müller 2007, 2021), the predominant focus has arguably been on pluralising the 'languages of geography' as a strategy to diversify geographical epistemologies. Important practical movements in this direction are represented by increasing – though still limited – numbers of translations of geographic scholarship from the Global South, such as Christen Smith's, Archie Davies's and Bethânia Gomes's (2021) translations of the Brazilian thinker and activist Beatriz Nascimento, the work of Lucas Melgaço (2017) to bring Brazilian geographer Milton Santos to an Anglophone readership, and *Antipode*'s Translation and Outreach programme. There has, however, been generally less sustained and nuanced engagement with geographies of language, multilingualism and translation (for notable exceptions, see Hammond & Cook 2023; Husseini de Araújo & Germes 2016; Italiano 2016; Medby 2019, 2020, 2023a, 2023b). In Chapter 2, I expand on a core argument to this thesis, previously set out elsewhere (Chapman 2023), that this in part may be due to a limited poststructuralist approach that insufficiently engages with the materiality and embodiment of language(s) and focuses instead

[1] Zineb Sedira's (2002) video triptych, 'Mother Tongue', which explores translation within cultural identity through the portrayal of three generations of women (a mother, a daughter and a grandmother) speaking to each other in versions of their own 'mother tongues' (Arabic, French and English), catalysed my interest in this topic, when I saw it in the Tate Modern in 2016.

on the Saussurean strawman of Language as an abstract and disembodied structure of signification.

Since the 'spatial turn' of the 1970s and '80s, meanwhile, there have been more explicit and sustained attempts to engage with geographies of language in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (for example, Auer 2013; Canagarajah 2018; Malinowski & Tufi 2020). In particular, scholars working on the linguistics of globalisation, 'superdiversity' and 'metrolingualism' (e.g. Arnaut *et al.* 2015; Blommaert & Rampton 2012; Pennycook & Otsuji 2015) have embraced a spatial philosophy of relationality that moves against a 'container' view of space as closed, flat or static. On the whole, however, this scholarship has tended to be characterised by rather superficial engagement with pricklier geographical debates regarding the political relationship *between* relationality and territoriality (Painter 2006a, 2006b, 2010), mobility and fixity, embodied processes of de/re-territorialisation and the politics of place. Geographies of minoritised languages, in particular, would benefit from more nuanced engagement with such geographic debates, especially given the spatial strategies of containment and displacement that have propelled their minoritisation and the relevance of place and territory to efforts at revitalisation or maintenance. The broad interdisciplinary perspective advanced in this thesis moves to bridge these gaps, contributing towards more nuanced geographies of language, multilingualism and translation.

The rest of this introductory chapter proceeds by first expanding on the three primary thematic currents that have carried this project towards its overarching reparative goal: (*i*) language and relation, (*ii*) language and territory, and (*iii*) language and embodiment. I then provide some important context for the research, the places in which it was conducted and my journey to it, before discussing in greater detail the interdisciplinary bodies of scholarship with which my work is in conversation – namely, the 'new ethnicities' paradigm, decolonial accounts of rural multicultures and an argument that I have previously set out elsewhere (Chapman 2023) for the 'revocalisation' of cultural and political geography. Finally, the chapter ends by outlining the structure and direction of the thesis to follow.

1.1. THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 3, this project's overarching move towards the reparative is characterised by heightened attention to what knowledge does, to what uses it is put. Rather than – or in addition to – exposing the workings of oppressive power structures, a reparative approach sets out to repair or redress, reading for resistance and the real possibility of things happening differently. In the context of this thesis, I turn towards the lived-in, everyday geographies of multiculturalism, migration and minoritised languages in the Outer Hebrides as a useful resource for narrating *against* colonial language geographies structured by race and

nation(alism). In this section, I introduce the three primary thematic currents that have carried the project towards this goal and that flow through the thesis to follow: namely, *(i)* language and relation; *(ii)* language and territory; and *(iii)* language and embodiment. In doing so, I identify more specific research objectives that give shape to my overarching reparative aim and gesture towards several contributions and key arguments made by the thesis. They are as follows:

(i) *Language and relation*

This project sought to interrogate the political and ethical implications of language(s) as relational, as an intersubjective, communicative action we do with other speaking, listening subjects. In particular, I was interested in contexts in which these relations are 'less-than-fluent', when there are degrees of language barrier or mismatch, when meaning might be only grasped at, intuited, obscured or misunderstood. How do speakers navigate and negotiate such relations of more or less 'successful' communication, and how does this impact spatial structures of belonging, identity, solidarity and community? How are we translated (or not), by whom and to what effect? In Chapter 2, I will introduce a key argument that consideration of the 'translational' labours of producing and sustaining differences-in-relation offers a useful means of understanding contingent and precarious relations of transnational, translocal or transcultural solidarity. Then, particularly in Chapters 6 and 7, I develop this argument empirically, exploring how multicultural, translational relations in the Outer Hebrides exist in tension with the racialised monolingualism of the nation-state.

(ii) *Language and territory*

Secondly and relatedly, the project set out to critically consider how these relations get pulled into the cultural politics of place, becoming territorialised through the borders of nations, cities, regions or villages. How do the linguistic choices of speakers of minoritised languages – whose survival has been threatened by spatial strategies of containment, displacement and peripheralization, especially as orchestrated by the technologies and ideologies of the nation-state – variously resist, reproduce or recast these linguistic territorialisations? Central to my overarching reparative aim in this regard will be careful consideration of the scalar politics by which these de/reterritorialisations operate, with particular attention paid to the contested geographies of rurality, 'remoteness' and peripheralization. In Chapter 2, I introduce the expanded, 'transepistemological' understanding of territory I will be using to this end, then apply it in Chapter 5 and 6's analysis of linguistic authenticity

and authority, and Chapter 8's exploration of a minoritised language's 'habitat' or 'environment'. My engagement with this theme not only advances interdisciplinary scholarship on the geographies of minority languages, but also makes several key contributions to studies of rural multicultures, conviviality and encounter.

(iii) Language and embodiment

These first two themes coalesce in the third: the embodied, phenomenological experience of 'belonging' in and through language(s). What are the implications of the bodily metaphors – tongues, umbilicuses, especially a mother's – for describing notions of belonging, kinship, identity and community in and through language(s)? How can we move beyond poststructuralist abstractions of Language as disembodied linguistic structure, to engage instead with languages' relational materiality and embodiment, as sounds and movements we make with our tongues, throats, teeth, bellies and lungs? How does this reorientation shift the way we understand bodies to move through and be moved through by the borders of racialised, gendered space? Chapter 2 continues this discussion through engagement with decolonial and feminist scholarship on embodiment and materiality, while Chapter 8 explores the relationships between embodied encounter and a language's 'habitat' or 'environment'.

I was, moreover, interested in confluences between these three themes, the scalar politics by which language is understood as simultaneously embodied, relationally emplaced, and territorialised at multiple interlocking and co-constitutive scales. While these objectives have an admittedly abstract bent, the thesis also attends to the complex ways in which they manifest empirically in the Outer Hebrides, especially considering the role of imaginaries of rural lives, languages and landscapes in racialising narratives of European nationhood, and the particular tempos, flows and rhythms of rural and island (im)mobilities. It is more explicitly to this context that the following section now turns.

1.2. JOURNEY TO THE WESTERN ISLES…

Open to the full, blustering fetch of the Atlantic, the Outer Hebrides, the Western Isles, or na h-Innse Gall ('the islands of strangers'),[2] are an archipelago of fifteen inhabited (and over fifty uninhabited) islands, separated from – or connected to – the northwest coast of Scotland by the waters of the Minch, the Little Minch and the Sea of the Hebrides. The kyles and seaways of the

[2] I use the terms interchangeably throughout this thesis.

Western Isles have long been busy waters, especially when seafaring was quicker and easier than travel over land. They have been traversed by the birlinns of the Gall-Ghàidheils (Norse-Gaels, lit. 'foreigner-Gaels'), the currachs of Celtic Christian missionaries, Merchant Navy vessels, steamships bound for the British Empire's Dominions, and fishing boats from the sgothan of Ness to the 'klondyking' trawlers of the Soviet Eastern Bloc. Not only a landscape of leaving, clearance, even evacuation, the Hebrides' ripples of machair, expanses of knolled moorland and fractured coastline of sea lochs, lochans and inlets have also long been a complex site of arrival, with the more recent (and highly mediatised) resettlement of Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian refugees across the archipelago complementing these longer, diverse but often hidden or unseen histories of rural migration and multiculturalism.

Figure 01. The Outer Hebrides. Detail from Great Britain 1:1,000,000. Sheet 1. Available at https://maps.nls.uk/.

At least since Samuel Johnson's infamous *A Journey to the Western Isles* (1775), however, these waters have been typically thought to divide more than to connect. Constructions of the

Outer Hebrides as 'remote', 'untouched', 'lost in time', coming hand in hand with representations of their Gaelic-speaking inhabitants either as uncivilised barbarians or 'noble savages', served as discursive handmaidens to the centuries of displacement and clearance from the Hebrides, with the displaced islanders often then moving to the British Empire's overseas dominions, as prisoners of war, indentured labourers, soldiers, clerks, planters or colonial officials. Today, these complex, ambivalent histories of the global-Hebrides are unevenly remembered – or as Leòdhasach poet Pàdraig MacAoidh (2018) puts it, '*Geographical Exclusions Apply*' – with debates about mobility, multilingualism and minoritised languages in the Hebrides rarely critically situated in an interscalar context of racial capitalism, European (post)coloniality and white supremacy.

There are several important reasons, then – discussed in greater depth in the following chapter – why the Outer Hebrides constitute an important and relevant case-site for this study, though my own 'journey to the Western Isles' took a more circuitous route. With a background in translation (from Italian and French into English) and with involvement with various forms of migrant solidarity activism, I originally proposed this project as a comparative one, bringing these two activities together and drawing links to another island on another edge of Europe, though more in the centre of the continent's highly mediatised 'refugee crisis' – Lampedusa. This was prevented by the global Covid-19 pandemic, and, with the benefit of hindsight, I think this was probably for the best: within the scope of this project, a comparative approach was overambitious, and I believe this thesis is richer for the insights and greater depth that a narrower focus on the Hebrides granted. The accounts and analysis in the chapters that follow build upon twenty-nine oral history interviews with multilingual people living in the Western Isles, and one with a person who grew up there, conducted over a period of six months from April to September 2022.[3]

Before I outline in greater detail the interdisciplinary bodies of scholarship upon which this project has drawn, a brief terminological note: when I speak of 'minoritised languages', I am not referring only to languages whose speakers account for a demographic minority of a pre-defined national population, but to languages whose speakers are accorded less status, power or legitimacy, often along the lines of race and nationality (though, clearly, the two definitions interrelate). As I discuss in Chapter 4, 'Our three voiced country?', this stands in contrast to the legal definition of a 'minority language' adopted by Scotland and the UK, but allows for a more dynamic engagement in this thesis with the geographies of language minoritis*ation* (and resistance to such processes) than of 'minority languages' as always-already minoritised.

1.3. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL CONVERSATIONS

[3] Further details of this project's methodology follow in Chapter 3.

In addition to the broader, overarching interdisciplinary integration of geography (which I argue has insufficiently engaged with the materiality and embodiment of language) and sociolinguistics (which would benefit from a more nuanced analytical approach to the spatial tension between relationality and territoriality), as indicated in the opening section to this chapter, there are several more specific, though still relatively interdisciplinary, bodies of scholarship upon which this research builds and to which it hopes to contribute. These are explored in much greater depth in Chapter 2; in this section I merely gesture to the shape of them.

1.3.1. 'New ethnicities'

Developing in large part out of the work of Stuart Hall (e.g. 1988, 1992, 2000), one of the founding figures of British Cultural Studies, the 'new ethnicities' paradigm approaches 'ethnicity' as a term that 'not only functions within the same discursive field as race but also operates in similar ways, that is to say, as a sliding signifier' (Hall 2017: 108). Placing an emphasis on the always unfixed negotiation and navigation of the politics of difference, it considers ethnicity as relational, contested, contingent; as an articulation of difference that can appear 'both in its restricted, unified, closed, absolutist, defensive, and essentialist forms and as a "weave of differences" that is looser, more permeable, and more porous in character' (Hall 2017: 134). As such, it provides a useful theoretical platform from which to move towards a reparative geography of the mother tongue, engaging with the complex workings of linguistic and cultural difference in relation to racial and ethnic identity.

Scholars working in the orbit of the new ethnicities paradigm – especially, in the British context, in the 'Bristol School of Multiculturalism' (Brahm Levey 2019; Meer 2019a) – have emphasised the centrality of religious difference particularly to European processes of racialisation. Less attention has been paid to the role of linguistic difference in (re)producing or disrupting the 'fateful triangle' (Hall 2017) of race, ethnicity and nation (for notable exceptions see Harris 2006; Harris & Rampton 2003), with the sociolinguistics of globalisation (e.g. Blommaert 2010) and superdiversity (e.g. Blommaert & Rampton 2012), while celebrating fluidity, hybridity and flux, sometimes lacking critical engagement with the geographies of European (post)coloniality, racial capitalism and white supremacy.

For various reasons considered in greater depth in the Chapter 2 (but in particular, Gaelic and the uneven memory of colonialism), the multinational, multicultural context of the Outer Hebrides also provides fertile ground for exploring the emergence and potential of hybrid 'new ethnicities'. This also relates to renewed calls for closer attention to how race and racialisation 'work differently' in different parts of the United Kingdom. While efforts to fracture narratives of Scottish exceptionalism are ongoing (e.g. Chaimbeul 2021; Davidson *et al*. 2018;

Ezeji 2015, 2021; Hopkins 2016; NicThòmais 2024; Meer 2015; Sobande & hill 2022), to some degree it remains the case that, as Charlotte Williams has written of rural Wales, the 'idea of Britishness, or more accurately Englishness, has formed the homogenised point of reference [and] […] the idea that the new [devolved] nations [and their languages] may themselves be a point of identification for some black Britons is not yet adequately accommodated' (Williams 2007: 760). I discuss this in greater depth in the following chapter; first I consider the relevance and utility of a focus on multicultural practices and relations in rural areas.

1.3.2. Rural multicultures

Both geographic literature on multiculturalism, mobility and conviviality (e.g. Amin 2002; Rishbeth & Rogaly 2018; Valentine 2013) and sociolinguistic engagements with 'metrolingualism' (Pennycook & Otsuji 2015) and 'superdiversity' (Arnaut *et al.* 2015; Blommaert & Rampton 2012) tend to have predominantly concentrated on urban, even metropolitan, contexts, in a way that can risk perpetuating imagined geographies of rural areas as necessarily (and somehow idyllically) static, homogenous and removed from geographies of globalisation and modernity. More recently, in line with broader critiques of the 'celebratory diversity drift' (Neal *et al*. 2018) of much scholarship on multiculturalism, there have been calls for more critical attention to how rural cosmopolitanism is often 'precarious and contingent' (Woods 2018: 316), structured by larger-scale geographies of race, nation and coloniality (see, for example, Butler & Ben 2021; Schech 2014; Stead *et al*. 2023; Whyte *et al*. 2019; Woods 2018, 2022). In their introduction to a Special Issue of the *Journal of Rural Studies*, Stead *et al*. (2023: 6), for instance, make the persuasive argument that scholars of rural diversity and mobility should attend more critically to 'both the structuring and place-making force of whiteness in the rural Global North, and to the multiplicities and richness of non-white rural lifeworlds'. Such a reminder is particularly timely given recent policy interest – discussed further in Chapter 4 – in promoting international immigration to alleviate population challenges in 'shrinking' (ESPON 2020) rural areas across Europe (see, for example, Gruber, Pöcher & Zupan 2022; Martins 2022; MPS 2023).

In this thesis, I draw on and contribute to this scholarship through a feminist mobilities lens that closely attends to the multiscalarity of rural multicultures. I argue that such an approach can broaden the scope for engaging with emergent 'new ethnicities' in rural areas, while also situating rural multicultures more critically within wider geographies of coloniality, nation and race. In Chapter 5, I adopt this perspective to explore how uneven (im)mobilities to, through and from the Outer Hebrides contribute to a structuring of belonging through the fluid metaphors of 'incomers', 'locals' and, to a lesser extent, 'flybys', in a way that does not sit atop ideologies and performances of nation and race, but interacts with them in complex and

dynamic ways – an interface which is then unpacked in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 7. This critical, multiscalar engagement with rural rhythms and cycles of (im)mobility and logics of (in)visibility and familiarity, I will argue, offers useful insights into the emergence of translational forms of rural 'new ethnicities' that intersect in complex ways with larger scale scripts of race, nation, class and gender.

1.3.3. Encounter, revocalisation and translation

In analysing the role of linguistic and cultural difference in processes of racialisation and emergent 'new ethnicities' in the Outer Hebrides, this thesis additionally draws on and contributes to scholarship on geographies of encounter, the philosophy of language and translation studies. In particular, I expand on an argument I have previous elaborated elsewhere (Chapman 2023) – that reading Italian feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero's (2005) account of the systematic 'devocalisation of logos' through a modernity/coloniality lens provides a useful means of analysing 'new ethnicities' emerging in and through embodied, 'revocalised' multilingual encounter as 'transruptions' (Hesse 2000) to the territorialised monolingualism of the racialised nation-state. In this thesis, in addition to evaluating this argument empirically, I advance it by drawing it into closer conversation with geographic scholarship on the scalar politics of encounter and an 'anti-abstractionist' (Edwards 2003) conceptualisation of translation as the political labour of producing and sustaining 'differences-in-relation' (Hammond & Cook 2023). Complementing the largely metaphorical understanding of 'new ethnicities' and multicultural diversity as 'communities in translation' (Hall 2000: 413–414), I draw debates on the politics and ethics of translation practice into conversation with geographic work on the scalar politics of embodied encounter. I suggest that this can open up generative lines of enquiry into what is at stake in the (re)production and potential scaling-up of multicultural relations and practices viewed through a reparative lens. I return to this in Chapter 2.

1.4. THESIS OVERVIEW

To respond to the research themes and objectives outlined in section 1.1 above, the thesis is organised into the following chapters:

Chapter 2, Revocalising Language Geographies, explores in greater detail the conceptual framework upon which later chapters of the thesis will build. I outline geographic and sociolinguistic work tracing the colonial roots of the 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012) that conceptualises individuals as having only one, 'true' mother tongue linking them organically and essentially to singular, racialised nation-state formations. I introduce the role of particular rural imaginaries in reproducing these geographies, and argue for the need to nuance sociolinguistic

critiques of territory through geographic engagements with embodied (im)mobilities and the relationship *between* territoriality and relationality. In doing so, I borrow from translations from Romance language geographies to introduce a 'transepistemological' understanding of 'territory' as a contingent, partial yet productive translation of 'place'. The second half of the chapter expands on the suggestion I have made elsewhere (Chapman 2023), that 'revocalising' (Cavarero 2005) geographic engagements with language, if situated in a modernity/coloniality framework, provides a generative starting point for exploring disruptions to colonial language geographies. I bring these arguments into discussion with geographic work on the scalar politics of embodied encounter and finally, suggest that deeper geographic engagement with embodied, 'anti-abstractionist' (Edwards 2003) forms of 'translational' labour and agency might help us better understand the processes by which such 'differences-in-relation' are produced and sustained.

Chapter 3, 'But you need data!', describes the (feminist) political and epistemological principles that have guided this research, introducing an understanding of oral histories as an instantiation of 'revocalised' standpoint epistemology. I outline my aspirations towards a 'methodological denationalism' (Anderson 2019) and detail the representational frames I chose to use (and refuse) with this aim in mind. In addition to discussing the various orientations that arose as a consequence of my own embodiment as a researcher, and my explicit political and epistemological commitments, I discuss the methodological implications of navigating rural borders, (im)mobility and 'relational claustrophobia' (Stachowski 2020). The chapter also includes discussion of how I approached questions of multilingualism, translation and 'less-than-fluency' throughout the various stages of the project, arguing that language difference should be considered not as merely a practical, technical or operational challenge for data collection and analysis, but rather as an integral, generative feature of qualitative research. The chapter ends by offering some reflections on reparative reading and the intentionality behind scholarly representations.

Chapter 4, 'Our three voiced country?', provides a critical analysis of the legislative and political contexts that shape the language geographies explored in later chapters. In particular, my focus is on the ways in which the governance of multilingualism and multiculturalism continues to operate along racialising lines as a bordering, territorialising technology. I take a multiscalar approach, detailing first the territorial anxieties shaping UK minoritised language policy and outlining the increasingly xenophobic, racist and nationalist tenor of British cultural politics in the wake of the supposed 'death of multiculturalism'. I then turn to the Scottish context, critiquing complex and evolving discourses of 'Scottish exceptionalism' and introducing the spatial and scalar tensions that have shaped minority language policies and politics in Scotland. Finally, I consider rural Scotland, in particular the Outer Hebrides, within these

contexts, outlining policy interest in managing immigration to rural or 'remote' areas to alleviate population challenges and discussing the political positioning of rural Scotland in relation to articulations of Scottish nationalism.

Chapter 5, 'A very small place on the edge', introduces the uneven and contested geographies of 'remoteness', (im)mobilities and localness in the Outer Hebrides as a necessary foundation for later chapters' analysis of language in relation to embodied processes of de/reterritorialisation and the cultural politics of place. I offer a feminist analysis of 'localness' as an intersectionally disciplined performance, with a particular emphasis on the role of 'tradition' in shaping translocal, transrural identities. I connect this to a discussion of particular rural logics of visibility and strangerness that carry important implications for later chapters' engagement with the politics of place and embodied encounter in the Outer Hebrides.

Chapter 6, '…but I don't know if I'm a Gael', turns attention to how the uneven (im)mobilities and relations between 'locals', 'incomers' and 'flybys' discussed in the previous chapter become de/reterritorialised, (re)scaled and drawn into the cultural politics of place through the linguistic ideologies of authenticity, anonymity and nativeness. I argue that integrating sociolinguistic and geographic analyses of 'authenticity' can help to ground Cavarero's (2005) philosophy of revocalisation in multicultural contexts of less-than-fluency, partial understanding and, most importantly, uneven power geometries. I consider how speakers agentially adopt various language practices as part of the ongoing political (re)construction of the meaning of places and the relations that constitute them, and then develop this argument into a proposal for understanding the cultural and linguistic identity of 'Gaelness' as a highly contested territorialisation of the performance of localness. I end the chapter by stressing the political importance of situating these debates in a multiscalar and pluralistic context, with a critical eye in particular to the structuring forces of race and nation.

This is the subject of Chapter 7, 'On the islands it wasn't there', which analytically 'scales up' the various relations, (im)mobilities and de/reterritorialisations discussed in the previous two chapters. After discussing the nonetheless racialising effects of the recursive rhetorical distancing of 'race' away from rural Scotland, I consider how embodied encounters with and across linguistic and cultural difference might have the potential to 'transrupt' them. This involves discussion of how the embodied, everyday but often invisibilised labours of translation and linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur 2004) might allow for a better understanding of the frictious processes by which geographies of solidarity come to take shape and continue to be negotiated. The chapter ends in an empirical counterpart to the policy analysis provided in Chapter 4, detailing how 'post-racial' (Joseph 2018) accounts of Scottish nationalism as 'impeccably civic' (Keating 2009) not only fail to rectify nonetheless racialised inequalities, exclusions and injustices, but also operate as an internal border to potential 'new ethnicities' in formation.

Chapter 8, 'The meanings in these places', returns to a smaller scale, exploring the embodiment, physicality and emotionality of language(s), and considering how the rural structuring of public, semi-public and private space in the Outer Hebrides enable or preclude the sorts of translational, multilingual, multicultural relations discussed in previous chapters. After a reminder of the relevance of (re)conceptualising language(s) as embodied, embedded and emplaced, the chapter sets out to pluralise imagined geographies of a language's 'environment' or 'habitat', exploring how embodied, phenomenological experiences of 'feeling at home' or 'belonging' in and through language(s) are structured, rescaled and emplaced.

Finally, in Chapter 9, Towards a Reparative Geography of the Mother Tongue, I conclude with an overview of the main arguments, contributions and relevance of this thesis, and gesture towards some potential avenues for future development.

CHAPTER TWO

REVOCALISING LANGUAGE GEOGRAPHIES

One of the key contentions of this thesis is that critical and sustained engagement with the 'geographies of language(s)' has been somewhat eclipsed by (no less important) calls to pluralise the 'languages of geography' as part of a strategy to diversify geographical epistemologies. This chapter sets out to address this imbalance, detailing the colonial language geographies to which the thesis strives to offer a reparative counterpart and introducing the principle conceptual and theoretical frameworks it builds upon to do so. As I first suggested in Chapter 1, this requires an interdisciplinary approach and as such, this chapter draws on a wide range of scholarship on coloniality, multiculturalism and the politics of difference.

In section 2.1, 'One-language, one-nation, one-people', I begin by critiquing the colonial language geographies that this thesis's reparative approach sets out to move within, against and beyond. I first excavate the colonial roots of the 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012) that conceptualises individuals as having only one, 'true' mother tongue linking them almost organically to singular, racialised nation-state formations. I then move this critique into the present, attending to the 'raciolinguistic' (Flores & Rosa 2015) ideologies and practices by which such language geographies continue to be reproduced in the context of Britain's transition from a 'colonial power in the traditional overseas extractive sense, to a space of domestic colonialism masquerading as a postcolonial nation' (El-Enany 2020: 130–131). The section ends by considering how this nexus of language, race and nation is complicated by the particular geographies of minority languages.

The chapter's second section, '"Where they went": mobility, territory, rurality', then turns more explicitly to how this entanglement of language, race and nation becomes territorialised at multiple intersecting scales. I consider the role of the 'rural idyll' mythology in reproducing whitening narratives of nation and nativeness and explore the de/reterritorialising implications of uneven mobilities to, through and from places such as the Outer Hebrides that are classified as rural, remote or peripheral. In this section, I also introduce one of the thesis's key contributions to linguistic scholarship – that the 'spatial turn' in sociolinguistics can be advanced through interdisciplinary engagement with geographical scholarship on embodied mobilities and the relationship *between* relationality and territoriality (Painter 2006a, 2006b, 2010). Central to this, I argue that transepistemological dialogue with other, non-Anglophone conceptualisations of 'territory' not only allows for greater *inter*disciplinary connections

between geography, linguistics and linguistic anthropology, but also offers an *intra*disciplinary bridge between critiques of 'territory' in political geography and engagements with 'place' in cultural geography.

The chapter's later sections then turn more towards theoretical and conceptual frameworks I suggest are useful for envisioning alternatives to colonial language geographies. In section 2.3, '"Back to the rough ground!": materialising language', I expand on an argument I have made elsewhere (Chapman 2023) – that Italian feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero's (2005) philosophy of (de)vocalisation, if read through the geopolitical lens of a modernity/coloniality framework, could provide a generative starting point for exploring disruptions to the colonial language geographies the first two sections of the chapter set out. In making this argument, I first discuss the abstraction, rationalisation and disembodiment of language(s) as the assumption upon which the coloniality of language and the monolingual paradigm operate. In section 2.4, 'The Absolute Local and Embodied Encounter', I suggest that Cavarero's emphasis on the political and ethical implications of the vocal can be usefully grounded through reading her philosophy alongside critical geographical scholarship on the scalar politics of embodied encounter as 'distinctive event[s] of relation' (Wilson 2017a: 452). This discussion will also circle back to the chapter's previous considerations of the utility of the 'new ethnicities paradigm' and the emphasis it places on the always unfixed negotiation and navigation of embodied politics of difference.

Finally, in section 2.5, 'Translation and differences-in-relation', I develop these arguments into a consideration of translation as an anti-abstractionist form of embodied labour that produces and sustains the 'differences-in-relation' at the heart of Stuart Hall's 'multicultural question' of how 'commonness in difference [is to be] imagined and constructed' (2000: 411). Introducing a key contribution to geographic scholarship, I suggest that more expansive engagement with language and translation as a social and spatial, relational practice could productively shift the focus from the supposed unassailability of epiphanic 'moments of untranslatability' (Jazeel 2019: 12) towards a more nuanced engagement with the frictions and disjunctions of the political and ethical labour of translation itself, especially as it occurs in embodied, everyday settings of partial or uneven linguistic fluency. This deeper dive into translation, I will argue, contributes towards the thesis' overarching aim by offering a lens through which to read for alternative, 'reparative' language geographies of relation not with blithe positivity, but with careful consideration of what is at stake in their (re)production.

The wide range of theoretical and conceptual arguments introduced in this chapter will aid later chapters' empirical critique of how race, nation and coloniality continue to structure geographies of language in the Outer Hebrides, whilst also offering a theoretical platform from

which to move towards 'reparative' language geographies of translocal, transcultural, 'translational' relation.

2.1. 'ONE-LANGUAGE, ONE-NATION, ONE-PEOPLE'

In this first section, I review geographic and sociolinguistic scholarship critiquing the racial underpinnings of 'one-language, one-nation, one-people' geographic imaginaries. In so doing, I adopt a 'coloniality of power' (Quijano 2000, 2007; Mignolo 2007, 2011) approach to questions of race, arguing that although forms of language standardisation and imperialist expansion existed prior to the fifteenth century (see Lane *et al.* 2017; Bohata 2004), modern categories of (ethno)linguistic difference emerged in this period as part of a complex strategy of colonial appropriation and domination of people, lands and languages. I consider the development of these racialising language ideologies in the context of Britain's transition from a 'colonial power in the traditional overseas extractive sense, to a space of domestic colonialism masquerading as a postcolonial nation' (El-Enany 2020: 130–131). I then conclude the section with a discussion of the complex and ambiguous position of minoritised languages within these geographies. Throughout, my analysis should be understood as specifically geographically situated: language geographies in other contexts are, of course, marked by different spatiotemporal trajectories and ontoepistemological traditions.

2.1.1. The 'monolingual paradigm' and the 'coloniality of language'

While the relationship between philology and racialising notions of cultural (especially religious) difference and identity has a much longer history (see Said 1978: 132–148; Topolski 2020), the convergence of geography and linguistics as modern academic disciplines dates back to their joint role in imperial expansion and nation-building in the late 19th century. The naturalisation of a connection between the construction of a codified and discretely bounded mother tongue and a territorially demarcated motherland was a key instrument of colonial statecraft, with the use of language codification and dialect mapping in (re)inscribing territorial boundaries being well documented and discussed by human geographers and sociolinguists alike (e.g. Dunlop 2013; Jagessar 2020; Jones & Lewis 2019; Phillipson 2010; Schwarz 1997). 'Linguistic landscapes', the visual presence or absence of written languages in the material landscape, have similarly been analysed by both geographers and sociolinguists as a means of claiming, maintaining and contesting colonial territorial control (Azaryahu & Kook 2002; Nash 1999; Zelinsky & Williams 1988).

While the relationship between language standardisation, territorialisation and the construction and bolstering of national and regional identities has been extensively discussed

(Bonfiglio 2010; Mac Giolla Chríost & Aitchisont 1998; Knox 2001; Segrott 2001; Williams & Smith 1983), this has not always been with a critical eye to the fundamental co-constitution of the ideologies of nativism, nationalism and race (see for example Chatterjee 1999; Sharma 2020; Valluvan 2017; and from a linguistic perspective, Makoni & Pennycook 2007). In response to this, there have more recently been calls in critical sociolinguistics for greater attention to the 'people' element of the colonial 'one–nation, one–people, one–language' geographical imaginary, in particular with regards to how that people and their linguistic expression come to be racialised in relation to a set of nation-state borders (Abdelhay, Severo & Makoni 2020; Flores & Rosa 2015; Makoni & Pennycook 2007). Work in sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and the philosophy of language in this regard has to a very limited extent been drawn into geographic engagements with language and multilingualism, that, as I address in greater detail below, to a certain degree continue to be limited by a (post)structuralist approach that conceptually treats languages as possessable, rational systems of representation that can somehow be abstracted from the embodied subjects who communicate through them.

The language ideology that construes speakers[4] as being almost organically connected to racialised kinship networks and nation-state formations through a single, discretely demarcated and codified mother tongue has been described by Yasemin Yildiz (2012) as the 'monolingual paradigm'. This ideology – that 'language is family is nation is race' (Giles 2019: 112) and that individuals 'naturally' have but one of each – cannot be abstracted from colonial processes of expropriation, exploitation and racialisation. The monolingual paradigm – and corollary conceptualisations of multilingualism as simply the pluralisation of monolingualism, an individual's ability to use distinct, discrete, countable language systems (see Pennycook & Makoni 2019) – is a historically contingent product of colonial state-building during the age of European imperial expansion. European linguists' systemising, simplifying, categorising and codifying of linguistic multitude was predicated on notions of linguistic and racial authenticity, and served to order and contain speaker groups within territorial boundaries. This bolstered an ideology of unified, distinct, autonomous and possessable language systems as co-constitutive with the constructs of race and nation. As Irvine and Gal (2000: 47) have noted of 19th century linguists' classifications of languages used in Senegal:

> The ways these languages were identified, delimited, and mapped, the ways their relationships were interpreted, and even the ways they were described in grammars and dictionaries were all heavily influenced by an ideology of racial and national essences.

In many contexts (see, for example, Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985; Monaghan 2012) speakers communicated through complex, hybrid linguistic ecologies, where not every

[4] The histories and geographies of nonverbal or signed languages follow a different course that is regrettably outwith the scope of this thesis. See Branson & Miller 1998; Fenlon & Wilkinson 2015.

communicative act could be identified as belonging to one or another discretely bounded language. Critical sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have argued therefore that more than simply the imposition of colonisers' languages, it was the differentiation, codification and systemisation of hybrid, fluid linguistic repertoires that served as a key instrument in the colonial enterprise of positing racial difference as the archetypal indicator of rationality, civility and literacy (Abdelhay, Severo & Makoni 2020; Irvine & Gal 2000; Ndhlovu 2018; Pennycook & Makoni 2019).

This imposition not only of language per se, but of language ontologies that are fundamentally entangled with the constructs of race, nation and epistemic privilege, Gabriela Veronelli (2015) has described as the 'coloniality of language'. Drawing on Quijano's (2000, 2007) distinction between colonialism and coloniality as the 'long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration' (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243), she writes:

> The coloniality of language is an aspect of the process of dehumanizing colonized people through racialization. Because racialization is inseparable from the Eurocentric appropriation and reduction of the universe of the colonized, the relation between language and racialization is performed within a Eurocentric philosophy, ideology and politics, which include a politics of language (119).

According to the coloniality of language, the language(s) of the coloniser are valued as Languages – coherent, rational and bounded structures of signification and representation, signs capable of transferring meanings that are abstracted from context and the bodies that might speak, sign or whistle them and fossilised in grammars and dictionaries. Colonised/colonialised expression, meanwhile, is construed as 'languageless' (Rosa 2016), without 'Eurocentrically valorised expressivity' (Veronelli 2015: 119), as meaningless sound, wasted words, phonic matter 'out of place' (see Pickering & Rice 2017). I will return to this abstraction, rationalisation and disembodiment of language(s) – and in particular, its relationship to processes of racialisation – in sections 2.3 and 2.4 below. First, I attend more directly to the development of these colonial language ontologies in the contemporary context of European (post)coloniality.

2.1.2. Language(s), multiculturalism and 'new ethnicities'

This section turns attention to how linguistic and cultural difference continues to be drawn into processes of racialisation, through considering the enduring reverberations of the 'coloniality of language' (Veronelli 2015) in the contemporary context of the 'postcolonial new world order' of nation-states (Sharma 2020, see also El-Enany 2020; El-Tayeb 2011; Lentin 2008, 2014). While Chapter 4 will outline in greater detail the policy developments that have governed geographies of multilingualism, multiculturalism and integration in Scotland and the UK since the turn of the

21st century, here I introduce on a more theoretical level the relevance of the 'new ethnicities paradigm' for engaging with the 'political and ethical quicksand [of] culture in relation to issues of racial and ethnic identity' (Alexander 2016: 1428).

Perhaps most obviously, racialised speech continues to be used as a bordering technology to confer or deny citizenship and thus to 'draw a border around the spoils of British colonial conquest as a final act of colonial theft' (El-Enany 2020: 127). This occurs in the first instance through increasingly onerous and externalised language testing regimes as a formal requirement of citizenship or residency (Blackledge 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009; Carlsen & Rocca 2021; Extra *et al*. 2009). Kamran Khan's (2017, 2019, 2021, 2022; Khan & McNamara 2017) work on the nexus of race, citizenship and language as part of the 'securitisation of English' in the UK's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policies since 2001 has further shown how the 'internal' multilingualism of racialised speakers has been construed as constitutive of a national security threat (see also Cameron 2013) or indicative of a 'failure to integrate'. Emma Hill's (2020) research with Somali Scots in Glasgow, meanwhile, has similarly evidenced how their language practices continue to be assessed always through a bordering lens of 'integration', even after the formal granting of citizenship rights (see also Blommaert *et al*. 2012). The citizenry is thus constructed as monolingually Anglophone, with arbitrary standards of English language proficiency operating as a measure of more or less successful 'integration'. Further analysis of this follows in Chapter 4.

More insidiously, linguistic and cultural difference continues to be drawn into processes of racialisation in a purportedly 'post-racial' context in which race 'can no longer be named, only continually insinuated' (Valluvan 2016b: 2243). Discussing sociological enquiry into 'new ethnicities' in Britain, Sivamohan Valluvan, for instance, has emphasised 'how central culture – framed as a discrete property of different ethno-racial groups – has become to both the operationalization as well as rationalization of racism and racial outcomes' (*ibid*.: 2244). While it is arguable to what extent cultural difference 'has *become'*, rather than has always been, central to processes of racialisation (see, for example, discussion in section 2.1.1 above, and Heng 2018; Topolski 2018, 2020), the 'new ethnicities' paradigm's emphasis on ethnicity as something that can appear '*both* in its restricted, unified, closed, absolutist, defensive, and essentialist forms and as a "weave of differences" that is looser, more permeable, and more porous in character' (Hall 2017: 134) offers a useful theoretical platform from which to analyse language and culture as a powerful racialising 'signifier' in the politics of difference in the context of late-modern globalisation. I will return to this in section 2.4 below.

Scholars working in the orbit of the new ethnicities paradigm – especially, in the British context, in the 'Bristol School of Multiculturalism' (Brahm Levey 2019; Meer 2019a) – have emphasised the centrality of religious difference to European processes of racialisation (Becker

2024; Jansen & Meer 2020; Meer 2008, 2013; Meer & Modood 2014; Modood, Triandafyllidou, & Zapata-Barrero 2006). Less attention has been paid to the role of linguistic difference in (re)producing the 'fateful triangle' (Hall 2017) of race, ethnicity and nation (for notable exceptions see Harris 2006; Harris & Rampton 2003; and Topolski 2020 for a fascinating albeit somewhat incidental account of the historical *intertwining* of theology and philology in the racialising construction of Reformation Europe), with the sociolinguistics of globalisation (e.g. Blommaert 2010) and superdiversity (e.g. Blommaert & Rampton 2012), while celebrating fluidity, hybridity and flux, sometimes lacking critical engagement with the geographies of European (post)coloniality, racial capitalism and white supremacy (see Flores & Lewis 2016). I will address this lacuna in Chapters 6 and 7, while section 2.4 below returns to the potential of the 'new ethnicities paradigm' and its focus on language and culture as a powerful racialising 'signifier' in dynamic, relational politics of difference. First, I consider how the nexus of language, nation and race so far considered in this chapter is complicated by the particular geographies of minoritised languages.

2.1.3. 'The rude speech of a barbarous people'

The geographies and histories of language minoritisation *within* European nation-states add an extra layer of complexity to attempts to redress racialising 'one-language, one-nation, one-people' geographic imaginaries. As I discuss further in Chapter 4, the definition of a 'minority language' adopted by the UK[5] is propelled by territorial anxieties about the coherence and stability of the nation-state and its racial or ethnic makeup. Across Europe, furthermore, the emergence of language revitalisation policies aimed at creating 'new speakers' of minoritised languages – those who come to a language by means other than intergenerational transmission – has troubled the rooting of these languages in familial relationships and predominantly rural 'heartlands', exposing tensions around which speakers in which places can lay claim to linguistic authenticity, authority and ownership. This is further complicated by the fact that some movements for the standardisation and territorialisation of minoritised languages have been interpreted as both a form of anticolonial resistance to linguistic imperialism, and as a reproduction of the dominant language ideologies that led to their minoritisation (see, for example, Costello 2015 or Johnson 1993 on Irish; Byrne 2020 or Woolard 2016 on Catalan; Kaur & Shapii 2018 on Malay). However, as Urla *et al.* (2018: 43) argue with specific reference to the Basque context,

[5] The definition provided by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (COE 1992a).

> the conditions of minoritized languages and advocacy efforts are rarely rehearsals on a smaller scale of majority language dynamics. They generate ironies, predicaments, and innovations that need to be appreciated in their full complexity.

In the multinational context of the UK, minoritised languages such as Welsh or Scots Gaelic occupy an especially complex and ambiguous position with regards to coloniality, race and nation. The historical work of Lucy Taylor (2017, 2018) on Y Wladfa (Welsh settler colonies in Patagonia), for example, has identified language minoritisation and the oppression of Welsh speakers in the 19th century as a key 'pivot point' for Welsh participation in British imperialism, complicating a simplistic 'agentive coloniser' versus 'victimised colonised' binary. Similar complexities exist in the context of Scots Gaelic. In her work on Y Wladfa, Taylor draws comparison to the 'dread of want' in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, noting that here too, 'logics of barbarism and civilization were expressed especially through language policy, which was a key tool of nation-building and political assimilation in modern British history' (2018: 455). The 'coloniality of language' (Veronelli 2015) can be seen reverberating through Samuel Johnson's assessment in *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* (1775) that Gaelic is 'the rude speech of a barbarous people, who had few thoughts to express, and were content, as they conceived grossly, to be grossly understood'.

These processes have – contentiously, selectively – been presented as a form of 'internal colonialism' (Hechter 2017; Mackinnon 2017). The salience of the memory of the Highland Clearances, however, corresponds to an amnesia about the involvement of Gaelic speakers – of multiple different stripes, from prisoners of war and indentured labourers to soldiers, clerks, planters and colonial officials (Kidd 2013: 47) – in the British Empire. As Cass Ezeji (2021: 234) has written, 'where they went is important, it too is an extension of a' *Ghàidhealtachd*'. Many Gaelic speakers, forcibly displaced or otherwise, participated in and drew material benefits from British imperialism (Calloway 2008). The first Gaelic dictionary, for instance, was funded by plantation slavery in the Caribbean (Ezeji 2021: 235; see also Kidd 2013). Further, as Sassi and van Heijnsbergen (2013: 4) have argued,

> Not only were the profits engendered by the Empire's economic success shared by Scots, both abroad and at home, […] but Scots also availed themselves of ample opportunities within the Empire to act as a distinct, self-protecting national group – pursuing national interests and even promoting a national cultural agenda across the globe.

A proper historical analysis of the complex intertwining of the violent processes of 'modernising', 'improving' and Anglifying Britain's 'Celtic fringe' with colonialism, Empire and enslavement overseas expands beyond the scope of this thesis. Here, my intention is to point to how the *memory* of colonialism impacts contemporary geographies of race, nation and language, shaping – and racialising – notions of 'Welshness', 'Scottishness', 'Gaelness', even 'Celticness' (see Hague, Giordano & Sebesta 2005; McCarthy & Hague 2004). In short, there has arguably been a

tendency for the memory of 'internal colonialism' to prevail over that of 'external' or 'offshore' colonialism in the construction of Welsh or Scottish identities, a selective remembering that, according to Liam Connell (2004: 254), was crucial for 'an early Scottish nationalist politics which, in the context of apparent cultural similarities between Scotland and England, needed to construct modes in which a fundamental cultural division between these countries could be identified'. As Charlotte Williams (2007: 756–757) has argued of rural Wales, discussion of issues of race and diverse ethnicities,

> has been dominated not by reference to the discourse of racialized exclusion of black and ethnic minorities but more acutely by English/Welsh ethnic relations [...]. The exclusionary force of this narrative also confers a racial purification given that the bedrock assumption of the argument is: to be Welsh is to be Welsh-speaking and by and large this equates to being white.

Researchers working on race, nation(ality) and coloniality in Scotland have similarly criticised a discursive 'displacement, deflection and disengagement' (Hopkins 2016; see also Davidson *et al.* 2018; Meer 2015; Smith 1993) from issues of race and racism as exclusively English problems. More recent work has pushed against this assumption and moved to deepen engagement with the 'tension between multinationalism and multiculturalism' (Meer 2015: 1479) – from interventions in the memory politics of nation and Empire, including from Williams herself, on the diverse forms of 'cynefin'[6] in Wales and their relational interconnection with 'people, places and histories elsewhere in Wales and across the world' (Williams 2021, 2022; see also Chetty *et al*. 2022), to empirical work exploring the intersections of ethnicity, gender and nationality among Scottish Pakistani groups (Emejulu 2013) or ethnic and religious minority youth perspectives of nationalism in Scotland during the 2014 independence campaign (Botterill *et al.* 2016). However, this work is still ongoing: this thesis aims to contribute to it with a specific focus on rural and island contexts in Scotland, and with a view to the role of language in these intersectional 'new ethnicities'. Later chapters of this thesis – in particular, Chapters 6 and 7 – hope to intervene in this gap, exploring the interscalar tensions between racialised nation(alism) and more localised discourses of difference, belonging and authenticity. The rest of this chapter outlines the conceptual scaffolding that this analysis will build upon, turning attention to how these processes of racialisation in and through language are de/reterritorialised at multiple intersecting scales.

2.2. 'WHERE THEY WENT': MOBILITY, TERRITORY, RURALITY

[6] Definition of 'cynefin' as it appears on the Welsh Government website: 'The place where we feel we belong, where the people and landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable. Though often translated as 'habitat', cynefin is not just a place in a physiological or geographical sense: it is the historic, cultural and social place which has shaped and continues to shape the community which inhabits it' (Welsh Government 2020).

Racialised 'one-nation, one-language, one-people' geographic imaginaries are troubled not by the multiplication of languages per se, but, as Yasemin Yildiz (2012: 7–8) specifies, by 'the notion of blurred boundaries, crossed loyalties and unrooted languages'. Linguistic diversity, in short, must be put in place. As such, the colonial territorialisation of language outlined above is challenged not only by calls for the 'disinventing and (re)constituting' (Makoni & Pennycook 2007) of Language(s) as discrete and disembodied systems of signification that distinct groups of people (typically imagined as national communities of racialised native speakers) can authoritatively deploy, authentically possess and legitimately inherit. It is also troubled by the fact that these speakers – without whom language cannot exist – move. It is to this that the chapter now turns, considering more explicitly how the entanglement of language and race outlined above becomes spatialised.

Since the 'spatial turn' of the 1970s and '80s, sociolinguists and applied linguists have called for more rigorous theorisations of the relationship between language, space and mobility to move beyond a territorial 'container' view of linguistic space as characterised by 'bounded areas, clear confines, and homogeneous communities' (Jacquemet 2005: 260; see also Auer 2013; Canagarajah 2018; Malinowski & Tufi 2020; Pennycook & Otsuji 2014, 2015). In particular, scholars working on the linguistics of globalisation and, more recently, translanguaging (García 2009; Blackledge & Creese 2010; Li Wei 2011), have found a 'spatial orientation' (Canagarajah 2018) generative for theorising linguistic diversity, mobility and fluidity. Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck (2005: 203–205), for instance, have called for greater attention to space and in particular spatial scale as an 'agentive force in sociolinguistic processes', emphasising how 'multilingualism is structured and regimented by spaces and relations between spaces'. Pennycook and Otsuji (2014, 2015), similarly, theorise speakers in 'metrolingual' contexts as drawing from a range of 'spatial repertoires' – 'the available and sedimented resources that derive from the repeated language practices of the people involved in the sets of activities related to particular places' (2014: 166).

While many sociolinguists have in this way embraced a spatial philosophy of relationality that moves against a view of space as closed, flat or static (Lefebvre 1974; Massey 1994, 2004, 2005; Soja 2011), there remains scope for deeper, interdisciplinary engagement with geographical analyses of the relationship *between* relationality and territoriality (Painter 2006a, 2006b, 2010), mobility and fixity, embodied processes of de/reterritorialisation and the politics of place. As Cristina Higgins (2017: 103) points out, 'in most applied linguistics research, it must be acknowledged that place and space are usually conflated', and as Auer (2013: 7) has further noted, 'the lacunae of research that result from the neglect of mobility can be observed in all fields of geolinguistics'. It is my aim in this section to bring these bodies of scholarship into closer dialogue, attending in particular to the potential of feminist 'new mobility' perspectives to

offer more dynamic, embodied understandings of territory. Noting that both sociolinguistic work on translanguaging, 'superdiversity' (Arnaut *et al*. 2015; Blommaert & Rampton 2012) and 'metrolingualism' (Pennycook & Otsuji 2014, 2015), and geographic work on multicultural encounter and conviviality (e.g. Amin 2002; Rishbeth & Rogaly 2018) have tended to focus on predominantly urban contexts, I additionally consider how the uneven mobilities of rural, 'remote' or 'peripheral' places implicate and are implicated in these geographies of linguistic de/reterritorialisation.

2.2.1. Mobility, territory and place

Developing out of (Anglophone) political geographers' criticisms of simplistic binaries between dynamic, fluid network and supposedly always bounded territory (Painter 2006a, 2006b, 2010), scholarship on the feminist geopolitics of scale has explored how multiple territories and borders are made, unmade and remade through the regulated movement of (racialised, classed, gendered, etc.) bodies (Jackman *et al.* 2020; Mason 2021; Moradi 2023; Smith 2012; Smith *et al.* 2016; Swanson 2016). Such developments can be considered as part of a wider 'mobilities turn' (Sheller 2017, 2018, see also Cresswell 1999, 2006; Hannam *et al.* 2006), developing out of the understanding that:

> the theory of spatial justice would take a more mobile turn if we recognized 'the city' or 'the nation' not simply as a fixed place but also as a principle of managed mobilities, one that extends from the inside to the outside, from the metropole to the colony, from the local to the global, from the interior of the body to the furthest reaches of empire (Sheller 2018: 34).

This 'new mobilities paradigm' – and related conceptual developments in critical border studies (Brambilla 2015; Johnson *et al.* 2011; Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2009, 2014; Sassen 2013) – has thus shifted attention from a conceptualisation of the border as a line discretely demarcating contained territories to a focus on the spatial-political practices of border*ing*, contain*ment* and de/re-territor*ialisation* as dynamic, embodied and contested processes. While some political geographers have explored such processes of de/reterritorialisation through embodied mobility at scales other than that of the nation-state (for example, Gieseking 2016), as Mason (2021: 3) notes in her discussion of the cultural politics of walking in rural Jordan, political geographical 'accounts of the relationships between bodies and territory […] rarely speak to cultural geographical work on the relationships between body and place', with the 'top-down' power exercised by the modern, Eurocentric state remaining the predominant mode in which territory has been analysed (see Elden 2013 for an account of the historical development of the concept and practice of territory as state spatiality).

Other languages and epistemological traditions, however, can offer an alternative 'way in' to the concept of territory. In Romance languages, for example, territorio, territoire, território

etc. is a much more elastic and expansive concept, emphasising the multiscalarity of power relations and a plurality of mobile 'protagonists' of territory (Porto-Gonçalves 2009, cited in Halvorsen 2019: 794). In some instances, it is arguably more appropriately translated into English as 'place', 'locality' or 'region' than as 'territory'. Indeed, Rogério Haesbaert (2013: 147) has gone as far as to argue that 'place is to Anglo-Saxon geography what territory is to "Latin geographies"'. Paasi (in Banini & Ilovan 2021: *vii*), meanwhile, has spoken of the need for greater 'interchange between the often disconnected continental Europe and Anglophonic debates' regarding territory and place identity, and Sandoval *et al*. (2017: 49) have connected Doreen Massey's writings about the politics of a 'global sense of place' (1991) to debates around polysemic nature of territorio in Latin American geographies (see also dell'Agnese 2013). This emphasis on the relational, multiple, mobile constitution of 'territoire' is frequently traced to the (largely still untranslated into English) writings of Swiss geographer Claude Raffestin (for example, 1977, 1980, 1995 and, in Butler's translation, 2012), who expanded the concept through situating it within a Foucauldian analysis of power. That 'the fallout of this fertile debate has remained confined within the Franco-Italian [and Latin American] domain,' writes Italian geographer Claudio Minca (2012: 146), 'represents a true missed opportunity for international (read: English-speaking) geography' (see also del Biaggio 2015; Klauser 2012).

Representing an important exception to this omission, Sam Halvorsen (2019) has argued that greater translingual, transcultural dialogue – more translation, in short – between Anglophone scholarship on territory and Raffestinian approaches (and especially how they have been developed in Latin American geographies) could contribute to a decolonial 'ecology of knowledges' (Santos 2016)[7] that might 'resist, rework and "reinvent" the modern, colonial idea of territory' (Halvorsen 2019: 791), so that it can be understood as:

> produced as overlapping and entangled in the process of appropriating space for political projects, and it is this multiplicity that highlights the limits of dominant Anglophone conceptualisations. Territory is a hybrid notion, caught between an incomplete colonial project, represented in the modern state and its political technologies (Elden, 2010), and multiple strategies to appropriate space in pursuit of different political projects (Halvorsen 2019: 795).

This translational, 'transepistemological' approach to understanding processes of de/reterritorialisation at multiple scales is particularly useful for my exploration of the language geographies of the Outer Hebrides: while the 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012) persists as a powerful territorialising 'political technology [of] the modern state [as] an incomplete colonial project', minority language advocacy efforts adopt 'multiple strategies to appropriate space in pursuit of [the] political project' of minority language resilience. In addition to deepening connections between cultural and political geography, therefore, this approach might help

[7] Santos's influence on decolonial politics and philosophy is tarnished by multiple allegations of his sexual misconduct and harassment of younger, female scholars. See Viaene, Laranjeiro & Tom (2023).

nuance sociolinguistic calls for a diversion of attention away from 'the territorial language space' of minority languages' 'rural heartlands' to instead focus on 'new, highly mobile speakers' in networked urban centres (O'Rourke 2022: 73). Rather than attempting to 'move beyond territory' (*ibid.*), a transepistemological turn *towards* territory might more critically interrogate the relationship between territoriality and relationality, urbanity and rurality, mobility and stasis. In the following section, I discuss how this approach can particularly advance understandings of rural multicultures and minoritised language geographies.

2.2.2. Mobilising the rural idyll: remoteness and peripherality

2.2.2.1. Rural cosmopolitanism, transrurality and mobility

In this section, I consider the implications of rurality on the language geographies explored so far in this chapter. If territory at multiple scales is understood to be made, unmade and remade through the regulated movement and containment of bodies, how is this impacted by the unevenness of mobilities through, to and from 'remote' or 'peripheral' rural areas?

Both geographic literature on multiculturalism, mobility and conviviality (e.g. Amin 2002; Rishbeth & Rogaly 2018; Valentine 2013), and sociolinguistic engagements with 'metrolingualism' (Pennycook & Otsuji 2014, 2015) and 'superdiversity' (Arnaut *et al.* 2015; Blommaert & Rampton 2012) tend to have predominantly concentrated on urban, even metropolitan, contexts. Sivamohan Valluvan has persuasively argued that the tendency 'to only locate this multiculture in the more fabled global cities' has not only shadowed engagement with the sorts of 'lived in' and 'easily worn' multicultures in less urbane, 'semi-urban and provincial settings, more mundane and more representative of where most of the British population is likely to be living' (Valluvan 2019: 41), but further that this orientation risks 'recycling a shameless and ultimately counterproductive working class versus immigration false dichotomy' (43).

Rural geographers and sociologists, meanwhile, have developed concepts such as 'rural cosmopolitanism' to counter the representation of rural areas as cities' 'constitutive outside' – as necessarily (and somehow idyllically) static, homogenous and removed from geographies of globalisation and modernity (Askins 2009; Milbourne 2007; Neal 2002; Neal & Agyeman 2006; Neal & Walters 2008; Radford 2016, 2017; Wilding & Nunn 2018). More recently, in line with broader critiques of the 'celebratory diversity drift' (Neal *et al.* 2018) of much scholarship on multiculturalism, there have been calls for more critical attention to how rural cosmopolitanism is often 'precarious and contingent' (Woods 2018: 316), structured by larger-scale geographies of race, nation and coloniality (see, for example, Butler & Ben 2021; Schech 2014; Stead *et al.*

2023; Whyte *et al.* 2019; Woods 2018, 2022). In their introduction to a Special Issue of the *Journal of Rural Studies*, Stead *et al*. (2023: 1) make the compelling case that:

> influential approaches to rural diversity […] –including 'rural cosmopolitanism'–too often fail to disrupt the taken-for-grantedness of rural places as already-made-as-white, and do not sufficiently account for the colonial and imperial foundations of rural places in the Global North.

To redress this, they stress the need for scholars of rural diversity and mobility to attend to 'both the structuring and place-making force of whiteness in the rural Global North, and to the multiplicities and richness of non-white rural lifeworlds' (*ibid.*: 6). Such a reminder is particularly timely given recent policy interest – discussed further in Chapter 4 – in promoting international immigration to alleviate population challenges in 'shrinking' (ESPSON 2020) rural areas across Europe (see, for example, Gruber, Pöcher & Zupan 2022; Martins 2022; MPS 2023).

The multiscalar emphasis of a mobilities lens offers a useful way of challenging the assumed stasis of rural areas and also the characterisation of such places as 'remote' from or 'peripheral' to larger scale geographies of European (post)coloniality, racial capitalism and nation(alism). Political geographer Alison Mountz (2011, 2015a, 2015b, 2020; Mountz & Loyd 2014), for instance, has analysed islands and archipelagos as crucial strategic sites of violently enforced (im)mobility, detention and containment that are implicated in larger-scale spatial ontologies of power, (national) sovereignty and (post)colonial bordering. Her work on the entanglement of the materiality of island (im)mobilities, carcerality and colonial state violence continues to be of grim relevance, with then Conservative Deputy Chair Lee Anderson in the autumn of 2023 suggesting that people seeking asylum in Britain should be sent to 'some remote Scottish island' if the UK Government's Rwanda deportation plan failed (Mitchell 2023). In cultural geography too, particular 'constellations of (im)mobility' (Vannini 2011) in ferry-dependent island communities have been identified as important shaping forces of, not territory, but place identity and performances of a 'place-specific way of life' (*ibid.* 268). Social geographers meanwhile have argued that the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of 'rural mobilities offer new perspectives on the complex interplay between movement, fixity and place' (Milbourne & Kitchen 2014: 327), not least because:

> some of the key forms of spatial infrastructure associated with urban mobility, such as public transport routes, dual carriageways, petrol stations, and even pavements remain largely absent in smaller and remoter rural places, meaning that the experience of mobility is, in many ways, different to that in the city. Moreover, […] not only is being on the move more difficult in rural spaces, it is associated more with necessity than choice. Rural mobility is something that has to be endured and carefully planned when a bottle of milk, loaf of bread or a hospital appointment can take the best part of a day to secure for those without cars (*ibid.*: 334).

We might also link this absence of 'spatial infrastructure' to national level austerity policies that have defunded rural public transport services (see Powell, Keech & Reed 2018; Salutin 2023). Mobilising rural geographies in this way – understanding rural places and territories as made

and unmade through structured, uneven (im)mobility on multiple intersecting scales – opens up a 'transperipheral' (Stroh 2009, 2011, 2013) or 'transrural (Askins 2009, see also de Lima 2011) approach to exploring rural diversity and mobility that:

> takes account of the specificities of place and, at the same time, pays closer attention to the ways in which rurality is implicated in and implicates other spaces and places, not only with regard to its binary 'the urban' but also networks of spaces and places across different scales (Askins 2009: 373).

Such an appreciation for 'transrural' or 'transperipheral' mobilities and relations therefore broadens the scope for engaging with emergent 'new ethnicities' or 'cultures of hybridity' (Hall 1992: 310) in rural areas, while also situating rural multicultures more critically within wider geographies of coloniality, nation and race. I adopt this perspective in Chapter 5, to explore how uneven (im)mobilities to, through and from the Outer Hebrides contribute to a structuring of rural belonging through the fluid metaphors of 'incomers', 'locals' and, to a lesser extent, 'flybys', in a way that does not 'sit atop' ideologies and performances of nation and race, but interacts with them in complex and dynamic ways – an interface which is then unpacked in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

2.2.2.2. The rural idyll, whiteness, nativeness

While the previous section made a call for 'mobilising' geographies of rural multicultures and moving against representations of rural areas as static and homogenous, this section now turns a critical eye to the *effects* of these representations of the countryside, moving in the intersection of cultural and political geography to ask 'what [these] representations do' (Anderson 2018). In particular, I outline the role of 'rural idyll' mythologies in whitening narratives of nation, emphasising their intersections with gender, heteronormative family structures and ideologies of 'nativeness' that are central to the 'linguistic family romance' (Yildiz 2012) that 'language is family is nation is race' (Giles 2019: 112) introduced in section 2.1 above.

Contemporary 'rural idyll' mythologies of the countryside as a harmonious, homogenous, unchanging outpost for 'traditional values' and as such, 'safe for children' (Hall 2020; Valentine 1997; Yarwood 2005) accelerated towards the end of the 19th century, not only in the context of intensifying industrialisation and urbanisation, but also that of eugenicist concerns about the 'racial degeneration' of the nation stirred by the Boer Wars (Agyeman & Spooner 1997: 200–202; Jedrej & Nuttall 1996: 33–41; Searle 1976: 20–33). Rural landscapes and communities were romanticised as morally and physically edifying, in contrast to the

polluted, sickly, overly fertile and generally 'unfit' urban poor.[8] The 'rural idyll' has thus been mobilised as a key lever in constructions of 'Britishness' as enduring, rooted in tradition, and most crucially, as white (Agyeman & Spooner 1997; Chakraborti & Garland 2004a, 2004b; Neal 2002). As Knowles (2008: 173) writes, 'the countryside stands for more than it is: it produces, embodies and sustains whiteness on behalf of the nation'.

But which nation? Albion is not Alba, and the English 'green and pleasant' conjures a different sort of landscape to the moor and machair of the Outer Hebrides (see Gkartzios, Toishi & Woods 2020 for discussion of the nuance lost through the Anglocentricism of rural studies). The 'rural idyll' mythology is inflected differently in Scotland. Romanticised representations of, in particular, the constructed 'wildness', 'remoteness', 'emptiness' of rural Scottish (or more precisely: Highland) landscapes – as opposed to the bucolic imagery of rural English 'quaintness' – have long been a key site of contestation between different constructions of 'Scottishness' (Blaikie 2011; Deary & Warren 2017; Withers 1999). This aligns with similarly inflected performances of rural gender, as rural Scotland was not immune from the racialising, eugenicist discourses of the 19th and 20th centuries. Jedrej and Nuttall (1997), for example, in their landmark study of repopulation in rural Scotland, cite J.S. Blackie (1809–1895), a prominent 19th century Scottish intellectual who almost singlehandedly raised the funds to endow the Chair of Celtic at Edinburgh University, expressing in an article for *The Scotsman* his concerns about the rural to urban mobility of

> the peasantry of a country [who] form in normal circumstances the most healthy, sound and sturdy class of society', since from the 'ranks [of Highland crofters] have sprung the best soldiers and the most illustrious commanders that have made the British name respected, and the British power feared from the rising to the setting sun' (1880: 20, cited in Jedrej & Nuttall 1996: 34).

Peter Mackay (2013), through analysis of 18th and 19th century Gaelic literature, has also linked particular, martial constructions of rural, Gaelic masculinity as ambiguously 'borb'[9] to recruitment efforts for Britain's imperial wars. Forty years later in 1920, Scotland's Committee on Women in Agriculture still judged retaining a 'sturdy' rural population as an 'urgent problem of national welfare', as 'country-bred women are generally superior in vigour and health to town bred women' and that 'agricultural work is a good preparation for motherhood' (1920: 2, 9, cited in Jedrej & Nuttall 1996: 40). Particular gendered divisions of rural labour and constructs of rural masculinity and femininity, although subtly inflected in the Gàidhealtachd, served to reproduce whiteness in the name of the (British) nation.

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[8] This is a symbolic contrast that find contemporary reflection in increased internal migration to rural areas in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic (Colomb & Gallent 2022; González-Leonardo *et al*. 2022; Rowe *et al*. 2023).

[9] The word has a wide semantic range, from 'fierce' and 'vehement' through 'wild', 'barbaric' or 'cruel'.

While the eugenic tenor of debates regarding rural population management subdued in the wake of the Holocaust, its afterlives can be seen in the construction of the 'rural idyll' as an outpost for children's safety and 'family values'. These discursive links rely upon racialised, 'nonheteronormative' (Ferguson 2003) folk devils whose various vices are essentialised as urban. Hubbard (2005: 14), for example, notes that opposition to plans in the early 2000s to construct 'self-contained asylum centres' in rural areas of the UK was shaped by the racialised representation of asylum-seekers as embodying a sexual threat to white women, children and heterosexual family structures. Similarly, Helen Moore, in her PhD research exploring the intersection of whiteness and class in relations between Eastern European horticultural workers and white English villagers, describes how '"proper" gender roles and sexual behaviour […] is essential to claiming ethnic group membership (that is, respectable, white, English, rural) and also demarcating the ethnic boundary between English and Eastern European' (Moore 2013: 237). I return to this theme at various points throughout this thesis: in Chapter 4's discussion of the place of rural Scotland in contested articulations of Scottish nationalism; in Chapter 5's analysis of the gendered performances of 'localness'; in Chapter 7's exploration of the complex tensions between whitening representations of rurality and lived experiences of rural racialisation; and Chapter 8's consideration of division between rural public and private space.

It is, finally, important to consider the intersection of race, gender and nation at the heart of the 'rural idyll' mythology in relation to the linguistic ideology of 'nativeness'. Yasemin Yildiz (2012: 10–11) notes how the monolingual paradigm's central 'invocation of the maternal' codeveloped with 'new and interrelated conceptions of family, kinship, motherhood, nation and state […] [which] corresponded to the reorganisation of labor and the household' in the late 18th century. Thomas Bonfiglio (2010), similarly, has rigorously historicised the development of the metaphors of maternity and nativity inherent in the notion of the 'mother tongue', tracing them back to Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* (1304) and the religious context of the late Middle Ages, especially to the Catholic veneration of the Virgin Mother and the continuity between lactation and the Eucharist (Bonfiglio 2010: 71–80, see also Bynum 1986, 1991). According to Bonfiglio (2010: 185), it was this 'corporealisation' of vernacular language as organic, biological, imbibed through the mother's – or, more likely for Dante's audience, the wetnurse's – milk that,

> function[ed] as a major conduit for the enracination of the national language. […] The image of the connection between mother and child has forged one of the most powerful icons in the protectionist, isolationist, and ethnocentric configuration of the sovereignty of the national language. This association still persists in the current era, albeit in secularised form.

Bonfiglio's fascinating, rigorous conceptual genealogy of the 'mother tongue' metaphor might be considered part of wider sociolinguistic scrutiny of the validity of the concept of 'nativeness' (Bucholtz 2003; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy 2001; Davies 2003; Watts & Doerr 2009), especially as

it is deployed to devalue, discipline or stigmatise racialised speech (Rosa 2016; Rosa & Flores 2017). Researchers of 'new speakers of minority languages' (O'Rourke & Ramallo 2011; O'Rourke & Pujolar 2013; O'Rourke, Pujolar & Ramallo 2015) have applied this critique to traditional dialectology and its tendency to confer linguistic 'authenticity' and 'nativeness' exclusively to 'the language variety of the noble and uncontaminated peasant' (Fishman 1972: 69). This is especially true, O'Rourke, Pujolar and Ramallo (2015) have argued, of 'salvage linguistics', with its aim of documenting endangered languages as artefacts, drawing predominantly on a narrow pool of so-called 'NORM' (non-mobile, older, rural, male) speakers (Chambers & Trudgill 1998, see also Bucholtz 2003). The countryside again, then, emerges as a key site of contestation for the gendered, racialised reproduction of an imbrication between 'nativeness' and 'nation'.

I continue this discussion in Chapter 6, which applies the transepistemological understanding of territory introduced above to examine the relationship between uneven (im)mobilities, rural structures of belonging and linguistic 'authenticity' or nativeness. Chapter 7 then turns attention to how these ideologies, performances and relations are implicated in broader scale geographies of race and nation. First, in the remainder of this chapter, I will introduce how I hope to read for alternative, 'reparative'[10] geographies of the mother tongue through bringing Bonfiglio's (2010) critique of this 'corporealisation' of vernacular language into conversation with decolonial and feminist work on embodiment and materiality.

2.3. 'BACK TO THE ROUGH GROUND': MATERIALISING LANGUAGE

Both the 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012) – the notion that everyone has one 'true' language, their mother tongue, connecting them to racialised kinship networks and nation-state formations – and the concomitant 'coloniality of language' (Veronelli 2015) rely on an abstraction of language(s) as property, as an object authentically and/or authoritatively owned rather than an intersubjective action performed. This view of languages as discrete and disembodied systems of signification that certain groups of people – as outlined above, typically imagined as national communities of racialised native speakers – can authoritatively deploy, authentically possess and legitimately inherit precludes a more relational understanding of language as a communicative, performative action through which meaning is not only intersubjectively sedimented and contextually arrived at, but also potentially obfuscated, perpetually negotiated and often inchoate. Debates in sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and the philosophy of language in this regard have to a very limited extent been drawn into geographic engagements with language and multilingualism, that to a certain degree continue to

[10] Here I draw on Sedgwick 2003 – my uses of the 'reparative' are set out in greater detail in the following chapter.

be limited by a (post)structuralist approach that conceptually treats languages as possessable, rational systems of representation that can somehow be abstracted from the embodied subjects who communicate through them, focusing instead on texts, scripts or discourses (e.g. Barnes & Duncan 2011; Ó Tuathail 1996; Sharp 1993), anxiously characterised by some as 'the ruin of words, and the disaster of writing' (Carter-White, Doel & Shubin 2024).

This tendency is particularly evident, paradoxically, in new materialist approaches that would seem to promise a collapsing of dichotomies between matter and meaning, but in which a conflation of language with representation is reified through somewhat reductive moves against the Saussurean strawman of Language as an abstract and disembodied structure of signification. It is held almost as axiomatic in much new materialist, and especially nonrepresentational, writing that, as Karen Barad (2003: 801) puts it,

> Language has been granted too much power. The linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, the interpretative turn, the cultural turn: it seems that at every turn lately every 'thing' – even materiality – is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation.

There have in more recent years been calls for geographers to move beyond this reduction of language to a vague form of 'cultural representation' and to engage more creatively with the material affects and aspirations of languages – and indeed, representations (see Anderson 2018) – as they are actually used. Focusing on the geopolitics of language diversity and multilingualism in Sámi contexts in the Arctic, for example, Ingrid Medby (2019, 2020, 2023a, 2023b) has drawn on Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language to outline the 'ample scope for more sustained critical geopolitical engagement with language and language-use' (2023b: 23). She moves against the tendency of some nonrepresentational theories to dismiss language as a rarefied system of signification and advocates instead for a 'conceptualisation of language that recognises that this too exceeds representation' (*ibid*. 20). The work of both Medby and Wittgenstein urges for a more expansive geographic engagement with the significance of materiality for language, for a view of language not simply as a means of naming the world, but as an embodied and relational part of being with and of the world. As Wittgenstein, translated by Gertrude Anscombe, notes in the *Philosophical Investigations* (*PI*), famously ushering us back to 'rough ground', 'we are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm' (*PI,* para: 107–108, see also Barton 2021).

Meanwhile, several cultural geographers theorising in a nonrepresentational vein (see for example Boland 2010; Kanngieser 2012, 2015; Kanngieser & Beuret 2017; Revill 2016), especially those working in geography's intersections with sound studies and musicology, have begun to explore the sonic materiality of spoken language in soundscapes, with particular attention to the spatial, political and ethical implications of 'the acoustic qualities and inflections of voices – the timbres, intonations, accents, rhythms and frequencies' (Kanngeiser 2012: 339).

Kanngeiser's (2012) efforts to outline an affective, 'acoustic politics of the voice' (348), for example, offer some important reflections on the role of paralinguistic 'soundings, gestures and affective transmissions' (337) in processes of collaborative meaning-making, albeit arguably while sidestepping some of the knottier complications of the relationship between voice and language, which in turn runs the risk of flipping from abstractions of language as representational structure to the other extreme of reducing (spoken) language to 'pure' materiality – an issue to which I return below.

There remains, however, a need for such engagements with the relevance of materiality for geographies of language to more explicitly articulate the connections between abstractions of language to property and the structures of coloniality, nation and race discussed at the beginning of this chapter. As I shall argue in the following section, the systematic 'devocalisation of logos' (Cavarero 2005: 40) is central to the workings of the previously outlined coloniality of language. Articulating these connections more explicitly might allow the relevance of 'reparative', decolonial geographies of language to resonate more clearly beyond the remit of the relatively small number of geographers working explicitly and specifically on issues of language and/or soundscapes.

2.3.1. Waste, voice, flesh: Revocalising language geographies

In *The Empire at Home*, a rigorous refutation of any 'postcolonial cut' that would supposedly mark a clean transition from a system of imperial-states to nation-states in the late 20th century, James Trafford (2021) emphasises the ongoing coloniality structuring and allowing modern Britain to (continue to) exist. He describes the colonial expropriation and exploitation of lands, resources and peoples as relying on the incorporation of nature into property regimes, a process propelled by logics of waste – lands and resources deemed 'uncultivated' were/are decried as wasteful, with only the coloniser judged industrious and rational enough to exploit them to their full potential. Trafford (2021: 25) summarises:

> The foundations of private property lie in these ideologies of labour as improvement and action, providing the means for transforming nature as waste into nature as property.

If, as I suggested above, the 'coloniality of language' (Veronelli 2015) can be understood to rest on the abstraction of language(s) as property, how can alternative, decolonial language geographies begin to be developed through considering linguistic analogies to Trafford's argument? How might we conceive of 'uncultivated languages', 'wild tongues' (Anzaldúa 1987) as yet 'uncivilised' and 'untamed' by colonial regimes of labour and private property? Which parts of language are dismissed as 'waste', superfluous to the purposes of signification, and what labours make them property? In this section, I suggest that reading Trafford's formulation

of the colonial relationship between nature, waste and property alongside Italian feminist political philosopher Adriana Cavarero's (2005) analysis of what she describes as Western philosophy's systematic 'devocalization of logos' can provide a generative starting point for exploring geographies of convivial, embodied language use that exist in tension with colonial language ideologies of territorialised and racialising monolingualism.

Adriana Cavarero's work can be situated in the intersection of political philosophy and feminist thought. Alongside Judith Butler, she is considered one of the foremost thinkers in continental feminist philosophy, whose work over the past four decades has explored the political and ethical implications of the concepts of relationality, plurality, vulnerability and violence, but has received limited attention in geography. In this section, I first establish the need to consider Cavarero's philosophy of vocal relationality in the context of coloniality/modernity, before suggesting lines down which a geographic engagement with her work might proceed.

Through close analysis of a wide array of theoretical work spanning from classical metaphysics to modern linguistics and philosophy, in *For More than One Voice,* Cavarero (2005) details how the phonic, relational and material aspects of human voices have been systematically muted, 'devocalised', as part of a logocentricism that has prioritised logos as structure, reason and signification. Drawing from Hannah Arendt's political philosophy of plurality, Cavarero approaches questions of relational ontology and its politico-ethical consequences through engagement with vocality, deploying the 'material relationality of singular voices' (13) as a challenge to the solipsistic universal categories of Western metaphysical political theory – '"man", "subject", "individual"' in their 'classic Cartesian clothes' (173). She critically analyses how the 'devocalisation' of Platonic metaphysics and its subsequent evolutions throughout Western philosophy has dismissed the material, vocalic aspects of (especially spoken) language as being somehow separate from and inferior to its abstracted referential content (61–83), to the impossible promise of the 'pure semantic' (136). In Cavarero's words (translated by Paul Kottman), through such 'devocalising' processes:

> The voice thus becomes the limit of speech – its imperfection, its dead weight. The voice becomes not only the reason for truth's ineffability, but also the acoustic filter that impedes the realm of signifieds from presenting itself to the noetic gaze (2005: 42).

In this view, language is considered as such only to the extent to which it is seen to attain or aspire to rational signification. Paralinguistic forms of expression, semantic excess, obfuscated or 'opaque' (Glissant 1990) meanings which in their materiality – and, Cavarero would stress, in their singularity – exceed their 'pure' function as linguistic signs are considered waste – 'dead weight' (Cavarero 2005: 42), peripheral and extraneous to the transparency of 'Eurocentrically valorised expressivity' (Veronelli 2015: 119).

In *For More than One Voice,* Cavarero does not discuss the 'devocalisation of logos' and its 'wasteful' vocal by-product in the context of coloniality; her arguments are squarely situated within the remits of the traditional Western philosophical canon. 'It has been said', she quips, 'that the entire history of philosophy is nothing but a series of footnotes to Plato' (42), offhandedly disregarding a diverse array of non-Western philosophical traditions and the dialectical relationship their thought likely had with that of the Western philosophers she does engage with.[11] Reading her philosophy from the geopolitical perspective of a modernity/coloniality framework that understands the epistemic framework of European modernity as mutually constitutive with coloniality (Mignolo 2007, 2011; Quijano 2000, 2007), however, allows for a clearer articulation of the connections between Western modernity's 'devocalisation of logos' and the ideologies behind the coloniality of language outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

This 'devocalised' ontology of language relies on the categorisation of colonialised, racialised expression as meaningless, linguistic waste. Cavarero notes that in order for Western Man to possess such a 'system of signification that […] subordinates verbal signification to mental signifieds' (34), there is a need for 'whatever is left over [to be construed as] an insignificant remain, an excess that is disturbingly close to animality' (Cavarero 2005: 35). What she does not explicitly articulate in *For More than One Voice* is that this hierarchical apportioning of the categories of humanity and animality, this bordering between a 'devocalised' system of signification and its meaningless 'insignificant remain' (*ibid.*), emerged as a means of legitimising European colonial conquest (Mignolo 2007, 2011; Quijano 2000, 2007) and continues to participate in assemblages of racialisation as 'a conglomerate of sociopolitical relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans and nonhumans' (Weheliye 2014: 3). In other words, and in line with critiques of the occasionally universalising tendencies of some posthumanist approaches that profess to 'found a biological sphere above and beyond the reach of racial hierarchies' (Weheliye 2014: 53), any conceptual move to 'revocalise' abstractions of language(s) into 'pure form' (Moten 2003: 109) must also carefully attend to the coloniality of language by which some forms of expression have been, quite on the contrary, reduced to 'simply sound' (Cavarero 2005: 179).

This complicates the terms on which we must engage with the 'materiality of language'. Decolonial feminist engagements with materiality and embodiment in and beyond geography (for example, Gökarıksel 2016; Gökarıksel & Smith 2017; Mountz & Hyndman 2006; Spillers

[11] See, for example, discussion of the relationship between Indigenous thought and the French enlightenment in Graeber & Wengrow 2021: 44ff; or Surya Parekh's (2023) account of the 'Black Enlightenment' through the writings of free Jamaican Francis Williams (1697–1762), Afro-British thinker Ignatius Sancho (1729?–1780), and Afro-American poet Phillis Wheatley (1753?–1784).

2003; Wynter 2003), if not positioned simplistically against Language as always-already 'pure form' (Moten 2003: 109), could prove generative for exploring the political and ethical consequences of (re)conceptualising language as an 'embodied, embedded, enacted and distributed' (Pennycook 2018: 89) practice that actively participates in dynamic, more-than-human, 'semiotic assemblages' (*ibid*.: 91), but crucially from a perspective that does not overlook coloniality, racialisation and gender as integral structural components of such an assemblage. Alexander Weheliye (2014, see also 2005), for example, has advanced the Black feminist thought of Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter to propose *habeas viscus* as displacement of the universalising biopolitics of Foucault and Agamben, emphasising that the work of these thinkers does not 'demot[e] race and gender to the rank of the ethnographically particular, instead exposing how these categories carve from the swamps of slavery and colonialism the very flesh and bones of modern Man' (2014: 29–30). My argument here is that a similar sensitivity is needed for materialising or 'revocalising' language. As Weheliye (*ibid.*: 127) continues, developing Spillers' (2003) 'hieroglyphics of the flesh' with reference to Frederick Douglass's 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and Agamben's highly influential analysis of 'Muselmänner' in Nazi death camps:

> While this form of communication does not necessarily conform to the standard definition of linguistic utterance, to hear Aunt Hester's howls or the Muselmann's repetition merely as pre- or nonlanguage absolves the world of Man from any and all responsibility for bearing witness to the flesh.

In other words, the 'logocentric' reduction of language to the always-already 'pure semantic' (Cavarero 2005: 136) should be understood as *co-constitutive* with the 'coloniality of language' (Veronelli 2015), by which Man's forms of expression are judged capable of conferring this abstraction of disembodied signification while others are dehumanised as extraneous to this purpose, as noisy, fleshy linguistic waste. This, I suggest, should prompt geographical engagement with multiple language *ontologies,* rather than with the multiplication of languages as a stand in for multiple *epistemologies*. Weheliye expresses this as an imperative to 'translate the hieroglyphics of the flesh' (2014: 137, drawing on Spillers 2003); Donna Haraway as 'training each other in acts of communication we barely understand' (2008: 287). Here, I suggest that Cavarero's (2005) feminist philosophy of vocalisation, if read critically through the geopolitical lens of a modernity/coloniality framework, could provide a generative starting point for 'delinking' from and exploring alternatives to the coloniality of language (Veronelli 2015) and the abstractions of language to a rational, possessable system of signification that it relies upon. This reading of Cavarero's philosophy has stressed that moves towards 'revocalised' geographies of language must involve more than acknowledgement of the material sonority of speech, but more critical engagement with its non-benignly relational constitution

and the ethical, political consequences that ensue from this – especially with regards the structuring forces of race and gender. Put otherwise, moves to (re)conceptualise language as a relational and material practice should entail a careful reckoning with the political and ethical implications of that relationality. It is to this that the following sections of this chapter now turn.

2.4. THE ABSOLUTE LOCAL AND EMBODIED ENCOUNTER

Cavarero's revaluation of the vocalic in *For More than One Voice* is not merely a theoretical exercise, but a proposal for radically rethinking the relationship between politics, space and speech (2005: 16, 200–209; Cavarero, Thomaidis & Pinna 2018). As she specifies, still in Paul Kottman's translation (2005: 178–179),

> The point is not simply to revocalize logos. Rather, the aim is to […] finally mean it as sonorous speech – in order to listen, in speech itself, for the plurality of singular voices that convoke one another in a relation that is not simply sound, but above all resonance.

In emphasising the primacy of a 'uniqueness-in-resonance' (199) at the foundation of a politically responsible 'revocalisation of logos', Cavarero advocates for a relational conceptualisation of spatial politics 'that does not appeal to territory or identity myths of community' (209). Instead, she reads embodied, reciprocal speech, the collusion of the semantic and the vocalic, as the expression of a radical, unrepeatable and relational uniqueness of existents that goes beyond the collective difference of 'belonging to this or that identity group, this or that language' (209). Advancing Arendt's notion of political space beyond a public/private divide, she instead proposes that a 'revocalised ontology' can allow us to engage with a politics of the 'absolute local', a 'relational space that does not concern *what* those share it are, but rather *who* they are' (204–205, emphasis added), a primary uniqueness that is communicated through the reciprocal, relational speech of singular voices in resonance. The absolute local, she specifies, is generated by a situational, contingent 'taking-place of politics that has no predefined borders, nor any fixed or sacred confines' (204):

> It is not a nation, nor a fatherland, nor a land. It extends as far as the interactive space that is generated by reciprocal communication. It is a relational space that happens with the event of this communication and, together with it, disappears (204–205).

Given the argument I set out in the previous section, however – that the devocalisation of logos is concomitant with the coloniality of language – there is an ironic need to put embodiment, 'flesh', back into this account. As categories of race and gender 'carve from the swamps of slavery and colonialism the very flesh and bones of modern Man' (Weheliye 2014: 29–30) it is not so simple a matter to transcend categories of collective difference or 'identity myths of community' (Cavarero 2005: 209). The 'taking-place of politics' (*ibid.* 204) by which Cavarero

understands the 'absolute local' does, in fact, *take place* within and against other 'inherited scalar structures' (MacKinnon 2011) such as those of the racialised nation. In this section, I argue that there is therefore a need to ground Cavarero's 'absolute local' in embodied contexts of racialised cultural or linguistic difference, and that this might usefully proceed through dialogue with geographic scholarship on the scalar politics of encounter.

Focusing predominantly on urban instances of 'living with diversity (though with notable exceptions: see Faier 2009; Horton 2008; Jones 2012), geographers have theorised encounters across and with difference as 'distinctive event[s] of relation' (Wilson 2017a: 452), that 'do not simply take place at the border [of difference] but are rather central to the making and unmaking of them' (*ibid*: 456). This literature resonates with Cavarero's relational 'uniqueness-in-resonance' (2005: 199), but, importantly, adds an explicitly spatial perspective that might help make sense of the 'deep paradox of place' (Burgess, Burgess & Murray 2006: 168) – the scalar collapsing of universal and particular, local and global – that her politics of voice and the absolute local has been said to occur within. Geographers of encounter (e.g. Amin & Thrift 2002; Darling & Wilson 2016; Koefoed & Simonsen 2012; Peterson 2020; Wilson 2017a) have stressed that rather than taking place against an abstract blank slate, or within preexisting spaces as passive containers, encounters are simultaneously shaping of and shaped by place as a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey 2005: 130). Scalar politics[12] are thus at the heart of questions of encounter, with embodied encounters with and across difference having the potential – or not (see Matejskova & Leitner 2011) – to stretch, twist or transform 'inherited scalar structures' (Mackinnon 2011). The multiscalar emphasis of an encounters lens, therefore, could potentially help to ground Cavarero's philosophy of revocalisation in contexts of embodied *multi*lingualism and *multi*culturalism, fraught and contestably structured as they are by the uneven, unequal geographies of race, nation and class. Attending to how notions of difference and identity are (re)made, negotiated and legitimised through acts of relation 'in *and* across place' (Katz 2001: 1230, original emphasis) allows for deeper engagement with how Cavarero's 'absolute local' emerges in scalar tension with the sorts of colonial language geographies discussed in the first half of this chapter.

At this point, we might usefully return to the chapter's earlier discussion of 'new ethnicities' and the role of language and culture as a powerful racialising 'signifier' in the politics of difference, introduced in section 2.1.2. above. I suggest that the emphasis in Cavarero's philosophy of revocalisation on the primacy of 'uniqueness-in-resonance' (2005: 199) might

[12] I adopt Mackinnon's (2011) 'scalar politics' as opposed to the 'politics of scale' (see Brenner 2001) as a means of integrating a poststructuralist emphasis on 'openness' and fluidity with an eye also to 'processes of historical sedimentation and social reproduction [that] suggest a need to take fixity more seriously' (Mackinnon 2011: 33).

offer a potential response to Stuart Hall's (1988: 249) question of how to develop a multicultural politics which is lived not *despite* difference, but,

> with and through difference, which is able to build those forms of solidarity and identification which make common struggle and resistance possible but without suppressing the real heterogeneity of interests and identities.

I further submit that grounding Cavarero's 'absolute local' through conversation with the scalar politics of embodied encounter might offer it greater potential to,

> effectively draw the political boundary lines without which political contestation is impossible, [but] without fixing those boundaries for eternity (*ibid*).

Such a theoretical integration might, in other words, offer a lens for analysing 'new ethnicities' emerging in and through embodied, 'revocalised' multilingual encounter at the 'absolute local' as 'transruptions' (Hesse 2000) to the territorialised monolingualism of the racialised nation-state outlined above. As Sivamohan Valluvan has argued of 'everyday multiculture' as a 'political repertoire that ably subverts the nationalist attempt to monopolize class for its own political ends' (2019: 36), attention to embodied, revocalised multilingual encounters could provide an 'important resource and reference that, if properly commanded, hints at the possibility of a post-nationalist politics of solidarity' (*ibid.* 40). Valluvan's work draws on that of Hall (1988, 2000) and Paul Gilroy (2004), to advance a reading of convivial multiculturalism as more than the mere *recognition* of difference, but rather, moments in which,

> identificatory terms of communal difference circulate, but are not bound to the metaphysics of modernity and its move to code the world's peoples discretely along certain communitarian sets (Valluvan 2016a: 214).

Convivial multiculturalism, from this perspective, is not simply the act of *naming* difference, but, chiming closely with the 'absolute local' that Cavarero sees ensuing from the plurality of singular voices in relational speech, becomes the contested process of 'the remaking of difference's everyday resonance' (Valluvan 2016a: 208).

Attention in particular to 'revocalised' multilingualism as an instantiation of convivial multiculture could, I suggest, shine greater light on how embodied encounters with and across difference are often disjointed, fumbling and by and large 'less-than-fluent'. A relational and revocalised conceptualisation of language and multilingualism might allow geographers to a greater extent to tune into what Anoop Nayak (2017: 291) has described as the 'auditory interruptions', the 'scratchiness and bumpiness that lie in the grooves of many encounters with difference'. In the following and final section, I conclude the chapter by suggesting that appreciation of embodied, revocalised encounters at the 'absolute local' as riven with this scratchiness and bumpiness can be advanced by interdisciplinary engagement with the praxis of

translation as the politically and ethically fraught labour of positing commensurabilities, producing and sustaining difference-in-relation.

2.5. TRANSLATION AND DIFFERENCES-IN-RELATION

In Stuart Hall's foundational writing on 'new ethnicities', race and multiculture (e.g. 1988, 2000), he makes frequent use of the metaphor of translation as 'an interpretive key with which to practice the politics of difference as an ongoing negotiation of reciprocal give-and-take' (Hall 2017: 28). Scholars working on the possibility of political community within, against and beyond territorialised nation-state formations have also found the metaphor of translation salient for theorising emancipatory forms of the 'mobile commons' (Hardt & Negri 2017: 152–153; Sheller 2018: 213), while Brent Hayes Edwards' (2003) has developed Hall's (1980) theorisations of diaspora and articulation to argue that 'cultures of black internationalism can be seen only *in translation*' (7, original emphasis). In the final section of this chapter, I propose looking closer at the praxis and theory of translation to expand this 'anti-abstractionist' (Edwards 2003) usage of translation, to understand it as an embodied, potentially risky (see Chapman 2024; de Jong 2023), potentially violent (see, for e.g. Lawrance, Osborn & Roberts 2006)[13] but often invisibilised form of political and ethical labour to produce and sustain various forms of 'difference-in-relation'.

In 'The Politics of Translation' (1993), it is precisely the aforementioned issues of (re)making commonality, difference and relation that postcolonial scholar and translator Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explores. Through considering the politics and ethics of translation in relation to the possibility of 'women's solidarity', she advances a view of cultural translation as a process of Derridean dissemination in which 'meaning hops into the spacy emptiness between two named historical languages' (202), diffracting new perceptions, epistemes, knowledges (in Spivak's Freudian term, 'frayages', 1993: 202). Rather than a 'workaday definition of translation' (Spivak 2010: 40) as the straightforward shuttling of meaning across languages and epistemes, she instead provides a more accurate view of translation as a contested act of 'tracking commonality [that] can lead us into areas of difference and different differentiations' (216), as the political labour of positing commensurabilities and striving for solidarity across difference – or, of 'remaking difference's everyday resonance' (Valluvan 2016a: 208). As Naoki Sakai, whose expansive scholarship on translation (e.g. 1997, 2000, 2006, 2009a,

[13] Consider, for example, Lord Thomas Macaulay's infamous 'Minute on Education' (1835): 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population'.

2009b 2010, 2017, 2019) has received regrettably little attention in geography, has similarly stressed:

> It is important to introduce difference in and of language in such a way that we can comprehend translation not in terms of the communication model of equivalence and exchange, but as a form of political labour to create continuity at the elusive point of discontinuity in the social (2010: 26).

Spivak's and Sakai's eminently spatial, relational conceptualisations of translation neither promote a view of linguistic, epistemic and phenomenological difference as always unassailable and absolute (though for an opposing view of 'untranslatability' or 'opacity' as anticolonial resistance, see Barokka 2022; Glissant 1990; Jazeel 2019), nor rely on the epiphanic promise of 'correct' translation or easy, direct equivalences. Rather, the focus is shifted from the *outcome* of failure or success in 'overcoming' difference to the processual, relational, politically and ethically fraught *praxis* of continually negotiating and navigating that difference, of recognising it as, in Spivak's words,

> not something that one cannot translate but something one never stops (not) translating, a *persistent epistemological preparation* rather than merely a response to a global market understood as a call to equitable pluralism (Spivak 2010: 38, emphasis added).

Turning away from the 'workaday' (Spivak 2010: 40) spatial metaphor of translation as 'bridging' essentialised or neatly bordered difference (see Baynham & Lee 2019), to instead conceive of translation as the 'worldmaking' (Müller 2021) labour of producing and sustaining differences-in-relation, allows it to be conceptualised as response to Hall's (2000) 'multicultural question' of 'finding the space for difference and identity to commune and communicate together' (*ibid.*: 425). While this is by no means the case with all acts of translation or brokerage, as Timur Hammond and Britanny Cook (2023) have recently argued, as translation is in this way 'simultaneously prompted by difference and [can] build differences-in-relation' (794), it can offer a means of envisioning geographies of collective belonging, community and solidarity that are 'defined by imbricated difference rather than self-identity' (802), a means of reworking 'common characteristics of "we" at the border with "them" […] [to] the "we" as constituted through its commitment to always translating its differences' (*ibid*.).

A practical enactment of this is offered by the 'Welcoming Languages' project (Fassetta *et al*. 2023; Fassetta & Imperiale 2023; Imperiale, Fassetta & Alshobaki 2023), a 12-month proof-of-concept project led by researchers in Glasgow and Gaza, that in 2022 taught Levantine Arabic to staff in Scottish primary schools as an act of 'linguistic hospitality' (Kearney 2007, 2019; Ricoeur 2004).[14] In addition to carrying tangible educational and psychosocial benefits for Arabic-speaking pupils, many of whom were of refugee backgrounds, the humility and

[14] On translation and/as language learning, see Kohl *et al*. 2020; Pym 2021.

vulnerability entailed in language learning had significant implications in shifting (to some degree) power relations between educational staff and pupils, adults and children, 'foreigners' and 'locals' (Fassetta & Imperiale 2023: 15). Just as importantly, becoming learners, fledgling speakers, of Arabic was an embodied process that entailed the adoption of 'fantasies of other identities' (Imperiale, Fassetta & Alshobaki 2023: 379, citing Kramsch 2006: 98), challenging assumptions and producing relations of curiosity and care about life/lives in Gaza and Levantine cultures. To what extent such relations forged through the process of translation, language learning and 'becoming a multilingual subject' (Kramsch 2006) might have 'hardened' into more explicit expressions or acts of solidarity against Israel's genocidal destruction of life in Gaza – violence that severely escalated nine months after the 'Welcoming Languages' project formally ended and that is ongoing at time of writing – remains to be seen.

Drawing debates on the politics and ethics of translation practice into conversation with geographic work on the scalar politics of embodied encounter might, therefore, open up generative lines of enquiry into what is at stake in the (re)production and potential scaling-up of 'meaningful encounter' (Wilson 2017a: 460–462). I explore this possibility further in Chapter 7. Writing from translators about the intimate but not innocent, vulnerable but potentially violent nature of our 'little art' (Briggs 2017) offers useful insight into the embodied labour of 'practising the politics of difference as an ongoing negotiation of reciprocal give-and-take' (Hall 2017: 28), raising pertinent 'practical, epistemological and political questions' (Smith, Davies & Gomes 2021: 291) around the relationship between positionality and subjectivity (Davies 2024), authenticity and artifice (Barton 2021; Collischonn 2022; Davies 2023; Maitreya 2022); geographies of knowledge and deeply uneven structures of epistemological power and violence (Footitt, Crack & Tesseur 2018; Müller 2021; Patel & Youssef 2022; Spivak 1993); directionality (Collischonn 2022); 'faithfulness' and 'betrayal' (Jazeel 2016); and the collectivisation of semantic agency and translational labour (Berkobien 2020; Davies 2023, 2024). Perhaps most pertinently to the aims of this thesis, reflections from translators – especially those working with racialised languages – on translation as an 'exophonic performance' (Collischonn 2022) troubles the hegemony of 'nativeness' and territorially bounded mother tongues,[15] but importantly, without jettisoning the possibility of (complicated, ambiguous, multifaceted) feelings of 'belonging' in and through language(s). I will return to this in Chapter 8.

While most of the participants in this research were not professional translators, neither are most of the people in the world who translate, for whom it is an everyday, practically necessary yet no less consequential task. As such, in this thesis, I understand 'translation' broadly, and bring these considerations forward in my exploration of various translational acts

[15] A troubling, it is important to note, that is nonetheless inadequately accommodated in the professional translation industry.

of producing and sustaining 'commonness in difference' (Hall 2000: 411) or difference-in-relation.

2.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to indicate directions in which a reparative geography of the mother tongue might develop. It has introduced the conceptual framework that later chapters' empirical engagement with rural multiculturalism, migration and minority languages hope to build upon, complicate and advance.

I first introduced the concepts of the 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012) and the concomitant 'coloniality of language' (Veronelli 2015) as the imposition not only of language per se, but of language ontologies that are fundamentally entangled with the constructs of race, nation and epistemic privilege. I provided an overview of how linguistic and cultural difference has been harnessed as a 'racialising signifier' – both during European imperial expansion and nation building in the 18th and 19th centuries, and in the contemporary context of Britain's transition from a 'colonial power in the traditional overseas extractive sense, to a space of domestic colonialism masquerading as a postcolonial nation' (El-Enany 2020: 130–131). Central to this discussion was the capaciousness of the 'new ethnicities' paradigm to conceive of ethnicity as something that appears '*both* in its restricted, unified, closed, absolutist, defensive, and essentialist forms and as a "weave of differences" that is looser, more permeable, and more porous in character' (Hall 2017: 134). This section ended in discussing how the selective remembering of colonialism in Scotland and Wales complicates these language geographies, and that further work is needed to critically interrogate the 'tension between multinationalism and multiculturalism' (Meer 2015: 1479), especially when it comes to minority languages and rural contexts. This discussion continues throughout the thesis, but is addressed most explicitly in Chapters 6 and 7.

The chapter then took a more explicitly spatial turn, adopting a mobilities lens to consider how these racialising language ideologies become de/reterritorialised at multiple, intersecting scales. I argued for greater transepistmological dialogue with, in particular, Romance language geographies of territoire/territorio, suggesting that the resulting, expanded understanding of territory as 'produced as overlapping and entangled in the process of appropriating space for political projects' (Halvorsen 2019: 795) not only helps to nuance sociolinguistic engagements with the spatial relationship *between* territoriality and relationality, but also strengthens a conceptual bridge between geopolitical analyses of territory and engagements with place in cultural geography. Such a theoretical integration is, I argued, particularly useful for advancing geographies of minority languages, given the spatial and

political processes which have led to their minoritisation. I apply this transepistemological understanding of territory in Chapter 6's analysis of linguistic authenticity and 'nativeness', and Chapter 8's exploration of a minoritised language's 'habitat' or 'environment'. This section also included discussion of how these processes of de/reterritorialisation might be modulated by the rurality and constructed 'peripherality' of the Outer Hebrides. I first approached this through the lens of material geographies of uneven mobilities to, through and from remote and rural areas, arguing for the need for studies of rural diversity to represent against the routine situating of globalisation, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism exclusively in urban, metropolitan centres, especially in order to situate rural places and spaces more critically in the wider geographies of coloniality, nation and race. I then took a more discursive turn, tracing the 'rural idyll' mythology to the widespread eugenicist concerns of the 19th and early 20th centuries and highlighting how particular ideals of rural masculinity, femininity, sexuality and family are still implicated in the whitening imbrication of nation and nativeness.

The second half of the chapter (sections 2.3 to 2.5) proceeded from the understanding that such colonial language geographies cannot simply be critiqued or deconstructed away. Rather, I suggested that critique of the racialising corporealization of language carried through the metaphor of the 'mother tongue' could be productively brought into closer conversation with decolonial and feminist work on embodiment and materiality. To this end, I considered Adriana Cavarero's (2005) philosophy of revocalisation from a modernity/coloniality perspective, stressing the fundamental *co*articulation of Western modernity's 'devocalisation of logos' and the 'coloniality of language'. Arguing that Cavarero's philosophy of revocalisation inadequately accounts for race and coloniality, I suggested that her 'absolute local' might be grounded in the contested, everyday contexts of multilingualism and multiculturalism through the geographical lens of the multiscalar politics of embodied encounter. Such an approach, I argued, might offer a means of navigating the alleged 'deep paradox of place' (Burgess, Burgess & Murray 2006: 168) her politics of voice has been said to work within, allowing for attention to how the relational place of 'absolute local' emerges *in scalar tension* with the structures of racial capitalism, European (post)coloniality and white supremacy. I suggested that bringing these bodies of scholarship into closer conversation could provide a useful means of analysing 'new ethnicities' emerging in and through embodied, 'revocalised' multilingual encounter at the 'absolute local' as 'transruptions' (Hesse 2000) to the territorialised monolingualism of the racialised nation-state. Finally, I argued that attending to translation as the 'anti-abstractionist' (Edwards 2003), 'worldmaking' (Müller 2021) labour of producing and sustaining differences-in-relation could help shine greater light on how such 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) relations or solidarities are produced and maintained. I continue this discussion in the chapters that follow, in particular in Chapters 6 and 7.

Having surveyed the theoretical frameworks upon which later chapters of this thesis hope to build, to conclude this chapter I now return to and elaborate on the three broad and interrelated research objectives that I first introduced in Chapter 1, relating them to the broader interdisciplinary conversations that this chapter has discussed in greater depth.

(i) Language and relation

In this chapter, I elaborated on an argument I have previously advanced elsewhere (Chapman 2023a) – that geographically grounding Cavarero's (2005) relational, 'revocalised' language ontology in dynamic and contested contexts of *multi*lingualism and *multi*culturalism (especially considering how they are structured by racialised and gendered power geometries) can help us understand how 'meaningful encounter' (Wilson 2017) at the site of the 'absolute local' (Cavarero 2005) can be 'scaled up', stretching, twisting or transforming 'inherited scalar structures' (Mackinnon 2011) of identity and community such as the territorialised, racialised monolingualism of the nation-state. I further argued that interdisciplinary engagement with 'anti-abstractionist' (Edwards 2003) forms of translational labour and agency can offer a useful lens for understanding how such solidarities or 'differences-in-relation' are produced, sustained and negotiated as part of 'reparative' geographies of language.

(ii) Language and territory

I additionally argued that a 'transepistemological' conceptualisation of 'territory' as emerging through translations between English and Romance-language geographies allows us to understand the language practices of mobile 'glottopolitical agents' (García & Amorós-Negre 2020; Guespin & Marcellesi 1986) as contested strategies to de/reterritorialise existing spatial and scalar structures. This multiscalar, mobilised perspective allows for greater insight into how minoritised language geographies exist in tension with processes of de/reterritorialisations of and through language at other scales, most notably, that of the nation-state. It also allows for greater appreciation with 'transrural' or 'transperipheral' mobilities and relations, broadening the scope for engaging with emergent 'new ethnicities' in rural areas, while also situating rural multicultures more critically within broader geographies of coloniality, nation and race.

(iii) Language and embodiment

Thirdly, I proposed advancing critique of the racialising implications of the corporealization of language – conveyed by the metaphor of the 'mother tongue' – by bringing it into closer conversation with decolonial and feminist scholarship on

embodiment and materiality. This is especially so given what I have argued is the co-constitution of the 'devocalisation of logos' (Cavarero 2005) and the 'coloniality of language' (Veronelli 2015). I argued that moves to (re)conceptualise language as a relational and embodied practice should entail a careful reckoning with the political and ethical implications of that relationality and embodiment, especially in view of insights from Black feminist scholarship (Spillers 2003; Weheliye 2014; Wynter 2003) with regard to race and gender as fundamental structural components of inherited ontologies of the human, and by extension, human communication.

The chapters that follow develop these wide-ranging theoretical arguments through exploration of lived-in, empirical geographies of multiculturalism, migration and minoritised languages in the Outer Hebrides. Firstly, in Chapter 3, I now turn to the methodology the project employed in order to engage with these geographies.

CHAPTER THREE

'BUT YOU NEED DATA!'

ON MEANS AND ENDS

The first interview I held for this research, in a busy Stornoway café on a sunny morning in May, was interrupted. A man who I had noticed painting a watercolour of the boats in the harbour at the next table when I came in approached us from behind and, by way of introduction, announced:

'I've been sat listening to you for the last… four hours? It's a real privilege, don't get me wrong, it really is. But I just wanted to ask…' He looked pointedly at my companion. 'How many questions have *you* asked *her*?'

'But but but,' he floundered. 'She's a PhD student!'

'Yeah, no,' I anxiously hurried to explain, gesturing towards the red light of the recorder sat on the table between us. 'This is an interview.'

He assured us, somewhat cryptically, that he 'quite understood the dynamic', paid his bill, and left. We laughed nervously, embarrassed.

'I'm just trying to help.' He explained a few moments later, the intervention from the would-be champion of women's voices still playing on both of our minds. 'If we were having a conversation, I would be asking you questions! But you need data!'

In this chapter, I explore several of the methodological discomforts that this interruption provoked: the embodied encounter between researcher, research participant and their spatial surroundings, the temporal, spatial and personal limits of 'the field', and the difficulty of reconciling the feminist epistemological and ethical principles undergirding this research with the blunt reality that I did, in fact, 'need data'. I first consider several of the methodological implications of reconceptualising the vocal along the lines outlined in Chapter 2: if we complicate conventional understandings of the voice as the archetypal expression of interiorised and atomised subjectivity, what consequences ensue for the politics of representation in qualitative research? I take the discomfort I felt towards 'needing data' as the starting point for answering this question, offering an interpretation of oral histories as 'revocalised' standpoint epistemology. I then discuss the representational 'frames' I chose to use (and refuse), with particular reference to the politics and ethics of researching migration, multiculturalism and nationalism in the context of the financialisation, spectacularism and sensationalism of representations of the border and border crossings. This discussion includes

reflections on the methodological implications of specifically rural borders and mobility in qualitative research. Finally, I describe how I navigated multilingualism, translation and 'less-than-fluency' in this project, arguing that language difference should be considered not as merely a practical, technical or operational challenge for data collection and analysis, but rather as an integral, generative feature of qualitative research. The chapter concludes by circling back to the anxieties with which it opens, offering some reflections on the reparative and what this project has been reading, listening, (re)searching for.

3.1. EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL PREMISES

This project subscribes to a feminist epistemology of partial, situated knowledges (Haraway 1988; Rose 1997). I understood my work 'in the field' to be the work of sowing the seeds of stories rather than harvesting the crops of data. The thesis you read now is but one of those possible stories and the voices, narratives and experiences that comprise this research – and those that may ensure from it – will always exceed my analysis of them.

As such, I felt a degree of discomfort when I was reminded, in the episode recalled above, that 'you need data!'. In a similar vein, I experienced a twinge of sadness when, during a lively, engaging discussion with another participant, I asked if I could record our conversation and she straightened up in her chair and asked, significantly more stiffly, 'how does this work then? Will you ask me questions?'. I had been asking her questions, listening carefully to her responses, and occasionally offering my own reflections since we had sat down with our coffees half an hour earlier, but suddenly our interaction had turned into a 'Capital I Interview', our exchange of experiences and thoughts flattened into 'data'. The repeated donning and doffing of the researcher's hat, multiple times throughout a single interaction, was a draining and disorientating performance, charged with questions of what counts as data, how it is made (or given) and to what uses it is put.

The root of this discomfort lies partly in the disjuncture between the embodied, relational and situated nature of my interactions with research participants, and the limited possibilities in the context of a PhD for collectivising the work of interpreting and representing them. For decades now, feminist methodological writing (see, for example, Dowling 2005; Pratt 1992; Rose 1997) has grappled with this representational imbalance, or the researcher's power to 'represent while escaping representation' (Haraway 1988: 581). Following Donna Haraway, proponents of 'standpoint theory' have advocated for a counterstrategy of 'transparent reflexivity' as a means of 'situating' or contextualising knowledge production and thus pre-empting any false claims to universality or objectivity. In this vein, in the chapters that follow, I shall at various points acknowledge the possible implications of my positionality where it seems relevant. I also, however, agree with Gillian Rose (1997: 311) that the way standpoint

epistemology is often somewhat formulaically deployed 'depends on certain notions of agency (as conscious) and power (as context), and assumes that both are knowable'. The reality of critical reflexivity in practice is much messier, more dynamic and more uncertain, not least because positionality is *itself* variously situated and performed in different contexts. The ways in which gender is performed in the opening vignette to this chapter, for example, are modulated by the fact that I was extremely nervous, by my companion's 'just trying to help', by his alignment with feminism and his own previous experience of undertaking doctoral research, by my awareness of an expectation to manage the unexpected interruption as an Ethical Researcher, and by the fact that over the course of 'the last…four hours?', we had been talking at length, recognising shared values and interests, and establishing a relationship that extended beyond the temporal and spatial limits of the interview. All of this is inseparable from the 'data' that feeds this thesis, and yet these sorts of relations are not typically categorised or considered as such.

Geographers Russell Hitchings and Alan Latham (2020: 393) have characterised this divergence in the methodological applications of standpoint theory as a distinction between 'big P positionality issues' ('the manner in which our personal characteristics and relative power play into the research process') and 'small p positionality issues' ('how we go about presenting ourselves to, and engaging with, our respondents and what that means for how they subsequently speak with us'). They note that discussion of the former in methodological writing has prevailed over that of the murkier latter – and, I would add, over that of the complex interactions *between* these two levels of positionality. To return again to the interruption presented at the opening of this chapter, for example, the 'small p' positionality of the specific gendered dynamics between me and my interlocuter, fleetingly introduced above, are complexly entangled with the assumed 'big P' positionality of our interrupter's comically mistaken reading of our interaction as one of 'mansplaining'.

In the following subsection, I draw Cavarero's (2005) philosophy of 'revocalisation', introduced in Chapter 2, into this discussion of the epistemological premises of this thesis's methodology, to suggest that developing a 'revocalised' approach to standpoint theory might open up productive avenues for thinking through what does and does not constitute 'data'.

3.1.1. 'Revocalising' standpoint epistemology

Haraway's own writing on standpoint epistemology relies heavily on the well-trodden metaphor of knowledge as sight and vision. She describes the un-situated, universalising 'god trick' as 'a conquering gaze from nowhere' (1988: 581) and in encouraging feminist researchers to attend to the power dynamics shaping knowledge production, urges us to consider, 'with whose blood were [our] eyes crafted?' (585). In this subsection, I suggest alternatively considering standpoint

epistemology from a vocal perspective and explore some of the methodological and epistemological implications of 'revocalising' debates on positionality, agency and representation in qualitative research.

Several researchers, working primarily in anthropology and cognate disciplines, have explored the methodological implications of moving beyond the conceptual abstraction in Western metaphysical traditions of 'voice' as the archetypal expression of individualised, interiorised subjectivity and authenticity. Amanda Weidman (2014), for example, points to the disjuncture between the many metaphorical mobilisations of voice – raising one's voice, giving voice to an idea, silencing or platforming oppressed voices – and 'the more sonically and linguistically focused study of actual voices and vocal practice' (38), and argues that these two registers of voice should be considered together. In a move to 'provincialise' Euro-Western modernity's associations of 'voice' with autonomous, rational speaking subjects who are always in possession of individual self and conscious agency, she calls for qualitative researchers to more critically 'ask where and when "voice" becomes a salient metaphor' (*ibid.*). In a similar vein, Lisa A. Mazzei (2013, 2016) has drawn on the post-humanist ontology advanced by Deleuze and Guattari to propose a 'Voice without Organs' that does not emanate from a singular, bounded subject but instead from an assemblage of 'conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 177, quoted in Mazzei 2016: 153). Political geographer Ingrid Medby (2023a: 225) has further suggested that 'working with the spoken word […] should mean tuning in to all of that which is said (and unsaid) as a mode of relating, as a mode of shared meaning-making in the moment, in turn gaining a richer understanding of the wor(l)ds beyond data.'

'Revocalising' qualitative research methodologies, then, might offer a means of conceptualising the research encounter as, above all, a 'resonant relation' (Cavarero 2005), not only between 'researcher' and 'researched', but additionally between context, discourse, theory, memories, desires and emotions, thus potentially facilitating more nuanced engagement with the aforementioned entanglement of 'Big p' and 'small p' positionality (Hitchings & Latham 2020). It offers a reminder that 'what we research is our relation with the researched' (Rose 1997: 315) and that further, this relation can be considered 'constitutive rather than [or, I would suggest, as well as] reflective' (Gibson-Graham 1994: 220). In this way, material, representative and subjective fields can be understood as relationally co-constituting each other and as all folded into what we might consider 'data'. Such a 'revocalised' approach allows not only for deeper engagement with words as they exist 'off the page' or 'outside the dataset', but also, significantly, for those that remain unsaid or merely alluded to.

3.1.2. Oral history as 'revocalised' standpoint epistemology

In this section, I argue for drawing on the methodological toolbox provided by oral history as an instantiation of 'revocalised' standpoint epistemology. Oral history's roots lie in folklore, oral tradition and, particularly, in post-World War Two ambitions for the 'recovery' of the silenced voices of the past (Abrams 2016). The post-positivism of the 1970s and '80s (and in particular the publication of Luisa Passerini's 'Work, Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism' (1979)), critiqued this tendency towards 'facile democratisation' (Passerini 1987) and led to more reflexive discussions about the complex, politicised and active role of the oral historian as an interviewer and analyst. Italian oral historian Alessandro Portelli (1981), in particular, set out important theoretical foundations for oral historians in arguing that it is precisely this emphasis on the complex and reflexive *inter*subjectivity of memory that 'makes oral history different'. Exemplifying this complex dynamic between memory and its intersubjective articulation, soon after I explained the aims of my research, Margaret told me about her father working in a medical practice in Lancashire in the late 1930s and '40s:

> My father, after three weeks, said, 'excuse me,' to the receptionist, 'but we, I think I haven't seen anyone yet who isn't Jewish'. And, because, having travelled, that wasn't an issue for him at all. But she said, 'well, yes, is that a problem for you?'. 'Not at all,' he said. But, um, she explained that it was the only practice that would take Jewish people when, when it was founded.

It wasn't entirely clear to me whether Margaret was telling me this to paint me a picture of her father and his politics, or more broadly to challenge the nationalistic, jingoistic representations of Britain's role in the Second World War and the historical erasure of British antisemitism that she might have (rightly) assumed that I, as someone born in the 1990s, have grown up saturated in. Whatever her motivations, the moment generatively invites reflection on the relationships between self (selves) and structure, continuity and discontinuity, personal and political, and the various 'placings' of the past in the present, demonstrating how the theory and practice of oral history constitutes a useful methodology not only for specifically historical geographers, but also for broader engagement with the ways in which narratives about the past, events and memories shape contemporary geographical dynamics (and vice versa, see Hampton 2022).

The thirty semi-structured, informal interviews I conducted for this research were informed by several key characteristics of oral history practice – most obviously, an engagement with the spoken word, a balance of autobiographical reminiscence and reflection, attention to orality/aurality, narrativity and performance, and an embrace of collaboration, mutability and ephemerality (Abrams 2016). In particular, however, it was oral historians' emphasis on the method as 'not simply as a source of data, but as text, a genre, an event, a historiographic act' (Freund 2019: 160), as a 'work of relation' (Portelli 2010) or a practice of 'critical empathy' (Field 2017) that made this method particularly appropriate for the feminist ethical, political and epistemological premises underlying this research. These 'peculiarities' (Portelli 1981) of

oral history, additionally, I would suggest, make the method particularly appropriate for feminist geographers exploring 'revocalised' standpoint theory.

Reflecting on oral history as a 'work of relation', Portelli (2010) relays the experience of a young colleague working on an oral history project with people who had had breast tumours removed. After an interview with an older, recently widowed woman, Portelli's colleague confided that she had also undergone this procedure. Her interlocuter first exclaimed, 'ma allora sei una di noi!' ['so you're one of us then!'], before (in Portelli's interpretation) reasserting her authority by observing, 'ma sei una ragazzina!' ['but you're [just a] a young girl/lass!']. The nature of the interview then took a new direction as the two women compared surgery scars. The episode exemplifies the dynamic and active process of negotiating difference within an interview that is explicitly embraced by oral historians. 'Big P' positionality issues (in this instance, generational differences, gender, shared experience of breast tumours) are entwined with 'small p' positionality issues (the narrator's curiosity about the interviewer, her eagerness to welcome the younger woman into the 'una di noi' category, the embodied intimacy of their scar comparison). The oral history interview might thus be understood as an instance of a 'relational space that does not concern *what* those share it are, but rather *who* they are' (Cavarero 2005: 204–205, emphasis added), allowing space for a more dynamic, relational and entangled conceptualisation of subjectivity and agency in research encounters to emerge.

Labour geographers Ben Rogaly and Kaveri Qureshi (2017) make a similar observation about oral history's particular attention to the active process of (re)making and negotiating difference, discussing this not only in the context of the interview itself, but also in that of their subsequent representation of it. They note that adopting oral history as a method in their study of food sector workers in Peterborough meant that 'people, once – perhaps still – food sector employees, emerge *as people*, rather than being reduced to a category that may only have relevance for a temporary period of their adult lives' (197, original emphasis). I found this more generous and flexible approach to representative categorisation useful, not only for the uncomfortable task of navigating what counted as 'data', but also in working towards the political aims of drawing people of various different migration statuses and trajectories into the same frame of analysis, further discussion of which follows in section 3.2 below. It was also useful for navigating representative issues stemming from a degree of research fatigue, especially amongst racialised members of small, rural communities. Ahmed, for instance, noted:

> Especially when the Mosque was being built, we had a lot of media coverage at that time. We still keep getting it, and because nobody else talks to anybody, I always end up being at the forefront of it! I'm the only one who will agree to talk to the media.

Similarly, the resettlement of eight Syrian families on the Isle of Lewis had received such intense media attention in the previous five or so years that I was told explicitly by multiple

'gatekeepers' that only one woman would be willing to speak to me, especially as several of the other Syrian refugees in Stornoway had recently experienced notably negative interactions with national media.[16] This reticence was possibly compounded by the displacement of up to a third of the population of Ukraine following Russia's invasion in February 2022: Annie, a friend of several of the Syrian families in Stornoway, told me how they were 'unsettled' by the war, how it had 'brought it all out again'. I felt that by operating within a methodology that explicitly embraces the situated (inter)subjectivity of the research encounter and moves between 'big P' and 'small p' positionality issues more flexibly and nimbly, I was better able to navigate the ethical complexities raised by both research fatigue and trauma. I felt less of a pressure to emulate 'an aura of pseudo-science' (Abrams 2016: 5) by trying to present these narratives as necessarily or perfectly representative of a larger group or community. Instead, oral history shifted the focus to recording a specifically situated relation, rather than 'collecting data' from a single component of a too-small 'sample' of Syrian refugees living in Stornoway.

3.1.3. Representing oral histories

Oral history's close attention to the implications of orality/aurality is for the various reasons set out above highly relevant to this project's engagement with 'revocalised' language geographies. Portelli's reminder, for example, that the 'orality' of oral histories should not be considered 'merely a vehicle for information, but as constitutive of its meaning'[17] (2010: *np*) resonates closely with the collusion of the semantic and the vocalic in Cavarero's (2005) call for the 'revocalisation of logos'. This focus, however, carries several methodological challenges on the level of representation.

As I was transcribing interview recordings, I struggled to adequately represent the meanings that were relayed through the many sighs, nervous giggles, tuts, cadences, ironic chuckle-grunts, hesitations, snapping or tapping fingers, smacking or squelching lips, clicking tongues, sarcastic tones of voice, impressions of characters in a narrative, accents and lilts, and countless other forms of 'vocalisation' that might not typically be included in narrowly defined 'datasets'. As Lynn Abrams (2016) writes in *Oral History Theory,* discussing her efforts to faithfully transcribe an interview with someone who spoke in a strong Shetland dialect, 'there can only be a semblance of similarity – a verisimilitude – between the narrative as told and the narrative as written down; something happens in the process of speech being translated to text' (13). As part of this process, oral historians begin to place on interviewees' narratives

16 Although I was not, of course, 'the media', the distinction between external journalists and researchers is not necessarily always apparent, or even particularly significant, especially when entering a community as an outsider or stranger.

17 L'oralità, insomma, non è semplicemente un veicolo dell'informazione ma anche una componente del suo significato.

interpretations that may derive from theoretical or conceptual frameworks far removed from the embodied and situated context of the interview itself, and 'increasingly the narrator's voice fades and the researcher's gains prominence as we move further away from the direct relationship with the subject' (*ibid.* 165).

I have responded to this through experimenting with representative strategies that are more explicitly orientated towards the sonic, auditory geographies of voice and spoken language that this project explores. This thesis is accompanied by a playlist, a mix of sounds from before, during and after 'the field' that didn't make the transcripts. The playlist does not include substantive excerpts from interviews (these are transcribed and discussed in the body of the thesis) but rather paralinguistic sounds, including ambient noise, songs, poems, excerpts from other conversations and archive sound. In communicating the acoustic environment of this research in this way, I hope the playlist will also respond to oral historian Lynn Schler's (2019) observations that the role of space in oral history literature has largely been discussed in terms of suggestions for how to 'neutralise space as a factor in the interview process' (328), rather than acknowledging how space, 'with all its messiness and complexity, can actually be leveraged during interviews as an additional source of knowledge' (329).

The first part of the playlist can be accessed here, and a full track list is detailed in Appendix 1.

This multimodal approach could be considered as a tactical 'suggestion' or 'supplement' (Barron 2021, citing Colls 2012; Dewsbury *et al.* 2002), in part inspired by 'more-than-representational' turns to affect, embodiment, performance and process. I hope that the accompanying playlist will provide an immersive, alternative means of engaging with the 'data' that emerged from my interactions in the Hebrides, serve as a reminder of their embodied, relational and transient nature, and speak to the uneven opacities (Glissant 1990) that characterise multilingual, 'less-than-fluent' communication. Importantly, this should not be taken as an abdication of responsibility for the political and ethical consequences of representation, but rather as heightened attention to what representations *do*: how they affect, work and are used, summarised by cultural-political geographer Ben Anderson (2018) as a focus on 'representations-in-relation'. I return to this discussion of the use of representations and its connection to the thesis's overall reparative aim at the end of this chapter. First, in the following sections, I outline the other representational strategies I adopted in the writing of this thesis, with particular reference to the ethical and political complications of representing borders, mobilities, multiculturalism and nationalism in the current political context.

3.2. BORDERS: FRAMES USED AND FRAMES REFUSED

The politics and ethics of representing borders and those who cross them feel particularly fraught in the contemporary context of intensifying racialised and gendered violence on multiple levels.[18] In popular, political and academic discourse, individuals who cross borders are often either associated with criminality, threat and invasion ('the illegal immigrant', 'the bogus refugee', 'swarms'), or else are reduced to passive symbols of vulnerability and victimhood, often along more or less explicitly gendered lines. As one of the participants in my research eloquently explained:

> People don't know about the migrants, so if they see one or two families, they believe all other will be the same like them. Like here, it was very surprising for them that we know the language; it was surprising for them that we are more open, open minded. Still, after a year of living here, when I do an interview with someone, or I meet a new group of people, they are surprised that I'm talking in English and I can talk in English, and that I want to continue my studies, or I want to work. Because they believe whoever who is a refugee or asylum seekers, they don't know the language, they are just dependent on the government or they are illiterate, these kind of things. It's, it is in their mind before meeting someone new, so it's challenging. After a year, I'm trying more and more to know more people, to just change their minds about – when people here are different from each other, it's the same case about refugees and asylum seekers as well. They are different. Their backgrounds are different, their hope in future is different.

The simultaneous hypervisibility of certain 'migration crisis' tropes and the invisibilisation of both the individuality of migrants' lives, desires, emotions and identities (see Mountz 2015b) and racialised state-violence at the border makes for challenging terrain for representation. Academic writing about migration and migrants which uncritically trades in such tropes has been criticised for perpetuating the sensationalising drama and epistemic violence of the 'migration industry' (Dahinden 2016; Kristensen 2020). Maurice Stierl (2022) notes that this can be especially true of scholarship that is shaped (and funded) by aspirations for 'policy relevance' with regard to EUropean[19] management of 'migratory pressures'. My own trajectory in higher education has taken place almost entirely in this context of the financialisation, spectacularism and sensationalism of the border and border crossings, in large part propelled by the watershed moment commonly referred to as the EUropean 'migration crisis' of 2015. The

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18 At time of writing the first draft of this chapter in February 2023, stoked by the rhetoric of hate and division advanced by politicians, pundits and media outlets, several hundred far-right extremists violently attacked a hotel providing temporary accommodation for asylum-seekers near Liverpool (Taylor 2023); Brianna Ghey, a transgender teenager, was murdered in Cheshire (Halliday 2023); and a Black schoolgirl was victim to a violent racially motivated attack in Surrey (Mohdin 2023). As I sit redrafting this chapter in early May 2024, my phone is repeatedly buzzing with updates about (resistance to) friends and neighbours being rounded up for deportation to Rwanda; and the UK Government refuses to suspend arms transfers to Israel, despite clear evidence that UK-licensed equipment is being used to advance the genocide of Palestinians. I note this context not to self-consciously position myself as a 'feminist killjoy' (Ahmed 2010; Parker 2017), but because I believe it constitutes just as significant an 'academic backstage' (Aparna, Schapendonk & Merlín-Escorza 2020) to this research as a 'positionality statement' declaring various facets of my social identity.

19 Stierl (2022) uses 'EUrope/EUropean' to problematise a frequent elision between Europe and the EU.

current section of this chapter will discuss the methodological strategies I used and refused in my attempts to represent *against* this context: primarily, an attempt to draw people of diverse migration statuses and trajectories into the same frame of analysis.

3.2.1. De-exceptionalising displacement

Scholars of migration, race and coloniality aligned with the abolition of borders and other forms of racialised state-violence have highlighted the prefigurative potential of refusing the frames of the colonial nation-state, in particular the dichotomy between the supposedly essentially 'settled citizen' and the persistently 'displaced migrant' (Collins 2022; De Genova 2018; El-Enany 2020; Mayblin & Turner 2020; Sharma 2020; Trafford 2021; Walia 2013, 2021). Developing in part out of earlier calls to denaturalise the nation-state as the essential, predetermined container for social processes (Urry 2000, 2007; Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002), analytical work to 'de-exceptionalise displacement' (Ramsay 2020), 'demigrantize migrants' (Dahinden 2016) or 'migrantise citizenship' (Anderson 2019) has contributed to a historicisation and deconstruction – a refusal – of the border, but importantly, without eliding the very real material and politico-legal inequalities wrought by colonialism, state-violence and racial capitalism.

Nadine El-Enany (2020: 11–12), for instance, in her rigorous critical race analysis of Britain's immigration law, warns that uncritically reproducing the politico-legal categories of citizenship that the state bestows without addressing their historical contingency and artificiality has the effect of concealing the law's ongoing role in producing racialised subjects and racial violence. Heath Cabot and Georgina Ramsay (2021), similarly, have taken to task the popular invocation in migration and refugee studies of Giorgio Agamben's (1998) theorisation of refugees as the paradigmatic figure of 'bare life' (see also Ramsay 2020; Weheylie 2014), arguing that such a framing of displacement as exceptional 'replicates borderwork in our scholarship and occludes crucial continuities (historical, temporal, spatial, experiential), and strands and planes of analysis, that cut across presumed forms of difference' (Cabot & Ramsay 2021: 292) between migrant and citizen, native and non-native. Finally, Bridget Anderson (2019) has explored the possibilities for a 'methodological *de*nationalism' (emphasis added) through engaging with what it might mean to conceptually 'migrantize the citizen' by attending to the gendered, classed and racialised borders, exclusions, displacements and acts of state violence that exist *within* formal citizenship.

These arguments informed the methodological categories or frames that I chose to use and refuse in this project. In researching language geographies in contexts of mobility and displacement, I attempted to draw speakers of a wide range of languages, nationalities, ethnicities, legal statuses and migration trajectories into the same frame of analysis. The extent

to which this attempt has been successful is ultimately for the reader to decide. In my initial recruitment of research participants, I advertised that I was looking to interview 'multilingual speakers', specifying that this included learners as well as more confident, proficient speakers of multiple languages. The collective linguistic repertoire of the thirty participants in this research comprises at least forty-two named languages (see Table 1). I did not specifically ask people to declare their level of 'fluency', aware that this is contingent and can change day-to-day, situation-to-situation. Instead, the languages other than English listed are, potentially non-exhaustively, the languages with which they had a significant enough relationship to tell me about. In order to safeguard participants' anonymity to a greater degree, I have also grouped the islands together – Lewis and Harris; Grimsay, Benbecula, North and South Uist and Berneray are all denoted by 'Uists'.

Table 1 Interviewees

Pseudonym	Languages other than English	Island group	Mode
Ahmed	Urdu, Arabic, Japanese	Lewis/Harris	Telephone
Aleena	Arabic, Gaelic	Lewis/Harris	In person
Alice	Swedish, Gaelic	Uists	In person
Alkapathi	Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, Telegu, Hindi	Lewis/Harris	In person
Annie	Hebrew, Arabic, Gaelic	Lewis/Harris	In person
Arezo	Pashto, Urdu, Dari, German	Lewis/Harris	Zoom
Becky	Gaelic, French, Italian, German, Russian, Vietnamese, Tagalog	Uists	In person
Conor	Doric, Spanish, Gaelic	Barra	In person
Dorothy	Gaelic, French	Lewis/Harris	Zoom
Eilidh	Gaelic, French	Lewis/Harris	In person
Fred	Gaelic	Uists	Telephone
Helga	Swedish, Finnish, French, Italian, Hebrew, Gaelic	Uists	Zoom
Homa	Dari, Pashto, Urdu, German	Lewis/Harris	Zoom
Iain	Gaelic	Lewis/Harris	In person
Imogen*	French, German, Welsh, Greek, Gaelic	Lewis/Harris	Zoom
Jane	Gaelic	Lewis/Harris	In person
Joyce	French, German, Spanish, Gaelic	Lewis/Harris	Zoom

Judith	German, French, Swedish, Icelandic, Gaelic	Uists	In person
Lea	German	Lewis/Harris	In person
Liam	Irish, Gaelic	Uists	In person
Màiri	Gaelic, Spanish	Lewis/Harris	In person
Margaret	Gaelic, French, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati	Uists	Zoom
Michal	Polish, Gaelic, Russian, French, German	Uists	Zoom
Nasrin	Urdu, Punjabi, Gaelic	Lewis/Harris	Zoom
Osian*	Welsh, French, Gaelic, Swedish, Spanish, German	Lewis/Harris	Zoom
Ricky	Ukrainian, Gaelic, Polish, Russian	Uists	Telephone
Rowan	Gaelic	Lewis/Harris	In person
Dàibhidh	Gaelic, Welsh, Italian, Polish, Sardinian	Lewis/Harris	In person
Seòras	Gaelic	Uists	Zoom
Tariq	Arabic	Lewis/Harris	Zoom

Alongside the interviews detailed in this table, the research was also informed by five additional informal conversations with individuals who work in fields relating to migration, multilingualism and minoritised languages in the Outer Hebrides. I do not list their details here to safeguard their anonymity.

Significant omissions from my analysis include speakers of signed languages,[21] speakers of cant, Romani or Beurla Reagaird,[22] and people who were kept from the physical space of the Western Isles by the very bordering practices that this thesis seeks to scrutinise. Further discussion of these omissions follows below, as I consider several of the practical challenges, complications and consequences that arose from these overarching aspirations to 'methodological denationalism' (Anderson 2019).

3.2.2. Borders and mobilities of and in the field

The 'field' of any ethnographic project will always be fractured, stratified, unstable and multiple. All ethnography is, in this sense, 'multisituated' (Rajan 2021), but this is especially true for projects with a specific focus on mobilities and displacements. I worked with the waters of the

* Imogen and Osian were married, and I interviewed them together.

21 I contacted several organisations working with d/Deaf people, but none of these conversations led to an interview.

22 This omission is particularly significant given the project's interest in the relations between ethnicity, race, mobilities and citizenship.

Minch, the Little Minch and the Sea of the Hebrides as an artificial (but also significantly material) border to my 'field', but the spatial and temporal limits of the research extend out far away from the crofts and causeways of the Outer Hebrides. A doctor from North Uist docked off the West Coast of Africa during World War One, cèilidhs in New Zealand vineyards, French expats in Vietnam, Icelandic horses and sectarian tensions in Glasgow, to name but a few far-flung supporting actors, all contributed to shaping the language geographies under examination in this thesis, as did my own mobilities as a researcher. Orientating my ethnographic focus towards the artificially bounded archipelago of the Outer Hebrides was a necessary practical limitation, but one which inevitably entailed orientating *away* from other possible language geographies. In this subsection, I will outline some of the practical and ethical consequences and challenges of this orientation and the analytical 'frames' discussed above. I will also address more generally the methodological implications of feminist research into borders and mobilities in rural and island contexts.

3.2.2.1. Mobilities, bodies, dwellings

Taking my lead from calls from feminist researchers to acknowledge and reflect upon the inherent volatility and 'messiness' of ethnographically informed fieldwork (Billo & Hiemstra 2013; Harrowell *et al*. 2018; Katz 1994), in this subsection, I aim to unpack the bearing that my own mobility/motility in and through rural borderscapes as a researcher had on the nature of the findings presented in this thesis. In doing so, I hope to reflexively resist 'the temptation to sanitize the realities of fieldwork into persuasive chunks' (Harrowell *et al.* 2018: 231), the tendency to camouflage the discomforts, mistakes and u-turns of fieldwork by 'smoothing the ragged edges of the research process' (Kay & Oldfield 2011: 1276).

I had initially planned to spend a period of several consecutive months in the Hebrides. The only way I could afford to do this while also continuing to pay rent in Glasgow, was to arrange through WWOOF ('Worldwide Organization of Organic Farms') to stay with local 'hosts' in exchange for part-time work on their farms. I was optimistic about this plan: I had arranged to stay with a Gaelic-speaking host and hoped to improve my spoken Gaelic, the prospect of staying on local farms assuaged my concerns about being lonely while away from home, crofting plays an important cultural and economic role in the Hebrides, I enjoy digging and tending vegetables.

It did not go well. I felt increasingly uncomfortable and unsafe due to my hosts' transphobia, alt-right conspiracy theories and Covid-denial. A very challenging week later, I found myself back in Glasgow, self-isolating with Covid and a nasty bout of mental health. After two years of uncertainty (due to the ongoing pandemic) about the possibility of doing any in-

person fieldwork at all, I felt abruptly reduced to a body that was contagious, a body that could not be touched, a body whose present mobilities and prospective motilities were suddenly severely curtailed, a body whose reactions to this situation I struggled to control, raising challenging questions about what it really means to be/have a body that arrives, inhabits, moves through and leaves 'the field'. As Longhurst and Johnston (2014) have observed, while geographical engagement with issues of embodiment has now gained a fair degree of acceptability, if not authority, in the discipline, there remain potential 'spaces for growth', including, notably, critical reflection on the implications of 'embodied fieldwork and methodologies' (272). Approaching the body as itself a border, leaky and capable of touching other bodies with care or with violence as Sara Ahmed (2006: 9) notes, reminds us that 'spaces are not exterior to bodies', and as such might allow for richer methodological engagement with questions of dwelling, mobility, autonomy and hospitality in fieldwork (see also Mason & Hughes 2024).

No longer contagious with Covid, I returned to the islands a few weeks later, deciding to stay for a shorter period of time in various hostels. While allowing less insight into contemporary crofting (and, arguably, rural right-wing populism), this decision did orient me towards the importance of community-run hostels in the Outer Hebrides (see Chapter 8), as well as to the mobilities of various other transient or cyclical presences (notably, those of cyclists, walkers and other tourists) in the islands (see Chapter 5). In May 2022, I spent two weeks in Lewis and Harris, and in August and September 2022, spent three weeks travelling throughout the archipelago, from Lewis down to Vatersay. During the intervening summer, I conducted several interviews remotely from my home in Glasgow, over the phone or video call. In-person and remote interviews obviously differed in tone, with it being much harder (for me) to have a 'natural', fluid conversation when physically distanced. Of significance is also that I took my car with me to the Hebrides,[23] meaning that I was able to travel to various places and interviews otherwise inaccessible, but equally that I was orientated *away* from interactions, experiences and observations that would have informed this research had I been dependent on public transport.

[23] And that fellow guests in Berneray hostel worked out what was wrong and helped me get it going again when none of us had internet access!

Figure 3.1. Berneray hostel, author's photograph.

3.2.2.3 Rural borders and 'relational claustrophobia'

In addition to the orientations stemming in various ways from my own embodiment, the above outlined aim of drawing speakers of a wide range of languages, nationalities, ethnicities and migration trajectories into the same frame of analysis was inflected by entanglements with other structures, spaces, borders and discourses. It sometimes felt challenging to achieve this representational balance, not only because my fieldwork coincided with a particularly clamorous moment in Gaelic language politics (see Chapter 4), but also because migrant groups in rural areas can be understood to an extent as 'hidden populations' (Stachowski 2020: 177, see also Rye & O'Reilly 2021: 15). As opposed to a city such as Glasgow, where there is a broad array of services and spaces used by diverse groups of people with English as another language, to speak to people who used languages other than English or Gaelic in the Western Isles, I was largely dependent on a few 'gatekeepers', whose attitudes towards my project varied from enthusiasm to disinterest to suspicion, and who typically directed me to individuals who they expected a) would feel comfortable speaking to me, and b) would present a certain kind of narrative of migration and multiculturalism in the Western Isles. In one memorably awkward interview with one such 'gatekeeper' – someone who worked with ESOL learners in the Hebrides in a professional context – when I asked a question about Eastern European economic

migrants, she irritably deflected, 'I'd much rather talk to you about the Syrian families', speaking to the sanitising effect of certain 'good migrant narratives' (Shukla 2017) that are discussed further in later chapters.

While it would in some instances theoretically have been possible for me to approach prospective participants directly – say, if their business had been advertised in the local press or their achievements featured in a newsletter – in many cases this felt like it would have been an intrusive breach of privacy. I felt uncomfortable taking advantage of the limited anonymity and the heightened visibility of difference – described by Jakub Stachowski (2020) as a climate of 'relational claustrophobia' – in small, rural communities and chose instead to use recruitment methods of 'snowballing', word of mouth and digital posters on social media.

Limiting the scope of the project to people currently in the Western Isles and attempting to ethically navigate the degrees of rural 'relational claustrophobia' (Stachowski 2020) that this decision entailed, therefore led to certain omissions and exclusions – most significantly, the experiences of people whose dwelling in the Western Isles was precluded, curtailed or made precarious by the very bordering practices under scrutiny in this thesis. I did, by chance, speak informally to several people whose presence in the Hebrides could be characterised in this way, and who therefore offered a very different perspective on rural mobilities, isolation and belonging. While these perspectives have to some degree shaped my analysis, for the various reasons set out above, I did not feel it appropriate to ask them to participate in the research. In the chapters that follow, I instead attempt to hold space for these silences and omissions, not making any definitive claims about their meaning, but acknowledging the presence of this absence.

The 'relational claustrophobia' (Stachowski 2020) of 'tight-knit' rural communities also carried ethical implications regarding anonymity. When I asked people for their consent to participate in the research, I informed them that they would be assigned a pseudonym, but that this might not be enough to protect their anonymity given the smallness of Hebridean communities. Many people shrugged this off, joking that 'everyone knows all my business already!'. Others asked to read and potentially redact the transcript of their interview. We navigated this on a case-by-case basis: in conversation with participants, I have in some cases generalised or removed potentially identifying details such as profession, and in others, simply not included some strands of our conversation in my analysis. There are two instances in this thesis in which I use participants' real names, as they are quoted discussing published work or projects with which their names have already been associated publicly. In each case, both participants have read the relevant excerpts of the thesis and agreed to their names being used in that specific context.

3.3. MULTILINGUALISM, TRANSLATION AND 'LESS-THAN-FLUENCY'

In this section, I explore the various ways in which the uneven fluencies and imbricating linguistic repertoires of myself and research participants shaped this research, hoping to address what Gibb, Tremlett and Iglesias (2019, see also Gibb & Iglesias 2017) have described as an enduring silence or 'mystique' around multilingualism and language learning in qualitative research. Many researchers working in multilingual contexts, even those explicitly employing methods from linguistic ethnography, have noted that the complexities of multilingualism, translation and uneven fluencies are rarely discussed reflexively, as they relate to the actual *doing* of ethnographic research (Copland & Creese 2015; Costley & Reilly 2021; Gibb & Iglesias 2017; Gibb, Tremlett & Iglesias 2019; Holmes *et al*. 2013, 2016). Tracey Costley and Colin Reilly (2021), discussing the prevailing treatment of multilingualism merely in terms of a practical, technical or operational challenge for data collection and analysis, go as far as to argue for a 'methodological multilingual turn' (1039) to address this lacuna. Following their lead, in this section I discuss the implications of the various forms of multilingualism and translation in the phases of research design, fieldwork and representation.

3.3.1. Language learning and translation in research design

When conceiving and designing this research project, I was guided by my experiences of learning, teaching and translating between languages. While undertaking this research, I have also been working as a community ESOL teacher to refugee and asylum-seeking students in Glasgow, and as a translator from Italian and French into English. As such, I came to this project with a preexisting appreciation for the complexities of learning, speaking and living between different languages.

In preparing for fieldwork, enabled by a six-month extension funded by the Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences, I followed the first year of the undergraduate course in Gaelic at the University of Glasgow. I was also picking up some Kurdish from my ESOL students and was curious about Kurdish language geographies and cultural politics, and so also participated in online classes in Central Kurdish (Sorani). This was before the final boundaries of the project's 'field-site' emerged. These experiences gave me valuable insight into the nature of learning languages remotely (this was still during Covid-19 restrictions), dislocated from their cultural contexts[24] and other speakers, and the challenges of learning minoritised languages, with fewer resources and opportunities for practice. While the skills I was able to develop in Scots Gaelic and Kurdish Sorani within the scope of this project were limited, the

[24] Further exploration between languages and their 'contexts' or 'environments' follows in Chapter 8.

unpredictable consequences of my efforts to learn these languages expand far beyond technical proficiency, as I discuss in the following subsection.

My practice of translation, in particular, was extremely impactful in shaping the design of the project. During a fairly early stage of the research, I noticed a disjuncture between how my translator colleagues and I talk about the nature of our work, and how the labour of translation and interpretation in social sciences research is often still treated as but a technical matter, delegated to unnamed (and often unpaid) field assistants. As I introduced in Chapter 2, scholarship on the politics and ethics of translation has predominantly taken place in literary and cultural studies. In the social sciences, a 'workaday' (Spivak 2010) conceptualisation of translation as the linear, 'nice and tidy' (Temple 2005) shuttling of meaning across languages and epistemes posited as equivalent to some extent still prevails. I was eager, therefore, to experiment with 'translation as method', to explicitly incorporate the generative frictions and diffractions of translation into my methodological approach.

I took particular inspiration from the 'Listening Zones Project' (Footitt, Crack, & Tesseur 2018), a three-year project investigating the role of languages and cultural knowledge in the practices of international development NGOs, which highlights participatory translation workshops and grassroots development of context-specific glossaries as best practices for multilingual research. I initially planned for an optional, additional 'prismatic translation' (Reynolds 2020; Reynolds *et al*. 2020) exercise to follow oral history interviews. An example of an exploration of the possible translations of the word 'research' that I produced for the written guidance for this exercise follows in Box 1:

Translating 'research' into Gaelic, we have 'rannsachadh', which comes from the Norse. The act of rannsachadh is one of 'rummaging', which is messier and more haphazard than 'researching', but it also carries with it connotations of 'ransacking', causing damage in your (careless) searching, maybe even pillaging, or taking what isn't yours. If we didn't like these connotations and didn't want to convey them in our translation, what other options could we consider? 'Sgrùdadh'? What different connotations would this carry?

Translations into Romance languages like French ('recherche'), and Italian ('ricerca'), give words that are also used for looking for things, sometimes even wanting things. To be doing 'recherche' or 'ricerca' is to be in search of or in pursuit of things – e.g. 'lost time', 'glory', 'a job'. The implications are not dissimilar to 'tha mi airson…' in Gaelic, raising questions about the role of desire and intent in the act of 'researching'. If we didn't want to convey this, we could consider translations such as 'uno studio', 'un'indagine', 'un'investigazione' in Italian, or an 'étude' or 'enquête' in French – again, each translation carries slightly different connotations and is a possible choice for different reasons.

Translation is not a straightforward act of plucking meaning from one language and plonking it into another, but a more creative and playful process of evaluating and selecting from an array of multiple meanings that can shift and sit differently depending on context.

The point of the exercise that follows isn't to come up with the 'right' translation, but to creatively explore what meanings are generated through the process of translation, to reflect upon which differences we chose to preserve and which we chose to sacrifice, and why.

Box 1: Example from Optional Translation Exercise Guidance

Disappointingly, my first few interviewees had little interest or time for this activity, and I eventually stopped asking if participants would like to take part, grateful for the time they had already given me. I noticed, however, that often my limited proficiency in my interlocuters' various languages meant that in trying to explain a certain concept or word, they would, unprompted, engage in precisely this sort of explorative translation activity, verbally evaluating the suitability of the various possible translations suggested. Further discussion and examples of this follow below.

3.3.2. Multilingualism and 'less than fluency' in the field

I had no illusions that I would reach any level of fluency after less than a year language learning online. My aims were more modest: to make some basic friendly small talk, to get a 'feel' for the languages' idioms, cadences, structures, to learn as I went along, to demonstrate a commitment and respect for the languages and cultures I would be encountering and ultimately representing. And yet, especially when I found myself in the Hebrides, I felt a much stronger desire – a duty, even – to improve my Gaelic language skills (a reaction that was shared by other Gaelic learners I later interviewed, as discussed in Chapter 6). I often felt anxious that I could not 'do justice' to the research without 'fluency' in the languages of its participants. To an extent, I still feel this way. I also, however, believe that my 'less than fluency' and the embodied process of perpetual

language learning was itself a valuable methodological resource that, indeed, reflects the sometimes fumbling reality of much transcultural, multilingual communication.

Annabel Tremlett (2009, 2019) has helpfully discussed the impact of her 'less-than-fluency' in her ethnographic fieldwork with children in Hungarian primary schools. She reconceptualises her linguistic limitations as in and of themselves generative research encounters that offered an opportunity to 'shift attention away from finding the "right words" to reflecting on moments in interaction' or 'collusion' (Tremlett 2019: 148, citing McDermott & Tylbor 1986). Danielle Drozdzewski (2018) and Elizabeth Watson (2004), similarly, in auto-ethnographic accounts of learning Polish and Afa Xonso respectively, usefully shift the focus from an ideal of 'fluency' to language learning itself as a methodology for 'slow scholarship' (Mountz *et al*. 2015), cultural learning and nurturing a relationship to people and place in and through language.[25] In this project, my 'less-than-fluency' led to unexpected and surprising avenues. The fact that I had a smattering of Kurdish, for example, facilitated not only a relationship with two Kurdish speakers, but also led, through an unpredictable series of professional and familial relations, to an interview with a Gaelic artist and activist that turned out to be one of the most influential interviews I conducted. My own feelings of excitement, shame, wonder, frustration, curiosity, fraudulence, anxiety, relief and gratitude when attempting less-than-fluent communication, while not entirely unfamiliar, offered a particular 'way in' to the language geographies I was researching and participating in.

The peculiarities of the cultural politics of minoritised languages added further implications to my 'less-than-fluency'. Linguistic relations are social relations are power relations, and given social class, generational and geographic tensions in Scots Gaelic that I will explore further in later chapters, I came to suspect that my halting, deferent, broken Gaelic in some instances was likely better received than had I spoken in a 'fluent', highly articulate, confident, standardised, 'correct' Gaelic that rang of a higher education at a prestigious institution such as Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (or the University of Glasgow's Gaelic department, for that matter), especially as I also speak English mostly with a Southern English accent.

A further outcome of the uneven 'less than fluencies' of my interlocuters and I was that practices of translation were often woven into the interviews themselves. One participant, for example, discussed his Gaelic translation of 'Lesbian Visibility Week': the obvious choice for translating 'visibility', he explained, would be 'faicsinneachd', from the verb 'faicinn' ('to see'). In Gaelic, however, this is used more specifically than in English, for the literal faculty of visual perception – the back translation would be more like 'vision', rather than 'visibility'. As such, he opted for 'comharrachadh',[26] which is also the word used for the earmarking of sheep to show

25 I return to this in Chapters 5 and 6.

26 Possible translations include 'marking', 'observing', 'distinguishing' …

ownership to certain farmer, provoking questions about the relationships between visibility, belonging, recognition and ownership. While a dedicated workshop or post-interview activity would have constituted an opportunity for more rigorous appraisal of the creative potential of 'translation as method', the fact that the activity of translation is such a regular, everyday part of translingual communication meant that there were many interesting, generative instances of research participants verbally evaluating the suitability of various possible translations or describing the affective quality of a word they were struggling to find an equivalent for in English.

A rather more ambiguous consequence of 'less than fluency' during fieldwork derives from the power imbalance of speaking with people with whom there was more limited linguistic overlap. Occasionally, interviewees apologised for their English and were clearly nervous and self-conscious speaking with me. Sometimes, even interviewees for whom English was a first language admitted to 'neutralising' their accents or the way they spoke during our conversation – either out of commonplace linguistic accommodation or because of the formality imposed by the interview context. The fact of conducting interviews in the Outer Hebrides, where English (and, in some places, Gaelic) is the expected 'public language' – in addition, of course, to the raciolinguistic privilege accorded to me as a white, educated, 'native' speaker of English – meant that my less-than-fluent fumbling in Kurdish, for example, was accorded a very different value to my Kurdish interlocuters' use of English. This would not necessarily have been the case in, say, a Kurdish centre in Glasgow, much less so in Sulaymaniyah. As Blommaert *et al.* (2005: 197) note:

> Multilingualism is not what individuals have and don't have, but what the environment, as structured determinations and interactional emergence, enables and disables. Consequently, multilingualism often occurs as a truncated competence, which depending on scalar judgements may be declared 'value assets' or dismissed as 'having no language'.

This was challenging to navigate. Tellingly, interviewees who were less confident in their English (though not exclusively) chose to speak to me in their homes, where they had more control over the (para)linguistic environment. Further discussion of these spatial dynamics between 'public' and 'private' language-use follows in Chapter 8. My awareness of the raciolinguistic power structures shaping multilingual relations during fieldwork – as well, of course, as a more fundamental desire for communication, to understand and be understood – also led me to speak slower and clearer, with more careful intentionality. I return to this discussion of agency and power in navigating 'less-than-fluent' relations in Chapter 6.

3.3.3. Representing multilingualism

Although I am writing this thesis in a particular, highly stylised form of academic English, I have adopted various representational strategies to convey a sense of the multilingualism, uneven

fluencies and acts of translation that have shaped this project. As introduced above, the accompanying soundtrack aims to offer a means of engaging with language as it exceeds the 'pure semantic' (Cavarero 2005: 136), with voices as sound and sound as voices. Taking my lead from discussion in translation practice, I have also aimed to avoid the exoticising 'foreignisation' (Venuti 1995) of 'non-English' words by leaving them unitalicised and glossing or translating them in the first instance in footnotes or parentheses, thereby inviting the Anglophone reader to 'acclimatise' to (Rehman 2022) and adopt the 'foreign'.

I have employed a combinatory translation method learned from minoritised language poets and translators, Rody Gorman (2024) and Harry Josie Giles (2021). Gorman (2024) dubs this method 'intertonguing', from the Scots Gaelic 'eadar-theangachadh' ('translation'). As essentially an attempt to make visible the process of 'prismatic translation' (Reynolds 2020; Reynolds *et al*. 2020) described in Section 3.1 above, intertonguing aims to translate the multiple semantic, etymological and auditory elements of a word in the 'source language' into a polysemantic, composite word in English (Gorman 2024: 50–59). To take the words in Box 1, above, by way of example: 'rannsachadh' might be rendered 'researchrummageransacking', or 'ricerca' as 'researchquestpursuit'. Such a method is, of course, partial and still editorial, but it is my hope that providing a 'thick[er] translation' (Appiah 2002) in this way can convey a fuller sense of the cultural, political, social, ethical, spiritual worlds a word participates in.

3.4. IN CONCLUSION: ON USE

This chapter has aimed to set out the various methodological approaches I adopted in designing, conducting and representing this research. I first explained the project's feminist political and epistemological premises, offering an understanding of oral histories as a 'work of relation' (Portelli 2010), as a form of 'revocalised' standpoint epistemology that can more nimbly move between 'big P' and 'small p' positionality concerns (Hitchings & Latham 2020). I then declared my aspirations to 'methodological denationalism' (Anderson 2019) and outlined several of the ethical and practical challenges that this attempt to draw people of diverse migration statuses and trajectories into the same frame of analysis entailed. Explaining my decision for this orientation led onto discussion of other orientations stemming from my own embodiment as a researcher. Finally, I set out to respond to an enduring silence or 'mystique' around multilingualism and language learning in ethnographically informed research (Gibb, Tremlett & Iglesias 2019; Gibb & Iglesias 2017), reflecting on the methodological implications of language learning, translation and multilingualism as a relational and spatially structured 'truncated competence' (Blommaert *et al.* 2005: 197).

To close the chapter, I would like to return to the discomfort with which it opened, and that has bubbled to the surface at various point throughout: the question of use, or, as queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003: 123–124, original emphasis) puts it,

> What does knowledge do – the pursuit of it, the having and exposing of it, the receiving again of knowledge of what one already knows? *How*, in short, is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among its causes and effects?

For most of the time I have been working on this project, a response to this question has felt uncomfortably hazy. I think it is part of the reason I felt so awkward when my first interviewee told me, as recounted in the vignette that opened this chapter, 'you need data!'. 'Data' is information collected – or, etymologically, given – with an intended use implied. In section 3.1 above, I stressed that the interpretive and critical practices that constitute this research have never been with the aim – the intended use – of producing or providing knowledge that is authoritative. In section 3.2, I also discussed doubts, particularly in the context of intensifying racialised and gendered violence from state and non-state actors, about the underlying assumption of much critical, analytic work that making visible the workings of oppression and injustice is but a 'hop, skip and a jump away' from dismantling them (Sedgwick 2003: 17). Such doubts become especially nagging when the logics of visibility and spectacularism are *themselves* instrumental to the violence under analysis, as is often the case with racial, colonial, border violence (Aparna, Schapendonk & Merlín-Escorza 2020; Hartman 1997; Said 1987).

In thinking through this, I have found useful guides in queer, feminist and critical race writers working within the 'reparative turn' (e.g. Ruez & Cockayne 2021; Sedgwick 2003; Seitz 2021; Wiegman 2014). This broad approach follows Sedgwick (2003) to encourage engagement with multiple scholarly representations – which also of course includes critique or 'paranoid reading' practices themselves – as 'forces with the potential to disclose other ways of living or other forms of social-spatial organization' (Anderson 2018: 1125). As Sedgwick (2003: 146) puts it, reparative scholarship aims to create 'room to realize that the future may be different from the present, to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did'. Far from being acritical, such an approach is characterised by heightened critical attention to what representations do, what uses they can be put to, to what extent they disclose the possibility of things happening differently. Reparative reading is not simply a case of reading with blithe 'positivity' (Ahmed 2010; Ruez & Cockayne 2021) but rather reading, listening, analysing in such a way that avoids 'cement[ing] the world in place rather than readying it for transformation' (Gibson-Graham 2008: 614). It is a careful '(knowledge) politics of inhabiting the potentials of neglected perception, of speculative commitments that are about relating with,

and partaking in, worlds struggling to make their other visions not so much visible but possible' (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017: 118).

I ultimately cannot know how this thesis and the voices it carries will be read, to what uses they might be put. It is my hope that my analysis of multiculturalism, mobilities and minoritised language geographies in the Outer Hebrides in the chapters that follow disclose ways of conceiving the relationship between language and place within, against and beyond the colonial language geographies of race and nation described in Chapter 2 – that they might, in short, move towards a 'reparative', revocalised geography of the mother tongue.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘OUR THREE-VOICED COUNTRY?’

A spatial analysis of language policy in early 21st century Scotland

My aim in this chapter is to offer a brief overview of the legislative and political contexts that shape the language geographies explored in later chapters. In particular, my focus is on the ways in which the governance of multilingualism and multiculturalism operates along racialising lines as a bordering, territorialising technology. As such, this chapter might be considered an expansion of the theoretical arguments set out in Chapter 2 as to the contemporary reverberations of the ‘coloniality of language’ (Veronelli 2015) and the ongoing (re)production of the ‘monolingual paradigm’ (Yildiz 2012). For reasons of space, this discussion will be predominantly limited to legislative and political developments that have occurred since the turn of the 21st century. While, as with any periodisation, this choice is to a degree arbitrary – and will be exposed as leaky at various points below – this period has been chosen given the historical significance of the establishment of the devolved Scottish parliament in 1999, and New Labour’s policy shift on matters relating to multiculturalism, security and immigration predominantly in the context of the ‘war on terror’ from 2001.

I will first consider key aspects of UK language policy: in particular, the territorial anxieties running through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, signed by the UK Government in 2000, and the increasingly xenophobic, racist and nationalist tenor of British cultural politics in the wake of the supposed ‘death of multiculturalism’. I then turn to the Scottish context, interrogating complex and evolving discourses of ‘Scottish exceptionalism’ and the positioning of ‘New Scots’ (and their languages) within them, and introducing the spatial and scalar tensions that have shaped minority language policies and politics in Scotland. Here, my core argument is that while languages have played a limited role in articulations of Scottish nationalism since Devolution, articulations of Scottish nation(alism) have powerfully – and differentially – driven the policies and politics shaping the language geographies of speakers of both ‘migrant’ and ‘indigenous’ minoritised languages, both ‘new’ and ‘old’ Scots. Finally, I consider rural Scotland, and in particular the Outer Hebrides, within these contexts, outlining policy interest in managing immigration to rural or ‘remote’ areas to alleviate population challenges and discussing the political positioning of rural Scotland in relation to current debates about Scottish nationalism.

4.1. UK LANGUAGE POLICY: 'EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE'

Testing perceptions that there is a relative lack of public language policy in the UK, especially in comparison with other European polities, Emma Humphries and Wendy Ayres-Bennett (2023) undertook an analysis of 1,501 pieces of UK primary and secondary legislation containing stipulations about language(s). Their primary conclusion was that that the vast majority (over 90%) of UK language policy is 'hidden in legislation primarily about another issue and is therefore generally not very salient either to the public or indeed policymakers' (2023: 526), supporting previous assessments that languages are 'everywhere and nowhere in [UK] government' (Ayres-Bennett 2017). A coherent, joined-up approach to overcoming language barriers or accommodating linguistic and cultural difference across policy domains such as housing, health or justice, is thereby impeded. Secondly, their analysis found that there is an overwhelming dominance of primary legislation relating to 'indigenous' languages (Welsh, Gaelic, and to a lesser extent, Scots, Cornish and Manx), as opposed to that providing for 'community languages', leading them to the conclusion that UK language policy 'may be coloured by a prevailing monolingual ideology' (Humphries & Ayres-Bennett 2023: 527). In this section, I set out to explore the language ideologies that undergird this policy landscape. In particular, I analyse the racialised nature of differentialisations between 'indigenous' and 'community' minoritised languages and situate this discussion within broader political discourses about ethnic and cultural diversity.

4.1.1. Minority Languages and National Minorities

In 2000, the UK Government signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (henceforth 'the Charter') (COE 1992a), and in 2001 ratified it with relation to Welsh in Wales, Gaelic in Scotland, Scots in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and Irish in Northern Ireland. In Article 1(a), the Charter defines a 'minority language' as a language that is: (a) 'traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population'; and (b) 'different from the official language(s) of that State'. It explicitly excludes dialects of states' official language(s)[27] and the 'languages of migrants'. The Explanatory Report to the Charter (COE 1992b) further entrenches the centrality of territoriality – and especially the territory of a nation-state – to the Charter's definition of a regional or minority language, noting that 'non-territorial languages' such as Yiddish and Romani that are spoken by minorities across (and beyond) the territorial extent of a state are to be excluded (para. 36). The Explanatory Report further declares (para. 13) that one objective of the Charter is to 'assuage the problem of minorities whose language is their distinguishing

[27] Definitions of 'language' versus 'dialect' are not provided.

feature, by enabling them to feel at ease in the State in which history has placed them [and] […] to put behind them the resentments of the past which prevented them from accepting their place in the country in which they live and in Europe as a whole'. Echoing Etienne Balibar's concept of 'fictive ethnici[zation]', whereby the historical or 'traditional' ethnic homogeneity of a nation is presumed (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991: 349), the Charter evidences a range of temporal ambiguities – how long does a language have to have been present in a given territory to constitute 'traditional use'? From where arises the Charter's confidence that separatist or secessionist movements are but 'resentments of the past'? Which, or whose, 'history' is being positioned here as a self-evident (dis)placer of people? In this way, it naturalises nation(alism) and its racialised exclusions and subsumptions as timeless and enduring. Territorial anxieties about the coherence and stability of the nation-state and the significance of supra-state political formations and racialised cultural identities such as 'Europe as a whole' can be seen rippling underneath the Charter's definition of a 'minority language'.

These spatial and scalar tensions become immediately apparent when the provisions of the Charter are applied to the lived-in geographies of minority language speakers. As Harry Josephine Giles (2019: 37) notes of her native Orkney: (a) Orkney can only be considered a minority language against the naturalised backdrop of the British or Scottish state, as it is a majority language on the island of Orkney; (b) if Orkney is understood as a form of Scots, it cannot be considered a minority language at all; and (c) if a speaker of Orkney were to move to Edinburgh or London, would Orkney then become a 'language of migrants' and thus be excluded from minority status? Further, we might wonder, if a speaker of Patagonian Welsh were to move from Y Wladfa in the Chubut Valley to Ceredigion, or a speaker of Scots Gaelic from Nova Scotia to Oban, would this form of migration make Welsh and Gaelic 'migrant languages' and thus ineligible for the protections afforded by the Charter?

Rather than challenging the monolingualism of the nation-state, therefore, the Charter's recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity serves as a (b)ordering technology, encoding a form of spatialised otherness whereby certain minoritised languages and speech communities 'have a place' – or are put in place – in individual European nation-states, or more broadly in 'Europe as a whole', while (racialised) others, by contrast, are constructed as 'foreign', migrant, out of place, just happening to fall on the wrong side of naturalised national (or European) borders. In particular, the territorial imperative of the Charter operates to contain, subsume or domesticate some forms of linguistic and cultural difference as 'internal' to the territorial boundaries of the nation-state, while simultaneously excluding forms of linguistic or cultural difference construed as incompatible with bounded nationhood – notably, in the case of the allegedly uniquely 'non-territorial languages' Yiddish and Romani, the languages of groups that have since the Middle Ages been consistently persecuted and displaced as Europe's 'internal

Others' through entwined racial, religious and ethnic othering (Becker 2024; Heng 2018; Van der Tol 2021).

Very similar territorialising ideologies – and historiographical justifications – informed the Council of Europe's later Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1998, henceforth the 'Framework Convention'). While purportedly protecting 'multicultural citizenship' (Kymlicka 2011) rights, the Framework Convention left it up to individual states to decide how to interpret a 'national minority', with the result, in practice, that the vast majority of the parties to the Framework Convention operate on a racialising distinction between 'minorities with a long history' or 'historically multinational minorities' and '"new" minorities' (Jacob-Owens 2022; Magazzini 2024). Notably, the UK represented a striking exception to the 'diffidence and caution, if not outright hostility' (Magazzini 2024: 13) with which many European states interpreted a 'national minority', applying the Framework Convention broadly to any minority that qualified as a 'racial group as set out in the Race Relations Act 1976' (UK's First State Report 1999: 4). This explicitly included 'ethnic minority communities (or visible minorities)' and 'historic national identities within the UK', which the report further stresses 'are in no way ethnically exclusive' (*ibid.*). The UK's inclusive interpretation of the Framework Convention stands in marked contrast to how it has actually been applied – Timothy Jacob-Owens (2022: 180) persuasively suggests that this may in part be due to the fact that the UK's ratification of the Framework Convention in 1998 coincided with the Government's anxieties to demonstrate commitment to 'the elimination of all forms of racism and to the development of policies which address racial discrimination, intolerance and violence' (UK's First State Report 1999: 4) in the context of the ongoing Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.[28] Whatever its motivations, the UK's uncharacteristically broad interpretation of 'ethnic minorities' in the context of the Framework Convention should be interrogated in relation both to the formation of 'new ethnicities' in their empirical complexity (see also below and, in particular, Chapter 7) and to the shift in British cultural politics since the turn of the 21st century. It is to this that we know turn.

4.1.2. Multiculturalism, Citizenship, Integration

As noted above, the UK's broad interpretation of the Framework Convention, whatever its motivations, stands in marked contrast to the increasingly violent, racist, nationalist tenor of the UK's governance of multiculturalism, integration and citizenship since the alleged 'death of multiculturalism'. In the 2000s, the racialised language practices and supposed lack of English language skills among British Asian (particularly Bangladeshi and Pakistani) communities came to be construed as a potential threat to social cohesion, national unity and security. While there

[28] A public inquiry into police institutional racism and the mishandling of the racist murder of Black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, in London in 1993.

had been a legal requirement for applicants for British citizenship to demonstrate 'sufficient knowledge of the English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic language' (HMG 1981) since the first introduction of national citizenship as a legal category in the UK with the British Nationality Act 1981, it was against the context of a series of Islamophobic discourses of 'state multiculturalism' that the testing of English language competence and knowledge of life in the UK became enforced under New Labour's Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act in 2002.

Following riots in towns in Northern England in summer 2001, the 'poor English' of, in particular, British Asians started appearing as a recurring theme in political discourse that cited 'multiculturalism' as the cause of social fragmentation and pitted immigrants against racialised constructions of 'the white working-class' (Shafi & Nagdee 2022; Virdee & McGeever 2023). In the aftermath of the riots, Ann Cryer, Labour MP for Keighley, in the House of Commons during the Westminster Hall debate on Urban Community Relations gave a speech in which she suggested that the cause of the riots was not far-right, neo-Nazi racial hatred (dismissed by Cryer as but 'taunts'), but rather,

> the lack of a good level of English, which stems directly from the established tradition of bringing wives and husbands from the sub-continent who have often had no education and have no English. As a result, the vast majority of Keighley households have only one parent with any English and children go to school speaking only Punjabi or Bangla.

If her suggested 'remedy' of making English language testing a requirement of entry clearance was not heeded, she warned, it would result in 'a Belfast-like situation in which we will all be losers, including whites', in an interesting analogy to the longstanding, colonial British military presence in Northern Ireland.

In the years following Cryer's speech and the subsequent 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act, language emerged as a major theme in an increasingly assimilationist model of integration, with 'monolingualism and multilingualism […] pressed into service as the metaphorical correlates, respectively, of social cohesion and social fragmentation' (Cameron 2013: 69). Following the 7/7 London bombings in 2005, in a speech linking migration with security, PM Tony Blair voiced concerns about people 'who have been here for 20 years and still do not speak English' (despite the fact that the perpetrators of the bombings were native English speakers), indicative, Blair warned, of 'a separateness that may be unhealthy' (Wintour 2005). In 2007, language testing was extended from a requirement for citizenship to a requirement for Indefinite Leave to Remain, and access to welfare support further became dependent on providing evidence of English learning (Blackledge 2009). In 2009, it was once again extended to non-EU students undertaking tertiary study in UK universities (Pearson 2021). In 2011, in a speech in Munich condemning the 'failure of multiculturalism', then PM David Cameron criticised the UK's alleged 'passive tolerance' of 'segregated communities', insisting that 'immigrants speak the language of their new home and […] that people are educated in the

elements of a common culture' (Cameron 2011). Five years later, in 2016, he targeted specifically the language practices of Muslim women, suggesting they may be 'more susceptible to extremism' as 'some of these people have come from quite patriarchal societies and perhaps the menfolk haven't wanted them to speak English' (Mason & Sherwood 2016). From Cryer's speech in 2001 to Cameron's in 2011, the 'death of multiculturalism' was repeatedly proclaimed, with racialised mother tongues – an in particular, mothers' tongues – lambasted as indicative of a 'failure to integrate'.

After Brexit, demonstrating proficiency in English was also required for applicants for Settled Status in the UK and for the Skilled Worker Visa. There have additionally been increasing degrees of offshoring this linguistic bordering, with language assessments taking place more often 'before and away from the UK' (Khan 2021). The onus for learning English is placed squarely on migrants, whose use of other languages is regarded with suspicion, all while there has been a lack of an ESOL strategy for England and Wales since 2007 (Meer, Peace & Hill 2019).

Over the last two decades, in short, as part of a wider entrenching of racist nationalism in British politics, the securitisation of English language learning and teaching has become normalised (Khan 2017) and increasingly tied up with racialised – and in particular, Islamophobic – constructions of citizenship and (national) belonging. The anxieties about the relationship between language, mobility and territory we saw bubbling beneath the surface of legislation relating to 'indigenous' minority languages in section 4.1.1 above become increasingly explicit in legislation and political discourses that construe the multilingualism of racialised speakers as unruly, 'dangerous' (Blommaert *et al*. 2012) to national unity and community cohesion (see also Flores & Rosa 2015; Rosa 2016), with the British citizenry construed as white, monolingually Anglophone and threatened by multiculturalism. If the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages serves to bolster 'indigenous' minority language speakers' 'place in the country in which they live and in Europe as a whole' (COE 1992b, para. 13), the last two decades of raciolinguistic (Flores & Rosa 2015; Khan 2021; Rosa 2016) justifications for the alleged 'death of multiculturalism' aim to place racialised, 'migrant' forms of multilingualism firmly outwith the nation, with people who 'insist on retaining their separate cultures [and languages] […] [expected] not [to] complain if they are viewed as outsiders and subjected to discriminatory treatment' (Parekh 2000: 197).

The following section now turns more specifically to how issues relating to minoritised languages and multiculturalism are governed by the devolved Scottish Parliament, to whom the responsibilities stipulated in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages are delegated, and whose political and policy approach to matters relating to migration, multiculturalism and integration is marked by notable 'divergences' (Mulvey 2018).

4.2. SCOTLAND

While a proper analysis of the complex and evolving trajectories of Scottish nationalism, Devolution and Independence expand beyond the scope of this thesis, in this section I hope to provide some contextual background as to the geographical imaginaries and ideologies that have informed 21st century Scotland's political approaches to multiculturalism, minority language(s) and 'integration' within the context of the UK's bifurcated attempts to (b)order linguistic diversity as outlined above. Especially in the period leading up to the Referendum on Scottish Independence in 2014 and the UK's vote to leave the European Union in 2016, I will note, multilingualism and multiculturalism were particularly mobilised in narratives of 'impeccably civic' (Keating 2009: 217) Scottish nationalism, though in a way that in practice nonetheless problematically differentiated between 'indigenous' and 'migrant' minoritised languages and cultures.

4.2.1. New Scots and 'aspirational multilingualism'

While decision-making on immigration and borders is a reserved matter for the UK Government, the devolved Scottish Parliament has some powers to legislate on areas relevant to migrant integration and multiculturalism – such as, for instance, education, health, culture, and housing. Under the UK Government's 2001 dispersal policy, Glasgow became host to the largest number of asylum-seekers in the UK (Stewart 2012), and in the subsequent two decades, the Scottish Government has 'carefully and politically' (Phipps & Fassetta 2015: 13) attempted to present a form of multicultural, civic nationalism that is explicitly articulated against the hostile policies of the UK Government (SG 2023b), with refugees and asylum-seekers being proudly celebrated as 'New Scots'.[29]

Especially in the period between 2014 and 2017, there was a 'paradigmatic shift' (Phipps 2017: 103) in the Scottish Government's discourse on languages for integration. In particular, the Scottish Government's funding of the 'Sharing Lives, Sharing Languages' project (Hirsu & Bryson 2017) and the emphasis on the importance of multilingualism and translanguaging in the 2014–2017, 2018–2022 and 2024 iterations of the 'New Scots Strategy' (SG 2017, 2018, 2024) evidenced a progressive understanding of integration as a multilateral, intercultural process (Ager & Strang 2008; Phipps, Aldegheri & Fisher 2022; Platts-Fowler & Robinson 2015). Peer-led, mutual and participatory language-sharing activities, with emphasis placed on the importance of multilingualism and the collective, community responsibility for language learning, are ostensibly encouraged across Scotland (Cox & Phipps 2022; Hirsu 2020). In Scottish schools, as well as in community settings, recent projects have explored the potential

[29] This term and the strategy it denotes is critically analysed below and in Chapter 7.

for the inclusion of a 'refugee language' in Scottish education (Fassetta *et al.* 2023; Imperiale, Fassetta & Alshobaki 2023) and in 2012, the European Union '1+2 Approach' to language learning in schools was adopted as part of moves to position Scotland as a European, 'multilingual country of the future' (SG 2012).

On paper, therefore, Scottish language policy can be said to be characterised by an 'aspirational pluralism' (Meer 2015). In practice, the reality is somewhat more ambiguous. The implementation and implications of this multicultural, multilingual vision remain, several critics have judged, decidedly 'aspirational' (Hill 2020: 164; Hill & Meer 2020; Meer 2015). There are evident problems of underfunding and unmet demand for ESOL in Scotland (Glasgow Community Planning Partnership 2018; Slade & Dickson 2021; Stella & Kay 2023). Changes to how ESOL in Scotland is funded has led to an increased competition for places and a stifling of cooperation between local authorities, colleges and third-sector organisations (Meer *et al.* 2019; Phipps, Aldegheri & Fisher 2022; Stella & Kay 2023). Further, critics have called for greater attention to be paid to the diversity of ESOL learners' needs, lives and barriers to access – stressing in particular the limited focus on ESOL for purely economic integration and the need for a more holistic, trauma informed pedagogy – and for greater consistency of ESOL provision across Scottish local authorities (Phipps, Aldegheri & Fisher 2022; Stella & Kay 2023). There have also been particular concerns raised regarding a more recent 'policy vacuum' and the lack of any clear, long-term strategy for Scottish ESOL, which was in 2020 incorporated into the broader national Adult Learning Strategy 2022–2027 – a strategy with no funding attached. Meanwhile, there remain practical and resourcing challenges impeding access to adequate translation and interpretation services (Fisher *et al*. 2022; Hill 2020), with language barriers presenting a practical problem in various aspects of people's lives.

More fundamentally – yet still related to these material issues – several critics have warned of a hierarchisation between 'community' or 'migrant' languages and 'heritage' or 'indigenous' languages (Hill 2020; Meer 2015; Phipps & Fassetta 2015) in terms of both status and resourcing. Nasar Meer (2015: 5–6), for instance, discussing interviews held with MSPs regarding the position of Gaelic as a 'national language' of Scotland, further discussion of which follows below, observes that:

> When the question is raised of bringing other minority languages into the fold which are more frequently spoken than Gaelic and appear to be taking on distinctive Scottish forms in terms of dialect, there is consensus amongst respondents that Scottish Urdu and Scottish Punjabi could not warrant a status as one of Scotland's national languages. In this assessment, historical multilingualism is seen as a feature of the national identity whereas migrant multilingualism is viewed as potentially divisive.

Here we see again the 'fictive ethnic[isation]' (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991) of nation implicit in the temporal differentialisation between 'new' and 'traditional' or 'historical' minorities in both the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter

for Regional or Minority Languages. The integration of 'historical' cultural and linguistic minorities (such as Gaelic) into the nation is construed as complete, a fait accompli, with any tensions temporally distanced as 'resentments of the past' (COE 1992b: para. 13), while the integration of linguistic and cultural minorities construed as 'migrant' is positioned in a temporal limbo of, at best, a perpetual 'not yet'. Accordingly, post-migrant, long-settled populations are perpetually 'migrantised' (Bhambra 2017; Tudor 2018) as 'New Scots', regardless of historical or phenomenological ties to Scotland (Evans 1995; Hill 2020, forthcoming). This is also evident on a legislative level, with the recent Scottish Languages Bill proposing to provide only for 'Scotland's indigenous languages, Gaelic and Scots' (SG 2023c: 1), while other forms of linguistic and cultural diversity in Scotland remain siloed in New Scots 'integration' strategies.

Later chapters (in particular, Chapters 6 and 7, see also Chapman forthcoming) consider in greater depth how such historiographies of nation and the 'denial of coevalness' (Fabian 2014 [1983]; Ramsay 2020) between 'migrants' and 'natives' are narrated *against* through the articulation of 'new ethnicities' in the everyday memory politics of belonging in the Outer Hebrides. My principal argument in this chapter is that cracks in the rhetoric of linguistic and cultural diversity and 'impeccably civic' (Keating 2009: 217) nationalism espoused by the Scottish Government become evident when the lived experiences of (in particular, racialised) minority language speakers are held up to the light. A 'no problem here' (Davidson *et al*. 2018) complacency as to the issues of race and racism (and other social justice issues, most notably stridently: gender) in contemporary Scotland further seems increasingly untenable given the growing confidence of more right-wing, populist forms of Scottish nationalism in the wake of SNP leadership struggles in 2023 and 2024, as articulated against the 'woke bogeyman' of the 'metropolitan [or 'Central Belt'] liberal elite'. I return to this in section 4.3 below.

4.2.2. Gaelic

Gaelic language policy in Scotland is marked by several key spatial and scalar tensions. Debates about the position of Gaelic as a national language are particularly contested and the relationship between urban and rural Gaelic-speaking communities particularly fraught. These tensions have a long and convoluted history, inextricably connected with histories of the Highland Clearances, emigration and land struggles. Robert Dunbar (2016: 457) has noted, 'the idea that Scotland was a land of two peoples – Gaelic-speakers in the Highlands, and Scots- (…) or English-speakers in the Lowlands – was firmly established by [at least] the 15th century'. As introduced in Chapter 2, this division was sharpened by violently Anglicising policies of linguistic and cultural oppression, with the Gaelic language being vilified as one of 'the chief and principal causes of the continuance of barbarity and incivility among the inhabitants of the Isles

and Highlands' (1616 Education Act (Scotland), cited in MacKinnon 1991: 47). Six centuries later, and the territorialisation of Gaelic and Gaelic-speaking communities continues to be a highly contentious matter, with the Scottish Government proposing to introduce 'Areas of Linguistic Significance [for Gaelic]' as opposed to the term initially consulted on – the 'Gàidhealtachd' – in order to smooth over tensions between 'urban environments' and 'island communities' (SG 2023c: 8) and to continue to promote Gaelic as a 'national language for all of Scotland' (*ibid*. 11). In this section, I offer some political context for these spatial and scalar tensions, outlining key Gaelic language policy developments since Devolution at the turn of the 21st century.

In 1999, in response to decades of campaigning for legislative protection for Gaelic,[30] the newly established Labour–Liberal Democrat Scottish Executive (now the Scottish Government) appointed a taskforce to make policy recommendations as to the public funding and institutional provision for Gaelic. The Taskforce, chaired by the deputy director of the Gaelic Broadcasting Committee, John Alick MacPherson, published its report (commonly known as the 'MacPherson report') in 2000. It recommended as a basis for language planning a spatial division of 'the Gaelic community' into 'three distinct, yet holistic, components' (Taskforce on the Public Funding of Gaelic 2000: 14). The first, the report proposed, would be the 'heartland' area, 'where the language is still vibrant but vulnerable'. Second would be 'the large area of Scotland where Gaelic was once healthy but has declined more rapidly in recent years'. The third, the 'remainder of Scotland and the diaspora of Gaelic speakers all over the world', particularly in urban centres with 'strong Gaelic communities'. Each area, the report specifies, includes 'an important constituency of learners as well as native speakers', but the three communities are distinguished by specific 'socio-geographic elements' that require different, place-based 'strategies, policies and activities'.

The recommendations of the MacPherson report were rejected in favour of Gaelic policy of a more national, centralised nature. In a searing critique, MacCaluim and McLeod (2001), for example, unequivocally called for the report's proposed framework of geographical differentiation to be rejected, particularly on the basis that it would 'work against the notion of Gaelic as a national language' and 'diminish the profile of Gaelic in non-Highland Scotland'. Considering 'Gaelic-language issues' in conjunction with 'peripheral' 'Highlands and Islands issues [such as] health, housing, transport or economic development', they warned, 'could mean

[30] Propelled, notably, by the 'Gaelic renaissance' of the 1970s and '80s – a wave of vigorous campaigning and grassroots community initiatives particularly in the areas of Gaelic arts, broadcasting and co-chomainn, rural community cooperatives (based on the successful agricultural co-ops in the Irish Gaeltacht) that delivered a diverse range of rural community services and activities through the medium of Gaelic (see Pedersen 2019).

that Gaelic-language issues would be relegated to the margins' and that learners and speakers of the language in the urban centres of the Lowlands would be side-lined.

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act (2005) (henceforth the Act) eventually passed in 2005. Largely based on the Welsh Language Act (1993), the Act's primary mechanism was the establishment of Bòrd na Gàidhlig (henceforth BnG), a statutory language planning agency charged with preparing a National Gaelic Language Plan every five years and with the power to require any public authority in Scotland to prepare a Gaelic language plan. The Act is vague as to the purposes and content of such plans. The first *National Gaelic Language Plan 2007-12* (BnG 2007a) specified fifteen aims regarding language acquisition, usage, status and corpus. In 2010, following criticisms about the ambitiousness of these targets, a new strategy, *Ginealach Ùr na Gàidhlig* (BnG 2010) was published, superseding the original plan and focusing chiefly on language acquisition, as then did the second *National Plan, 2012–2017* (BnG 2012). This focus on increasing the numbers of Gaelic learners (arguably an easier goal to quantitatively measure) occurred alongside the defunding in 2015 of the highly successful multidisciplinary Gaelic community arts development agency, Pròiseact nan Ealan (PnE). PnE's Gaelic community arts initiatives had attracted national and international renown, enacted the inseparability of language and culture, and, crucially, 'respond[ed] to grass-roots demand rather than imposing preconceived notions from above' (CnaG 1994: 7). The defunding of the organisation and ongoing centralisation of Gaelic language policy contributed to a keenly felt sense of alienation and anger about the institutionalisation and distancing of Gaelic away from (especially rural) community contexts in many Hebridean communities, where Gaelic arts and cultural activities had played a central role in the Gaelic revival of the later 20th century (Maclean 2022; Pedersen 2019).

The third National Gaelic Language Plan, published in 2018, re-emphasised Gaelic as fundamentally 'belonging to Scotland' (BnG 2018: 6), though also marked a shift back to recognising the existence of three distinct Gaelic communities ('island and rural communities; towns and cities; and communities linked by technology'), and acknowledging that a '"one size fits all approach" is neither appropriate nor effective' (*ibid.:* 13). This acknowledgment was somewhat muted in the latest Plan (BnG 2023). The Policy Memorandum to the Scottish Languages Bill (SG 2023c: 11), meanwhile, hedges that a '[geographically] proportionate policy approach [should be] incorporated into Gaelic development yet not at the expense of the promotion of Gaelic throughout Scotland', while also advocating for 'a more cohesive approach to language development across the country' (*ibid.*).

While the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act (2005) has led to greater institutional visibility of the language, continuing decline in the use of Gaelic as an active community language, particularly in the Western Isles, where there remains the densest concentration of Gaelic

speakers (Mac an Tàilleir, Rothach & Armstrong 2010; Ó Giollagáin *et al*. 2020), continues apace. BnG, in its guidance to the Plans, described their function expressly as one of 'increasing the profile, visibility [and] status' of Gaelic (BnG 2007b: 4), contributing to criticisms of the Plans as essentially cosmetic and of limited, lip-serving impact when it comes to the actual use of the language – for example in community settings or in cultural initiatives such as those of the Pròiseact nan Ealan. While more positive developments include an increased number of Gaelic medium schools (particularly in cities) and, after complex funding negotiations, the 2008 launch of BBC ALBA, these have also been criticised for contributing to a class-related 'disconnect between the carriers of the language and the professionalised language and media sector' (Maclean 2019: 255). This sense of alienation has been compounded by efforts to 'modernise' the language and develop specialist Gaelic terminology in domains where Gaelic might not 'traditionally' have been used, such as in business, local administration or further education, a register of Gaelic certain demographics of the speaker community feel unfamiliar and uncomfortable with (see McEwan-Fujita 2008, and Chapter 6). The role of the Skye-based Gaelic college Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in this corpus development and in educating and awarding degrees to middle-class, professional Gaelic-speakers has led some (e.g. Maclean 2022) to consider the college a distinct 'fourth Gaelic community', in addition to the three set out in the MacPherson Report (2000). I return to the spatial and political implications of these tensions in Chapter 6.

As I was conducting interviews for this research, frustration and disappointment with this trajectory of Gaelic language policy was amplified by the publication of *The Gaelic Crisis in the Vernacular Community* (Ó Giollagáin *et al*. 2020, henceforth *The Gaelic Crisis*). The study's findings regarding the sharply declining vernacular use of Gaelic, especially in island communities, while not surprising to many readers, were bleak. Soon after the report's publication, the findings were framed in the media in terms of the possibility of the language 'dying out in the next ten years' (BBC 2020; Campsie 2020; Grant 2020). The study and the debates surrounding it were controversial and divisive. *The Gaelic Crisis* was scathingly critical of 'postmodernist individualism', 'asocial, aspatial and academic-led' language policy (see also Ó Giollagáin & Caimbeul 2021) and a perceived prioritisation from academics and language planners on urban 'new speakers' of Gaelic.[31] In turn, levelled against the study were criticisms of 'analytical deficiencies and inconsistencies'; negativity towards speakers outwith the Western Isles, especially Gaelic learners; and an underlying conception of community in narrowly territorial terms (Mcleod *et al.* 2022). These criticisms were dismissed by *The Gaelic Crisis*'s authors as an entrenching defence of the status quo that had facilitated the 'Gaelic crisis' itself (Ó Giollagáin *et al.* 2022). An increasingly contentious and polarised debate – pithily

[31] The relation between these geographical tensions and place-based constructions of 'authenticity' are explored in Chapter 6.

characterised by Alastair McIntosh (2022) in *Bella Caledonia* as 'flyting'[32] – ensued in the pages of a special issue of *Scottish Affairs;* in ripostes, rejoinders and responses in a later issue (31:1) of the same journal; in letters, columns and editorials in the *West Highland Free Press*; and, of course, on Twitter.

At the heart of this debate lay highly sensitive and complex issues of identity and ownership of a minoritised language, culture and heritage under threat. These complexities, however, were often reduced to a false dichotomy between 'new speakers' of Gaelic in networked, urban settings versus 'native speakers' using the language in rooted, territorialised rural communities – an unhelpful and reductive divide that became especially fraught when entangled with questions of being, or not, a 'Gael' and, relatedly, of defining the 'Gàidhealtachd', as the place of the Gaels (Armstrong *et al.* 2022; MacKinnon 2021, 2022; Oliver & Mackinnon 2021). Both 'sides' accused each other of essentialism, racism and misrepresentation (with, we might note, limited engagement with the contributions from Gaelic speakers and learners of colour, e.g. Ezeji 2015, 2021; Gessesse 2019). Many of the participants in my research expressed degrees of hurt, frustration and alienation at how these issues had come to be framed. I will return to these debates and more explicitly position my research within them in the chapters that follow. Here, I limit myself to suggesting, cautiously, that a policy emphasis on Gaelic as 'belonging to Scotland' (BnG 2018: 6), as a 'national European language' (Armstrong *et al.* 2022: 75), has masked a more complex set of spatial and scalar tensions that we see bubbling to the surface in the 'Gaelic crisis' debates. It is my hope that adopting a phenomenological approach to foreground the lived-in geographies of language minoritisation might usefully contribute to the situating of these tensions in a broader cultural politics of *multi*culturalism and *multi*lingualism in rural Scotland, taking account of the multiscalar (post)colonial geographies of race and nation outlined above.

4.2.3. Scots and Sign Languages

While the 2015 Scots Language Policy (SG 2015) recognised Scots as one of three 'indigenous' languages of Scotland, acknowledged its regional variations, and stressed the Government's 'respect' for the language, the Scottish Languages Bill for the first time proposes official status and legislative provision for the language. This includes requiring Scottish Ministers to prepare a 'Scots language strategy' and 'promote and support Scots language education in schools' (SG 2023c: 23, see also McPake & Arthur 2006; Millar 2020; Niven 2017 on the increasing

[32] 'Flyting' is an old Scottish literary tradition whereby two poets coruscatingly exchange a series of caustic jibes, taunts and rhetorical flourishes. As a term it was popularised by the famous public 'flytings' in the pages of the *Scotsman* between Hamish Henderson and Hugh MacDiarmid in the 1960s principally regarding the political and literary worth of folk culture. See Gibson 2015.

formalisation of teaching Scots literature). Notably, aside from a brief comment on consultation responses expressing desires for the standardisation of Scots 'while still accommodating all dialects' (SG 2023c: 24), there is a similar emphasis on Scots as a 'national language'. It is unclear how the Bill would support, say, the resurgence of Doric or 'the spik o the place' in Northeast Scotland (Leslie 2021; Knox 2001; Reid 2023), hailed by some as 'Scotland's fourth language' (MacEacheran 2021), or efforts in the Shetland Islands to 'Shetlandise' books written in Scots to protect and promote the dialect (Nihtinen 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015; Shetland Forwirds WWW). Nevertheless, the Bill represents a significant shift away from a previous tendency in governmental language policy that can to some degree be 'characterized by unwillingness to recognize that a language called Scots exists' (Hance 2004: 36).

In addition to circular debates as to whether Scots is either endangered or, even, a language, it has been suggested that one reason for the imbalance between governmental support of Gaelic and Scots lies with the perception of Gaelic as a 'safer' recipient of support in terms of electoral risk (see Nihtinen 2008: 75). Gaelic is spoken by a much smaller number of people and, as we saw above, is construed as a 'heritage' language of the past. As such, the argument goes, support for Gaelic is less likely to tarnish reputations of 'impeccably civic' (Keating 2009: 217) nationalism. This possibility stands in curious contrast to the articulation of a cultural revival of Scots – in literature and, particularly, in political song – in explicitly internationalist, translational terms in the 20th century Scottish Renaissance (Fiasson 2018; Gibson 2015; Kockel 2021).[33] We might consider, for example, calls for translator,[34] poet and folklorist Hamish Henderson's 'Freedom Come All Ye' to be adopted as Scotland's (inter)national anthem, a socialist Scots 'rallying cry for a post-imperial, post-racial, non-nuclear, egalitarian Scotland, reconciled with its history in its commitment to a radical future' (Gibson 2015: 4). This symbolic place of the Scots language in constructions of 'progressive', internationalist Scottishness might also be glimpsed today in, for example, the Glasgow-based charity, Refuweegee's name and tagline, 'we're all fae somewhere'; or else the *Scots-Polish Lexicon / Leksykon szkocko-polski* by Kasia Michalska (2014), culminating out of the North-East based Polish–Scots Song and Story Group (McFadyen & Nic Craith 2019: 143). While this articulation of Scots is, of course, far from flat, uncontested or static – sociolinguist Robert McColl Millar (2020: 205), for example, observes that many Scots speakers are 'touched by the use of Scots features in the speech of some immigrants, while finding condescending (and often grating) the

[33] Translation in both directions between Scots and other European languages (minoritised and not) was a distinctive feature of the 'Scottish renaissance'. See Corbett 1999; Hubbard 2022; Kockel 2021.

[34] Most notably, Henderson was the first to translate Sardinian Marxist Antonio Gramsci into English. He spent the period between 1948 and 1951 translating Gramsci's *Lettere dal Carcere,* drawn in particular to Gramsci's writings on folk revivalism, popular culture and cultural and political parallels between Gramsci's Sardinia and Italy, and Scotland and Britain. See Gibson 2015.

same words in the mouths of other groups (particularly when that group is native English-speaking)' – as argued above, this potential for the fertility of multilingualism to articulate a creolised, translational or translocal sense of political identity – a 'post-nationalist politics of solidarity' (Valluvan 2019: 40) – is somewhat attenuated by an overarching language policy approach that upholds distinctions 'migrant' and 'indigenous' (or 'national') languages.

Scotland was also the first country in the UK in which a sign language was provided with statutory recognition in law. The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 was loosely based on the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, requiring the Scottish Government and several other named public bodies to regularly produce BSL plans (De Meulder 2015). These have been subject to much less scrutiny and controversy than have the Gaelic language plans, potentially due to BSL users' unique position in public policy at the intersection of disability and linguistic minority (De Meulder 2017; De Meulder & Murray 2017; Turner 2009). The complex place of signed languages in relation to linguistic territoriality, nation-state monolingualism and regional (and racial: see, for example, Hou & Moges 2023) linguistic variation, while fascinating, are unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis (see, however: Al-Fityani & Padden 2012; Branson & Miller 1998; O'Connell 2021; Rowley & Cormier 2021).

4.2.4. Scotland: 'our three-voiced country'?

In July 1999, the newly established Scottish Parliament opened with lines from Iain Crichton Smith's poem, *The Beginning of a New Song*: 'Let our three-voiced country / Sing in a new world'. In the two decades that followed, Scottish language policy has served to reinforce the status of these 'three voices' (English, Scots and Gaelic) as 'national languages', brushing over a range of unresolved spatial and scalar tensions that shape the more complex and diverse language geographies of Scotland. While the languages of 'New Scots' are symbolically mobilised as part of a positioning of Scotland as a multicultural, liberal, inclusive nation – especially in relation to the increasingly hostile and xenophobic policies of the UK Government – there remain limits both to this rhetoric itself and the actual implementation of Scotland's 'aspirational multilingualism', with migrant and racialised language practices continuing to be viewed – formally and often informally – through the lens of integration, even after the bestowing of formal citizenship rights (see Hill 2020). In short, though languages have played a limited role in Scottish nationalist or Independence movements since Devolution, imaginaries and ideologies of nation have shaped the trajectory of Scottish language policy.

4.3. THE WESTERN ISLES AND RURAL (RE)POPULATION

To conclude this chapter, I briefly provide an overview of policy governing the language geographies explored in this thesis on the more local level of the Western Isles. This includes a

summary of significant institutions with relation to language(s) operating throughout the archipelago, discussion of recent policy interest in managing (im)migration to alleviate population challenges in rural areas such as the Outer Hebrides, and some reflections on the broader centre-periphery relations between the islands and the 'central belt' of Scotland.

The Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (henceforth the Comhairle), the local authority for the Western Isles, expressly declares in its Gaelic Policy and in language plans submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig their ambition that 'the Western Isles should be a fundamentally bilingual community', with English and Gaelic held as 'equally valid' languages (CnES 2022). Their Gaelic policy places particular emphasis on 'the employment creation potential of the Gaelic language' (CnES WWW). McLeod *et al.* (2022: 96), however, criticise the Comhairle, itself the largest single employer in the islands, for only making Gaelic proficiency an essential skill for 167 posts out of its 1300 employees.[35] The Comhairle's Gaelic policy has also had to contend with geographical tensions, albeit on a smaller scale, with, for example, concerns about the centralisation of Gaelic-medium education in Stornoway coming at the expense of provision in other parts of the archipelago (BBC Naidheachdan 2013, cited in McLeod 2020: 304).

The Comhairle, specifically its Adult Learning and Employability section, also runs the Western Isles Learning Shop, an adult literacies centre based in Stornoway. The Learning Shop, along with Cothrom Ltd, a community-owned 'Learning and Development Organisation' in South Uist, are the main formal providers of ESOL in the Western Isles. With the exception of an Arabic interpreter employed by the Comhairle between 2017 and 2021 to serve the Syrian refugees resettled to Stornoway under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS), formal interpretation services for accessing public services such as the NHS Western Isles are outsourced to LanguageLine Solutions, an American-owned interpretation company. Of note with regard to language policy-making at the local authority level is the context of austerity and budget cuts, with the Comhairle in the foreword to its latest Gaelic Language plan 'recognising that its own financial resources have reduced in recent years, and are likely to continue to reduce' (CnES 2022: 1).

The patchiness of rural language provision (Pietka-Nykaza & Baillot 2022; Stella & Kay 2023) will need to be addressed if the recent, Europe-wide trend of policy interest in managing immigration to alleviate population challenges in 'remote' and rural areas continues (Gruber, Pöcher & Zupan 2022; Martins 2022; MPS 2023). In the UK, following the difficulties experienced by Vietnamese refugees resettled in rural areas in the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers in Britain were dispersed to cities (Barber 2021; Woods 2022). The SVPRS, introduced by the UK Government in 2015, however, marked an

[35] This does not, of course, mean that Gaelic learning and use are not encouraged in the majority of appointments which do not have Gaelic language proficiency as an essential requirement.

important shift to this trend, with many of the local authorities applying to welcome refugees serving predominantly rural areas (Woods 2022). As a result, there has been increased policy interest in the potential of managing immigration to reverse the 'shrinking' (ESPON 2020) of, in particular, working-age people and 'young families' in rural areas. In Scotland, for instance, as part of a series of policy papers aiming to set out a 'prospectus' for Scottish Independence from the UK, the Scottish Government recently proposed a new type of visa – the 'Live in Scotland' route – that would incorporate a specific focus on 'support[ing] migration to rural and island communities' as a means to 'tackle depopulation' (SG 2023a: 2) and address 'labour supply issues […] particularly in rural areas' (*ibid*.: 22–23).

I argue in this thesis (an argument introduced in Chapter 2 and continued in Chapter 5) and elsewhere (Chapman forthcoming) that such initiatives should more carefully take into the account the long histories of uneven geographies of development, extraction and (im)mobility in rural areas. There is a complex, circular relationship between rural depopulation and the closure of basic services, and population 'attraction' (mobility) and 'retention' (immobility) should be viewed as complementary rather than as in competition (MPS 2023). This requires an understanding of the uneven centre-periphery geographies of the islands (and arguably, rural Scotland more broadly) in relation to centres of economic and political power.

In 2013, in the context of Scottish Independence debates, the Comhairle joined with Orkney Islands Council and Shetlands Islands Council to launch the 'Our Islands – Our Future' campaign, calling for greater autonomy and 'the provision of an island voice' (Reid-Howie Associates Ltd., 2016: *v*) for the three main island council areas.[36] Following this, in 2014 the UK Government set out a Framework for the Islands, in which it established the principle of 'island proofing', whereby policy and legislation on a national level must take into account the particular circumstances and needs of islands (UK Government & the Three Scottish Islands Councils 2014). Though the subsequent Islands (Scotland) Act (2018),[37] which came into law in July 2018, has been praised as having the 'potential to position Scotland at the forefront of island law and policy on an international scale' (Sindico & Crook 2019: 441), uneven geographies of development, extraction and (im)mobility continue to fuel a viscerally felt disconnect between many rural and island communities and centralised government in Edinburgh. An illustrative

[36] In the Policy memorandum to the subsequent Islands (Scotland) Bill, the specific issues affecting islands include 'isolation; remoteness; environment and climate issues; and population issues' (SP 2017: 8). The 'Our Islands – Our Future' campaign's joint position statement further notes that Islands Councils should be given greater powers to support Gaelic (though it does not detail exactly how), promote the Orcadian and Shetlandic dialects and recognise the Nordic aspect of the culture of the Northern Isles (OIOF 2013: 3).

[37] Its two primary provisions are the National Islands Plan and islands communities impact assessments, whereby 'relevant authorities' must address in their policy-making particular island challenges of 'distance, geography, connectivity and demography' (SG 2022b: 2).

example of these dynamics was provided by the outrage expressed by many islanders towards Scottish Government's plans to introduce Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMA) in which fishing and aquaculture activity would be banned in 2023. Rhoda Meek, a crofter on Tiree, told reporters:

> In rural areas, people are increasingly fed up with not being listened to by Edinburgh, in the way that Scotland has felt it has not been heard by Westminster. […] You are seeing fury at HPMA proposals not because islanders and fisherfolk hate the environment but because our communities, language and culture are as fragile as our seas (Rowe 2023).

Meanwhile, the Scottish trad band Skipinnish collaborated with Vatersay inshore fisherman Donald Francis MacNeil, to release a protest song comparing the proposals to the Clearances (WHFP 2023). The HPMA controversy provides just one example of the need not only for a just rural transition, but also for sensitive consideration of a knot of interconnected (im)mobility justice issues when policy-making for rural Scotland. This is especially the case given the potential for these tensions to be exploited by right-wing populist movements or politicians in articulating rural politics and rural identities as against the 'progressivism' of a 'metropolitan ["Central Belt"] liberal elite', as the SNP leadership campaign between Kate Forbes and Humza Yousaf in 2023 was often framed.

4.4. CONCLUSION

The language geographies explored in the following chapters of this thesis are structured by several, shifting layers of policy and political discourse which do not always neatly line up. Both UK and Scottish language policy landscapes can be understood to be shaped by ideologies and imaginaries of nation, albeit with notable 'divergences' (Mulvey 2018) in rhetoric on migration, multiculturalism and integration. While early 21st century British politics has been increasingly characterised by racism, nationalism and xenophobia, on paper, the Scottish Government has striven to present an 'aspirational pluralism' (Meer 2015) and an 'impeccably civic' (Keating 2009: 217) form of nationalism. Despite this, Scotland's nonetheless bifurcated language policy – with the Scottish Languages Bill proposing to provide only for 'Scotland's indigenous languages, Gaelic and Scots' (SG 2023c: 1), while other forms of linguistic and cultural diversity in Scotland remain siloed in New Scots 'integration' strategies – betrays a retrospective 'fictive ethnic[isation]' (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991) of nation, with the integration of 'historical' cultural and linguistic diversity constructed as a fait accompli, while other minoritised languages or forms of racialised speech are perpetually 'migrantised' (Bhambra 2017; Tudor 2018) as those of 'New Scots'. I additionally critiqued how this policy focus on Scotland's 'three voices' as 'national languages' has masked a set of unresolved spatial and scalar tensions that shape the more complex and diverse language geographies of Scotland. Of particular note in this

regard, I introduced the keenly felt geographical and social class-based divisions in Gaelic speaking communities, highlighted the internationalist, translational articulation of Scots in the 20th century Scottish Renaissance, and stressed the need for more careful consideration of multiple geographies of (im)mobility, extraction and peripheralisation in rural Scotland.

Later chapters of this thesis (in particular Chapter 7) respond to many of these themes, exploring the empirical complexities of rural multicultures and emergent 'new ethnicities' in the Outer Hebrides that the 'impeccably civic' (Keating 2009) articulations of Scottish nationalism and the legislative and policy instruments analysed in this chapter fail to adequately propel. First, in the following chapter, 'A very small place on the edge', I pick up on this final point around the need for situated consideration of rurality and islandness, providing an analysis of how uneven dynamics of (im)mobility and contested notions of 'remoteness' in the Outer Hebrides structure rural geographies of belonging, community and identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

‘A VERY SMALL PLACE ON THE EDGE’

REMOTENESS, LOCALNESS, STRANGERNESS

‘I wouldn’t say,’ Helga, originally from Sweden and living in North Uist with a Gaelic-speaking partner and their young son, mused, ‘that people are like, anti-foreign people here – absolutely not. It’s just… it’s just a very small place on the edge.’ In this chapter, I probe behind the softy implied ‘but’ in Helga’s description of ‘remoteness’, rurality and belonging, exploring multiple experiences of being a ‘foreign person’ in ‘a very small place on the edge’. While language features as something of an undercurrent through this chapter, understanding these geographies of rural belonging, (im)mobilities and ‘remoteness’ is a necessary foundation for later chapters’ analysis of language in relation to embodied processes of de/reterritorialisation and the cultural politics of place.

I first introduce an understanding of ‘remoteness’ as a contested, uneven and relational quality inextricably entangled with the geographies of (im)mobility and connectivity. I then outline how these uneven (im)mobilities to, through and from the Outer Hebrides contribute to a structuring of belonging through the fluid metaphors of ‘incomers’, ‘locals’ and to a lesser extent, ‘flybys’, in a way that does not simply ‘sit atop’ ideologies and performances of nation and race but interacts with them in complex and dynamic ways – a scalar politics which will be further explored in Chapters 6 and 7. This discussion entails a feminist analysis of ‘localness’ as an intersectionally disciplined performance, with a particular emphasis on the role of ‘translocal tradition’. The chapter then homes in on a central aspect of the performance of localness in the Hebrides – ‘sloinnidhean’ and the articulation of ‘roots’ (or ‘routes’), which I argue should be understood in light of the uneven (im)mobilities outlined in the first half of the chapter, and further that they reveal particularly rural logics of (in)visibility and strangerness, with important implications for Chapters 7 and 8’s engagement with embodied multicultural encounter. As such, while the primary aim of this chapter is to situate this research more rigorously in the specific spatial and historical context of the Outer Hebrides, the analysis provided in this chapter additionally responds to research objectives regarding language and relation (by introducing the attachment between linguistic and cultural identity and the *trans*local in section 5.2.1), and language and embodiment (through discussing the embodiment of difference the figure of the stranger in section 5.2.2). The ways in which these relations become de/reterritorialised will be considered in greater depth in Chapter 6.

5.1. 'REMOTE FROM WHAT?'

Màiri, a musician from a village outside Stornoway, like many of the participants in this research, bristled at representations of the Hebrides as 'remote', speaking to the spatial and scalar tensions first introduced in Chapter 4:

> That's a word that comes up quite a lot when we're dealing with people from the mainland. Especially if you're trying to shop, [laughs] 'oh no, it's too remote'. Oh, it's really annoying. It's so annoying, because, remote from what, you know? We're not remote – we've got flights coming in from Glasgow and Edinburgh every day. We're not remote at all. We're far more connected than many other places. But as regards the centralised government, they look upon us as being remote, and you know, when they're talking about the weather, doing the weather maps, for instance, on television, the way they talk about 'remote', 'up on the edge of', 'back of beyond' – things like that are said, yeah…

Other people, too, in addition to pointing to the islands' travel links and internet connectivity, problematised centre-periphery dynamics by asking, in one way or another, 'remote from what?'. Participants repeatedly narrated against representations of remoteness by stressing the Hebrides as variously, 'on the doorstep of [their] job', the 'heart of Gaelic culture' or as a place facilitating deep connections to their 'roots' (more discussion of which follows in section 5.2.2 below). In every instance, 'remoteness' was emphasised as never 'simply a static condition found somewhere out there beyond the pale' (Harms *et al*. 2014: 362), but rather as a contested, uneven and relational quality inextricably entangled with the geographies of (im)mobility and connectivity.

At the heart of these debates is not so much *whether* the Hebrides are 'remote', but what the representation of remoteness *does*, who gets to name it and whose (im)mobility it privileges. This is particularly contentious in the Hebrides, where 'remoteness' often serves as the discursive handmaiden of constructions of 'wildness', 'isolation' or 'emptiness' that overlook, if not wilfully disregard, rural landscapes as lived-in places with a history predating the arrival of the intrepid tourist, ethnographer or land developer from the 'centre'. While this argument has been well-rehearsed in the context of rewilding (e.g. Deary & Warren 2017), participants in this research also discussed how the 'remoteness–wildness–emptiness' slippage propelled the cyclical, transitory mobilities of tourists and the movement of resources (especially wind power) away from the islands in processes of green extractivism, further discussion of which follows below and in Chapter 8.

Despite the way that Gaelic has similarly been cast as temporally and spatially 'remote', the language was often used as a key strategy in narrating against dominant representations of 'remoteness' and (re)centring the islands. Seòras, for example, spoke of *Uist Beò* ('alivevibrantliving Uist'), a project established in 2021 – when, in the context of the Covid-19

pandemic, images of 'empty', 'unspoilt' rural landscapes and idealised rural lifestyles were fuelling interest in amenity migration to rural areas (Colomb & Gallent 2022; González-Leonardo *et al.* 2022; Rowe *et al*. 2023) – to counter what he described as the 'self-fulfilling death narrative' of both falling numbers of Gaelic speakers and downwards population projections in Uist. Through Gaelic storytelling, the project has the aim of,

> showing all that's happening – and there are plenty of things happening – and also presenting the image of things happening as opposed to, like, empty landscapes, or sheep causing a traffic jam or whatever, beautiful empty beaches. Showing that there's businesses here and people and activity and festivals and cèilidhs and whatever.

Anne, an artist and crofter from the village of Bragar in North Lewis, similarly, described her work on '*Dealbh-Dùthcha*' ('*Pictureform of the Landcountry*', Campbell 2017), a map of hyperlocal Gaelic placenames created as part of the *Tir mo Rùin* ('*land of my lovepurposeintentsecret*') project. The project aimed to demonstrate the intertwined, symbiotic ecological and cultural heritage of the Lewis Peatlands, in resistance to proposals to build a wind farm on the moor. In contrast to the wind energy project managed by the Galson Estate, a community land trust – 'a community wind farm which is actually useful for the community!', Anne emphasised – the project opposed the extraction of resources and capital, a mobility which relied on representations of remoteness from centres of socioeconomic power. Anne explained,

> [It was] just the same old story of 'where will we put this?' You know, 'we want loads of renewables', but nobody wants huge developments close to where they live. 'What do we do? Oh, we'll use an island remote from the centres of power and population. We'll use the part of the island where, well, it's just crofters there, nobody important lives there'.

Dealbh-Dùthcha and *Uist Beò* use Gaelic – and in particular, in the former, the local knowledge and collective memory encoded in Gaelic toponymy (see Maclean 2021, though also Briggs & Sharp 2004)[38] – as part of conscious representative strategies against spatiotemporal 'remoteness', (re)centring the Hebrides, 'all that's happening' on the islands and their bio-cultural heritage, which, Anne emphasised, 'is still there, it's still known and alive'.

Uneven and entangled geographies of (im)mobility – of people and resources – then, lie behind these contested representations of 'remoteness'. The characterisation of the Hebrides as 'remote', hard to get to or disconnected from centres of socioeconomic power, at least in part, propels tourism *to* the Hebrides and favours the movement of resources, capital and other people *from* the islands. As other scholars have noted, this renders 'remoteness' rather 'phenomenologically complex' (Jedrej & Nuttall 1996: 19), even 'paradoxical' (Ardener 1987). Màiri's question 'remote from what?' is once again incisive, not only because it challenges the

[38] I will return to *Tir mo Rùin* and the relationship between land, language, memory and various articulations of 'local knowledge' in Chapter 8.

assumption of an objective, static or universal centre, but also because it speaks to this phenomenological complexity and unevenness. Homa, a woman from Afghanistan living on the Isle of Lewis, for example, discussed her and her family's uncertainty as to whether to stay on the island or move to the mainland:

> There are things called collectivities that I want to be involved in. Like, recently there was a protest. It was both on Twitter and also protests in different countries around because we believe what's happening on Hazara people in Afghanistan is a genocide, and we are campaigning for that so the world can recognise that. I cannot do that from here. This time it was challenging because those Hazaras who are living in Glasgow, they have no experience of doing protests and how to do it and all that, so my husband was the head, leading the protest from here. […] It was difficult for me to go with my son, so my husband went there. […] It's just good to be there and to be involved in all this activities, and I don't want the group to be male-dominated, and I cannot participate in different things from here, so I should be there to be involved in the activities. And that's not possible from here. And also with the University and the job, everything, I believe it's difficult from here for us. […] I said that I cannot go to Glasgow, but maybe we can do something here. […] We wrote some… slogans? on a paper and we went to [Stornoway]. We stayed there for an hour. Some people came and asked what is it about, but then the rain started and we came back home [laughs]. At least we spoke to some people about that.

Again, it is not that the Isle of Lewis *is* remote – in Homa's account above, it emerges as a key site in the organising of Hazara solidarity campaigns, embedded in national and international diasporic networks – but it might be experienced as such by different people under different conditions for different reasons. Most obviously in this example, Homa indicates gendered differences in the experiences of remoteness and (im)mobility, but just as important is the emphasis on 'mobile desires, capacities, and limitations' (Sheller 2018: 36) – her desire and commitment 'to be there and to be involved in all this activities' is as important to the experience of 'remoteness' as are long journey times, the cost of travel and caring responsibilities.

A mobilities perspective thus allows space for the 'phenomenologically complex' (Jedrej & Nuttall 1996: 19) ambiguities, even contradictions, of 'remoteness'. Becky, for instance, a young teacher living on the Isle of Benbecula, forcefully staged Uist as her most important 'centre', using the Gaelic word 'cianalas' to explain 'like a homesickness but not for home for land':[39]

> I think a lot of Gaelic – well, not necessarily Gaelic speakers, but speakers from Gaelic communities – just tend to experience that. […] It's almost like a supernatural pull or like, a feeling of actually physically being drawn, it's not just like a, 'oh, like, I really like this place, I'm going to keep returning', it's like a *need.*

[39] I return to the question of land in Chapter 8.

At the same time, uneven experiences of 'remoteness' and (im)mobility featured prominently in her understanding of Outer Hebridean identities. She spoke of a 'separation from Highlanders and Islanders' stemming from,

> Certain hardships here that you don't have on the mainland – you can just drive. And that's why I [laughs] […] I don't love when Skye is referred to as an island, because it's not really! It's connected to the mainland.[40] You can drive to Tesco if you want to! […] You can drive wherever you want to go, it's not like you get stuck there, and I don't often think of myself as stuck here, but obviously if transport doesn't run, you are stuck on an island.

One might wish for easier access to a supermarket, or to take more of an active role in political organising, but this doesn't necessarily mean one would take any kinder to external representations of 'remoteness', especially when such representations are often deployed in the material (re)production of that uneven (im)mobility itself. Asking 'remote from what?', in short, allows for the pluralising of centre-periphery geographies and re-emphasises the role of multiple (constrained) mobile agencies in the production of space (Lefebvre 1974; Massey 2005). It reveals 'remoteness' as a contested, uneven and relational quality that is inextricably entangled with the politics of (im)mobility and connectivity. In the following section, I consider in greater detail how this impacts the construction of Hebridean identities and structuring of Hebridean communities.

5.2. INCOMERS, LOCALS, STRANGERS AND FLYBYS

Mimi Sheller, a key theorist of feminist mobilities, notes:

> Mobility injustices [such as unwanted 'remoteness'] are not an occurrence that happens after entities 'enter' a space (i.e., after travelers get into a vehicle, or people gather on a city street, or migrants enter a new country), but *are the process through which unequal spatial conditions and differential subjects are made* (Sheller 2018: 47, original emphasis).

In this section, I turn attention to how the uneven experiences of 'remoteness' discussed above produce 'differential subjects' in the Outer Hebrides. In one sense, my analysis echoes that of Charles Jedrej and Mark Nuttall in their landmark study of rural repopulation in Scotland (1996), corroborated by more recent studies of migration to rural Scotland (Caputo, Bianchi & Baglioni 2023; Pietka-Nykaza & Baillot 2022), that rural communities are structured primarily through the metaphors of 'incomers' and 'locals'. I hope, however, to advance and unsettle this argument through a feminist analysis of 'localness' as an intersectionally disciplined

[40] As mentioned below, several other participants drew elucidating contrasts and comparisons between the Outer Hebrides and the Isle of Skye, including taking issue with the latter being described as an island, since, as one interlocuter exasperatedly protested, 'it has a bridge!'. As the base of the Gaelic college, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Skye is also a key site in tensions between different Gaelic communities, further discussion of which follows in Chapter 6.

performance, shaped in particular by rural logics of (in)visibility and strangerness and co-imbricated with mobilities, structures of belonging and de/reterritorialisations at other scales.[41] Adopting a more explicit mobilities perspective to structures of rural belonging, I will argue in section 5.2.3, also allows for greater engagement with the social category of the 'flyby'.

Casual descriptions of people as either an 'incomer' or a 'local' were common throughout my interviews – as will likely be unsurprising to any reader who has spent much time in rural Britain.[42] The boundaries between the two, however, always remained 'fuzzy and contestable' (Burnett 1998). They were not used as 'literal descriptions of a demographic reality' (Jedrej & Nuttall 1996: 20), but rather as part of a 'symbolic repertoire' (Cohen 1985, cited in Mackenzie & Dalby 2003: 327), as metaphors deriving from uneven experiences of (im)mobility and deployed to present a 'façade of homogeneity invented to resist [perceived] external threat' (*ibid.*). While claiming ancestry 'going back generations' certainly contributed to being accepted as a 'local', participants also referred to 'locals that are German'; a Uist business owner said of the Eastern European workers he employs, 'they're locals, they speak with a Hebridean accent now'. On the other hand, Ahmed, a Pakistani business owner, described himself ironically as but 'the newest comer [as] I've only been here for thirty years, you see'. As such, it is generally more appropriate to speak of an 'islander/incomer continuum' (Kohn 2002), whereby people might be considered or present themselves as 'locals' or 'incomers' in a not necessarily temporally linear fashion, depending on where they are or who they're talking to. 'Localness', in short, might be considered a situated performance, shaped by its intersections with other axes of difference and disciplined by particular spatiotemporal contexts.

5.2.1. 'Good local' performances and translocal tradition

Alice, a Swedish woman living in North Uist, asked about her experience of 'integrating' into the local community, replied that it was 'so-so.' She laughed, 'you have to be active, while also being inactive':

> As incomers you are in a different group to the natives, so to say. But yeah, you have to be active and actually try. People won't come to you. Your neighbours might come and say hi, but you do have to be active and go to events and things, join committees and stuff, and in that sense, you also have to be inactive. Because if you come here and join all these things and then have a very loud voice about things you think need to be fixed, and 'this is how we need to do this' and stuff, you're gonna be, like, alienated straight away.

[41] The scalar politics of these articulations of rural belonging, community and identity are discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

[42] A common dynamic with a colourful lexicon: see the Isle of Wight's 'caulkheads' and 'overners'; the West Country's 'emmets' and 'grockles'; Yorkshire's 'offcumdens'; or Ireland's 'blow-ins'.

Several other people discussed this delicate balance to be struck in the performance of localness – the craft of being simultaneously 'active and inactive', of participating in local community, but not too much, or not too vocally. Judith, a German woman living in Benbecula, offered some important context for why sometimes 'I have not spoken my mind before when I would have liked to, because I know it would not have gone well and that my German directness is just sometimes not in the right place'. She explained, with reference to the powerful local collective memory of the Highland Clearances, first introduced in Chapter 2:

> We're in a place where people for so long have been told by others how to do stuff. People have been told to move away to make space for sheep that will then destroy what the landscape used to be. So, this whole – and that is obviously where the special apprehension towards the English comes from, that still more people have, especially when it's about The English. I think most people here know an English person that they like, but The English are still the problem. And I can see that, I can see how that evolved, I can see where that would come from – and people don't forget. That's a very interesting bit to me as well, how far back the collective memory goes in that respect. […] And I find it so sad, because in the end no one wins, you know. It's not that any local wins a lot by being generally apprehensive towards incomers, and some of the incomers are just absolute complete idiots, because they don't think about this, they don't think about the background. They either don't know or don't care about what happened to people here. […] I'm so, so careful these days because by no means do I have the solution, by no means am I judging, I just observe and feel each side basically, and that can be quite hard going sometimes.

In this account, demonstrably 'knowing and caring about what happened to people here' figures as an important way of articulating or performing belonging to 'here'. The (forced) mobilities of the past continue to powerfully shape identities in the present – though nation(ality) is amplified over class,[43] what is important is participating in the (re)production of the collective memory of the Clearances to pit 'localness' against notions of Englishness. Here, we might note, it is far from the case that 'the representation of the border between "us" and "them", "locals" and "migrants" was never defined by British borders' (Caputo, Bianchi & Baglioni 2023: 116). Rather, national borders and the tensions running through 'Britishness' constitute an important reference point in articulations of 'localness' that people of various national backgrounds, at various points along the local–incomer spectrum must navigate.

We begin to see emerging here a resonance between 'good immigrant narratives' (Shukla 2017) and what we might consider 'good local narratives', with one's position on the local–incomer spectrum being relative to how convincingly one can perform scripts of nation, gender, race and class. Speaking of international incomers who had 'become locals', for instance, my interlocuters would often stress how they were 'excellent workers' or 'very hardworking',

[43] Historians have demonstrated that Lowland elites and Scottish Lairds – not just 'The English' – played a central role in the oppression and exploitation of the Highlands (see Connell 2004; Devine 2018; Maclean 1997; Tindley 2021).

having 'a lot of ambition, a lot of enterprise'. In some instances, this otherwise intuited understanding was explicitly taught – Margaret, an ex-ESOL teacher, for example, recounted how her English lessons with Eastern European migrant workers would include a focus on 'politeness codes' and 'social learning':

> They would take other things that would happen as rude, things that would happen to them in the workplace, and they'd answer back. And I had to do a lot of explaining. [*Imitates a Polish accent*] 'but in Poland if the boss treats you badly, we have to say, you are treating me badly!' [*drops accent*] And I had to kind of explain, 'yes, they're treating you badly, but just go quiet, don't say anything', you know.

Learning English as a migrant worker entailed learning when *not* to speak English, in deference to existing class structures and labour relations. Margaret recalled sadly how after one of her Polish students was unfairly dismissed from her job for 'answering back', 'the others just learnt to button their lips'. Meanwhile, Syrian families – and they were almost always referred to as 'the families' – who moved to the Hebrides under the SVPRS were frequently described as 'settling in well' by virtue of their entrepreneurship and their children's academic successes. Joyce, a retired secondary school teacher, spoke of a former student's transition from 'incomer' to 'local' through emphasising in particular his assimilation into particular family structures:

> There's another boy, he's Latvian and he was in a lot of trouble at school, he wasn't quite as academically gifted [...] and he had a terrible temper, because he'd get frustrated at whatever. But now I see him quite often and he's lovely! He's married and he's got two kids and he's very much involved in the culture and everything.

Lea, a 'new crofter' in Lewis, similarly, discussed particular gendered performances of crofting – as discussed further in Chapter 8, a particularly powerful symbolic resource for 'localness' – with instances of 'gender trouble' in crofting being distanced as 'English', as we saw above, the archetypal characteristic of the imagined incomer:

> I also feel that women are probably… not *not* welcome [in certain aspects of crofting, such as on common grazings], [...] but I think they [male crofters] just like to be, you know, male bonding, this kind of stuff, so they don't want the women with them, which is fair enough. I mean, I know there's quite a few sheep owners down there who are female, but they're all English.

Importantly, these 'good local narratives' should be understood as disciplining not only 'incomers' with the potential to be eventually seen as 'locals' if they can convincingly perform these scripts of gender, nation and class,[44] but also those who might in other respects be taken for granted as 'locals'. Lea also, for instance, discussed gendered articulations of localness in relation to homophobia:

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[44] Race and ethnicity intersect with 'localness' in complex ways that are discussed in greater detail below, with regards to 'strangerness', and in Chapters 6 and 7.

> I know how hard it is for queer people up here. I've heard many stories and they were absolutely horrendous. It's a lot better now, but ten, twenty years ago, it was utterly horrendous up here for them. A lot of them moved away cos they just couldn't stand it. You know, when you have shit shoved through your front door just because you're gay. Yeah, that happened. Or you just get beaten up, all the time. A lot of people were suicidal. There were some horrible stories.

I here do not, of course, mean to suggest that there have not existed locally inflected ways of expressing queerness – there undoubtedly have, a subject which merits further research[45] – just that cisheteronormativity should be understood as a powerful disciplining force that shapes the public performance of 'localness' (or even, in this extreme example, the possibility of safely being in the locality at all) for all people at various, shifting points along the incomer–local spectrum.

Though often used as a shorthand for belonging, the local/incomer binary clearly does not map onto belonging in any obvious or simple way. The 'performance of localness' can (sometimes violently, as in the case of extreme homophobia that Lea describes) exclude 'locals' and 'incomers' who fail to perform its intersectionally disciplined scripts. At the same time, however, these disciplined performances of 'localness' could themselves become points of identification for certain 'incomers'. Akalapathi, for instance, made an explicit comparison between the way in which on Isle of Lewis 'most of the things community controls, everyone is expecting to live according to what community legitimises' and the Hindu practice of Varnashrama-dharma, in which everyone is, in his words, 'duty bound' to act in a certain way according to age and caste:

> When I came here, some people asked whether I had, er, cultural shock, this place. I told them not much, simply because I felt Stornoway or Isle of Lewis more similar to Indian culture, where everyone know each other and look after each other and care for each other, and also even in terms of behaviour. For example, there are still people here behave by thinking what others think about them. It's not so much real in urban context of UK for example – 'I don't care what others think', 'I be, I do what I want'. So, whereas here, culturally, maybe, related to maybe even for example, churchgoers for example, er, you know, what my church-people think, what my community people think. I can give you one example, for example, it is not a normal rule, but it is an understanding. Sunday, for example, is considered as a strict – they use the religious language, Sabbath. So that means, er, if you do normal chores or routines for example, we are dishonouring local culture. I am not expected to put my washings out or clean my car. Although I don't believe what they are saying, I don't do it, simply because I don't want to offend my neighbours.

[45] As an interesting digression, this forms the punchline to a 2007 Gaelic comedy sketch which simultaneously mocks both the 'new, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Gaelic' introduced as part of corpus development efforts (see Chapter 4) and conservative rallying calls to 'protect the Gaelic of our forefathers'. In mock outrage at the word 'leasbach' ('lesbian'), comedian Carina MacLeod satirises the complexities of Gaelic identity politics by asking rhetorically, 'why do we need a word for something that was never in the Highlands? The English are to blame! Maggie Thatcher and folk like that!' See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btg-aEPNiRg.

Ahmed, a businessman of Pakistani background, similarly discussed the observance of the Sabbath – an important marker of cultural identity in the islands in the north of the archipelago – attributing a 'much greater kind of a coexistence, a harmonious coexistence as compared to the mainland' between 'island communities' and 'the Pakistani community' to the perception that,

> The island communities were very, and still are, very traditional. It's the only place where Sabbath is still observed quite strongly compared to anywhere else. Sundays, you know, everything is off. And as a result – obviously the Pakistani community itself is very traditional. Even today, being part of it, they were also very traditional and tied to their own traditions quite strongly. So, it was a meeting of two people, two communities, both very, very strongly traditional in their own ways.

He further observed that this 'is something that surprises the media. Especially when the Mosque was being built [in Stornoway in 2018], we had a lot of media coverage at that time'. This press coverage often tended towards a caricaturising 'clash of civilisations' narrative (Huntington 1996) that assumed necessary and absolute conflict between what Annie ironically dubbed 'the spectre of religious thinking on the Christian side' (i.e., Free Church Presbyterianism) and other, racialised religious or cultural identities and practices. Instead, in both Akalapathi's and Ahmed's accounts of rural multiculturalism, 'tradition' is identified as a point of commonality in diversity, a bridge between the 'local here' and various 'locals there', cutting across the imagined space of the 'global postmodern' as one of secularised universalism or cultural homogenisation.

This 'classic Enlightenment binary […] between traditionalism and modernity' (Hall 2000: 417) was unsettled by people at various points along the Hebridean incomer–local spectrum. Margaret, for instance, a retired ESOL teacher, discussed her previous experience teaching in Bradford before moving back to Uist:

> M: [I] found I could understand the Pakistanis and the Indians so well; they seemed much closer in culture to what I was used to here.
>
> E: In what way?
>
> M: Well, their… interest in relationships, their sense of family, their sense of even simple things being quite sacred, which in my youth, even milking a cow, or putting a meal on the table, everything was quite sacred. […] So, I mean, the basic contrast is that coming, dating from the kind of very religious – and up here it was a mixture of not-so-strict Protestant and pagan – like, when I was taught to milk a cow, the person who taught me would ask me to take a dish of cream outside for the fairies. The first pull was for the fairies, so you'd get a good pailful. And I think that because of that sense of life being… Urdu has a very good word for it which is دین, I don't know how you'd spell it in English, but it means that your way of life is a bit sacred, and not particularly religious, but every small thing matters, the details matter.

While still using potentially homogenising categories of nation as a frame of reference,[46] Margaret's reaching for an Urdu word and concept, picked up from students in Bradford, to translate Hebridean traditions, folk practices and relationships with brùnaidhean or brownies might be seen as promising 'new discursive formations of the traditional' (Hall 2017: 115). Her, Ahmed's and Akalapathi's translocal articulations of 'tradition' here rescale localness so that it 'acquires specific meaning by operating within a larger, globalized cultural topos' (*ibid.*: 116).

This also emerged in the reflections of younger research participants. Michal, a young Gaelic-speaking Polish man living in North Uist, similarly discussed a sense of transrural identity as emerging through transnational 'translations' between commensurable histories of class-based rural displacement:

> I think through learning more about life here and the kind of communal peasant past of the Highlands and Islands, I think for me that's also a road to recovery of my own heritage, where all of my grandparents' generation were all peasants born in the countryside, but all – both of my parents were born in the city, […] and so that connection was broken, but it's something that I've always felt really strongly about, that root, that origin. I don't really feel like I'm necessarily doing other, or digging into other people's past is I think almost like our common past, but I have to, yeah, it is, like, for me it's always going to be something that's not really, it's not gonna be my past ever, I don't think, but that doesn't, or has never and probably will never make it any less important to me.

Here, again, the local – 'that root, that origin' – figures not in a closed, static or absolutist sense, but as a site of complex entanglement with the global. A translocal sense of heritage or tradition is mobilised as a translation between 'locals here' and 'locals there', unsettling narratives of global modernity as cultural homogenisation. Michal's nuanced reflections on this placing of the past also raises a key question in the memory politics of migration, nation and 'integration' – 'not the question of "what is the past" but "whose past is it?", that is, who belongs and who does not' (Bertossi, Duyvendak & Foner 2021: 4161–4162). While Michal foregrounds transnational rural class relations, a 'communal peasant past', as we saw with above reflections on the memory of the Highland Clearances, any answer to the question of 'whose past is it?' has to contend with the ready response provided by the historiographies of nation(alism). I continue this discussion in Chapter 7.

This section has argued for 'localness' as an intersectionally disciplined performance, and for a view of the articulation of 'translocal tradition' as serving to stretch, rework and translate the meaning of 'local' globally, 'in *and* across place' (Katz 2001: 1230, original emphasis). It has not been my intention to romanticise 'tradition' – it is evident in the above account of homophobia

[46] Chapter 7 considers in greater detail how (racialised) notions of nation interact with the 'performance of localness'.

how violently it can be weaponised. Nor have I meant to suggest that the labels of 'incomers' and 'locals' are never wielded with exclusionary intent. They sometimes are. I have, however, in emphasising the fluidity and flexibility of these metaphors attempted to present experiences that 'appeal to agency and speak to the heterogeneity of minority peoples in rural communities' (Williams 2007: 761), and further to explore how that heterogeneity is lived and understood in a way that participates in 'the remaking of difference's everyday resonance' (Valluvan 2016a: 208). The remaining sections of this chapter home in on a central aspect of the performance of localness, sloinnidhean and the articulation of 'roots' (or 'routes'), arguing that this is amplified by the uneven experiences of (im)mobility and 'remoteness' outlined in the first half of the chapter. This leads onto a discussion of some particularities of rural place – namely, rural logics of visibility, familiarity and strangerness – that are important to keep in mind for later chapters' analysis of embodied multicultural encounter in the Outer Hebrides.

5.2.2. Sloinnidhean, roots and strangers

'When I got retired up here, having come up here every summer,' Margaret told me, 'I had my Gaelic sloinneadh, I'm, although I talk differently, I'm accepted.'

Comparable to a patronymic or matronymic, a sloinneadh is a Gaelic way of naming that stresses one's genealogy and family connections, embedding oneself within networks of social relations and local landscapes of collective memory. It is frequently remarked upon that, in Gaelic, one does not ask 'where are you from?', but 'cò as a tha thu?', literally, '*who* are you from?'. Sloinnidhean, genealogy and family relations are important waymarkers for identity in the Gàidhealtachd, indicating 'the shared space of interrelations between rootedness and connectedness' (Oliver 2011: 12). Presenting a Hebridean sloinneadh might lead to greater 'acceptance' as a local, since, as Joyce, a retired teacher, put it with reference to her Highland sloinneadh, 'you had your place there, because everyone knew who you were and all your relations.' In this section, I suggest that, although typically referring to genealogy and family biography, the logic of sloinnidhean can be usefully expanded 'beyond blood' to understand the articulation of roots/routes as a central component of the performance of localness and belonging.

Nasrin, for instance, a Scottish-Pakistani woman who grew up in the Outer Hebrides, in part attributed the lack of racism in her childhood to particular rural logics of visibility and familiarity. The Hebrides, she explained, are 'open communities to those who know each other', and in her account, 'having roots' figured primarily as a means of being known and being placed:

> My older sister's, like, six, seven years older than me, and my uncle had been there before that, so they had been there for a long time, so I think because they had roots, and they had their business, it was maybe a wee bit different as well.

Claiming 'roots' here figures not in an essentialist or exclusive sense of primordial 'origins', but, consistently with the logic of sloinnidhean, as a means of embedding and emplacing oneself within dense networks of social interrelation. A similar logic propelled the performances of localness of people – especially more recent international migrants – who moved to the Hebrides with no claim to genealogical or ancestral 'roots', connections by marriage or even affiliation with social structures powerful in the islands – notably the church, described by Helga with a click of her fingers as an 'automatic in'. In such cases, the articulation of 'routes' performed a similar, sloinnidhean-adjacent function. Homa, a woman from Afghanistan, for instance, considered her prior connections to a known organisation on the islands as a potential reason that she and her family have not been victim to anti-migrant xenophobia:

> I was always afraid to leave my own country and end up being as a migrant or refugee in another country. But people here were really kind, supportive, and I think people are kind here. But it was maybe because of our connection to the [organisation] which is based in the island as well. People know them and through them they got to know us more.

Similarly, Aleena, reflecting on how her experiences of refugee resettlement in Britian might have been different in a city on the mainland as opposed to Stornoway, described the impact of the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the local authority for the Outer Hebrides, having briefed local communities on the conflict in Syria and aspects of Syrian cultures. She stressed the importance of being known and introduced:

> It's different because they [the Local Authority] introduced us to people and they spoke about us, about Syrian people, I mean. Because we came, like, they know we are coming here, […] even the volunteers. So, that's another way that people know us now. Knew that we are coming here.

Judith, a German woman living in Benbecula, discussed the social importance of this logic in explicitly spatial terms, explaining that presenting some form of sloinneadh through the articulation of roots/routes, 'literally opens doors'. This is especially so, she explained, as the vast majority of socialising in the Outer Hebrides takes place in private homes with the relative absence of anonymity or 'strangers' without sloinnidhean. She drew an illuminating comparison between her experience of what she described as 'proper cèilidh culture' in the Outer Hebrides as opposed to the Isle of Skye:

> You would maybe bring someone [to certain places or events in the Outer Hebrides] that had not been there before, but there's always a connection. There's always a connection, maybe around one or two corners, but there will always be a connection there. I mean, we have a friend that lives in the North of South Uist, and he has a wee extra house that is his music room, basically, and he puts up his sessions there and you get invited, but I know for a fact that you don't always get invited, he just does whatever. […] They're the best sessions I've ever played, but it's not something that you would know of. I took my mum there – obviously, the only people she knew were myself and [my boyfriend], but that would never have happened to her if she hadn't known us. […Whereas] I can go to the Old Inn in Carbost [in Skye], every Thursday

> night […] even if I don't know who's playing there, then still, it's gonna be happening, and it's gonna be happening for me as well, because I can just go there.

Here, we can see the logic of sloinnidhean shaping the particular production of rural place as a 'spatio-temporal event' (Massey 2005: 131). The importance of narrating some form of roots or routes, even if those social connections are 'around one or two corners', modulates the 'potential for the happenstance juxtaposition of previously unrelated trajectories' (*ibid*: 198), as the logic of sloinnidhean entails an expectation that those trajectories will be explicitly, retrospectively articulated into relation. This raises doubts about the possibility for encounters to be 'surprising', 'inherently unpredictable', 'destabilising' and thus, as Helen Wilson (2017a, 2017b) would have it, 'meaningful' in their potential to transform, to use Judith's formulation, 'who a place is happening for'. This is a possibility I evaluate more fully in Chapter 8, through considering the rural structuring of public and private space and the implications of 'proper cèilidh culture' for rural geographies of encounter. Here, to introduce the argument, I suggest that rather than necessarily limiting the possibility for 'meaningful' encounter, rural geographies of (in)visibility, familiarity and recognition simply modulate them.

We might consider here, for example, an archetypal figure in encounters with difference – the stranger (Ahmed 2000a, 2000b; Amin 2012; Hopkins 2014; Koefoed & Simonsen 2011, 2012). The perception, (re)produced by the logic of sloinnidhean, that 'everybody knows everybody' in rural areas – a source of comfort for some, of 'relational claustrophobia' (Stachowski 2020) for others – leads to the 'paradox' that 'remote areas are full of strangers' (Ardener 1987: 527), or, as Jedrej and Nuttall (1996: 21) explain, that strangers are 'more in evidence in remote rural areas while they are muted in the urban setting'. This 'paradox', stemming from rural logics of (in)visibility, familiarity and recognition, complicates disembodied accounts of strangerhood that would 'cut "the stranger" off from the histories of its determination' (Ahmed 2000a: 5, see also Hopkins 2014). In particular, encounters with 'strangers' in the context of rural logics of sloinnidhean complicate the assumption that with anonymity or invisibility comes whiteness.

For example, when I briefly introduced my research to a fellow hostel guest on a walking holiday in South Uist, she remarked, somewhat sniffily, 'I haven't seen very many migrants in the Hebrides.' What she meant, of course, was that she hadn't seen many people she took to be less-than-white, 'visibly other' (Askins 2006), strangers she '*already recognised as not belonging*, as being out of place' (Ahmed 2000a: 21, original emphasis). Nasrin, meanwhile, who described her family when she was growing up as 'the only coloured [*sic*] people' on the island, reflected on reading racist comments on posts in a local Facebook group since moving away to the mainland:

> I notice, there's people coming to [the island], and I'm like, *who's that*? Because you know, we do know everyone at home, pretty much, […] you know families, and a lot of the time the people who end up negatively commenting […] actually ends up people not really, not actually that have been in the community for a long period of time? […] Because even when I go back, you know, going back you see the same people, a lot of the older ones have passed away, but you go back and see the same people, and you know, it's not as open. It's still open communities to those who know each other, and you know, if incomers have tried to be part of the community, actually give something back, or get involved in working in the community, but then if not, you end up going back and it's actually a bit more of a divide, and not in a race, not in a race way…

Here, 'strangers' are not understood as disembodied, decontextualised, or essentialised 'in a race way' (see Hopkins 2014). Rather, there is a relational, embodied view of strangerhood, as contingent on the logics of sloinnidhean ('it's open communities to those who know each other') as part of the disciplined performance of localness ('if incomers have tried to be part of the community'). The tourist in the hostel, centring her own seeing and assuming an invisibility by virtue of her whiteness, likely didn't consider that her transience and anonymity could in fact mean that she might *be seen* as the migrant, the stranger, the 'visible other' or, as I introduce below, the 'flyby' in the Hebrides.

This is by no means to suggest that structures of race and nation do not interact with rural geographies of encounter, (in)visibility and localness. This is the subject of Chapter 7. [47] My argument here is simply that the presentation of sloinnidhean – the articulation of roots/routes as a central aspect of the performance of localness – is entangled with particular rural logics of visibility, familiarity and recognition, shaping the geographies of encounter and multiculturalism that later chapters will explore in greater depth. The following section develops my argument for understanding the figure of the stranger through a situated, mobilities lens.

5.2.3. 'Flybys'

In a foundational essay on the spatiality of strangerness, Georg Simmel offers an understanding of the stranger as someone who '*may* come today and stay tomorrow, […] a *potential* wanderer [who] has not quite shed the freedom to stay or go' (Simmel 1908, translated by Mosse 2016: 176, emphasis added). In the final section of this chapter, I pick up on this underemphasised *motility* of strangerness, returning to the uneven geographies of (im)mobility and remoteness described in the first half of the chapter to introduce the notion of the Hebridean 'stranger' not as the 'incomer', but as the 'flyby'.

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[47] The structures of rural (in)visibility as they relate to race and migration are further complicated by the relative 'hiddenness' of migrant workers in the agricultural or fishing industries, often working long hours, living away from resident communities, in caravans on secluded farms or offshore in highly precarious conditions on transit visas (see Hržić forthcoming; ITF 2022; Milbourne & Coulson 2021; Rye & O'Reilly 2021).

The previous section emphasised the articulation of roots/routes as a key aspect of the performance of localness. As well as reaching out into the past, however recent or distant, roots, when 'put down', extend into the future. In many of my participants' accounts, evidence of a commitment to stay – whether having children and 'putting down roots' for the long-term, or even just persisting through several bad winters – led to a greater security in 'local' status. This echoes Michael Woods' (2022: 323) findings that 'onward migration by refugees [from rural communities in Wales and Ireland] […] tended to be rationalised away as cases of individuals from urban backgrounds who couldn't adapt to rural life, or of households being reluctantly forced to leave by structural circumstances'. Joyce, a retired teacher, for instance, explained:

> One thing that I did notice that I thought was quite interesting was that when I did retire, I realised that a lot of people were surprised that I didn't up sticks and move back to the mainland. And I noticed almost, this might be just me, but I noticed more acceptance? […] I did feel that when I had finished working, people would say 'oh, are you staying here?' and I would say, 'yes, this is my home'. So then I felt that I was more accepted as being from here.

Mobility (in)justice, as Sheller (2018: 23) has argued, is 'as much about how, when and where we dwell as how, when and where we move'. This is particularly salient in the Outer Hebrides, where staying, 'putting down roots' can be interpreted as a commitment to a 'historical and political context where, despite over 4,000 years of human habitation, dwelling cannot be taken for granted' (Course 2019: 62). In addition to the powerful collective memory of the forced displacements of the Highland Clearances, many people continue to face significant material barriers to staying in or returning to the islands, in no small part due to the (re)production of 'remoteness' discussed above. As Annie, a woman from Lewis explained, 'we've always had to go. Because we wanted to be educated further or we wanted to get jobs or blah blah blah.' Iain, living in a village on the West side of Lewis, discussed surprised and dismissive attitudes he had encountered as a younger Gaelic speaker choosing to stay in Lewis, which he attributed to these same dynamics of uneven (im)mobility:

> A lot of your older folk, especially older men, I guess, guys would come up to me and like […] 'why would you even want to speak Gaelic? What's the point? Why would you want to live here?' That sort of thing, but I don't know if that's ingrained… I guess people did just have to leave, for opportunities and education and all that sort of thing. […] They just left as soon as they were able and they went away to the Merchant Navy or to do whatever, so I guess they were always… I dunno, that was just the way of life. Even my mum, she left when she was sixteen, went down to Edinburgh, and you know, went to the hostel for high school, and was, like, living in a hostel in town. So maybe that's part of it, that there has been this disconnect from the local community.

These same mobility injustices (Sheller 2018) were identified by more recent 'locals'. Ahmed remembered times when 'seventy or eighty of us used to get together, we would meet [and] communicate in our own language', then told me sadly that 'we don't have many of our Pakistani

families left now'. Over the last fifteen years, he explained, 'the number of Muslims was dwindling, the families were already moving away from the isle, we were getting less and less' because, 'simply travelling was easier' on the mainland. Fred, the business owner who described the Eastern European workers he employs as 'locals, they speak with a Hebridean accent now', recounted that he had lost employees less because of new visa restrictions with Brexit than because of,

> the isolation and the difficulty of communication and transport. That's always the reason given. They will go off, leave their friends here and go off work somewhere else, but they're able to go somewhere for the weekend or for a day trip or you know, and the ones who are left here are unable to get off the island [because of] the problem with transport issues, with ferries and so on, with tourists booking since summer and local people can't get on boats and can't get away for a weekend or you know.

The entangled (im)mobility Fred stages here is a key 'process through which unequal spatial conditions and differential subjects are made' (Sheller 2018: 47) in the Hebrides. Staying, 'putting down roots', becomes a way of expressing identity and community as *against* the transient, rhythmical presence of what one participant described as 'flybys':

> I heard someone call them 'flybys' […] – people who come for a year and are like, 'ah, this is amazing, blah blah, I want to engage in all of this', and then they leave in a year cos, yeah… people who live here are used to that.

Rather than the 'incomer', who as we have seen can in various ways perform degrees of 'localness', it is the motility of the transient 'flyby' who '*may* come today and stay tomorrow, […] a *potential* wanderer [who] has not quite shed the freedom to stay or go' (Simmel 1908, translated by Mosse 2016: 176, emphasis added) who is here cast as the archetypal Hebridean stranger. This is, clearly, closely related to 'the inescapable experience of the asymmetries of social class' (Jedrej & Nuttall 1996: 20): the prevailing notion that you have to 'get out' to 'get on' contrasts with processes of rural gentrification, amenity migration and second-home ownership that only accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic (Colomb & Gallent 2022; González-Leonardo *et al.* 2022; Rowe *et al*. 2023). Because of the context outlined above, this was felt to be most egregious when the 'flyby' was English. Judith summarised the anger of most of my participants across the incomer–local spectrum:

> One of the things that I can see happening and that I can understand that that is going to make you angry if you're actually from here, is the whole housing situation, that's one of the prime examples. Coming from London, having a lot of money, 'oh, this is a pretty place in the summer, let's buy a house, do up the house, spend two winters here, find it horrible, sell the house for double the price'. The locals can't afford it or the place is off the market for anyone or anything else because the people only come for two weeks in the summer.

I return specifically to the issue of rural housing in Chapter 8. Here, I note that the relative freedom of 'flybys' to come and go, whether after two weeks' holiday in the summer or after two rough winters, is identified *against* by residents across the local–incomer spectrum who face a range of mobility justice issues. The question of how long one needs to stay to dispel any doubts of flyby-ness (remember Ahmed, describing himself but 'the newest comer [as] I've only been here for thirty years') is unclear and, more generally, the subject of temporality and migration in and to rural areas, especially when these rural areas are cast as remote not only spatially but also temporally, is worthy of further exploration (see Chapman forthcoming).

5.3. CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced several key arguments which form an important bedrock for the analysis of geographies of multiculturalism and minoritised languages in the Outer Hebrides in the chapters that follow.

First, I established 'remoteness' as a relational quality produced through the uneven experiences of (im)mobility. The tangled relationship between the contested representation of remoteness and the material (re)production of that uneven (im)mobility itself renders it 'phenomenologically complex' (Jedrej & Nuttall 1996: 19), even 'paradoxical' (Ardener 1987). I argued that a mobilities lens offers a useful means of understanding this seemingly paradoxical relationship. In relation to this, I moved to advance insights that belonging in rural Scotland is structured through the metaphors of 'locals' and 'incomers' through an analysis of 'localness' as an intersectionally disciplined performance, exploring how 'good local narratives' shape the performances of people across the incomer–local spectrum. This discussion entailed engagement with how the meaning of the 'local' was stretched, reworked, translated into a global context, 'in *and* across place' (Katz 2001: 1230, original emphasis), in particular through the expression of 'translocal tradition' as a bridge between the 'local here' and various 'locals there'. This reworking of the meaning of the local relates to the thesis's first thematic objective of exploring how linguistic and cultural identity can be detached from notions of bounded homogeneity and articulated instead through translational 'differences-in-relation'. This analysis of 'localness' is continued with more explicit reference to language politics and geographies in Chapter 6, and then critically situated in the context of race, nation(alism) and coloniality in Chapter 7.

Additionally, I identified the articulation of roots/routes – which I understood through the lens of sloinnidhean – as a key narrative strategy in the performance of localness. This, I argued, should be considered in relation to particular rural logics of (in)visibility, familiarity and recognition. I made this argument through discussion of rural 'strangers', suggesting that rural logics of sloinnidhean and 'proper cèilidh culture' trouble the assumption that with anonymity

or invisibility comes whiteness. Again, more focused discussion of the role of race and nation in shaping these geographies of rural (in)visibility is the subject of Chapter 7, while Chapter 8 returns to the rural structuring of public and private space and its implications on geographies of multicultural encounter. This chapter's preliminary discussion of Hebridean strangerhood constitutes the beginnings of a response to the thesis's third thematic objective, moving towards a more embodied and situated account of the figure of the stranger as the embodiment of cultural or ethnic difference (see also Hopkins 2014).

While the primary aim of this chapter was to situate the research more rigorously in the spatiotemporal context of the Outer Hebrides, the following chapter, '…But I don't know if I'm a Gael', advances these arguments by considering them more directly in light of the thesis's overall aim of reparative language geographies. It will explore how the various (im)mobilities and relations discussed in this chapter become more or less explicitly de/reterritorialised, (re)scaled and drawn in to the cultural politics of place – notably, through the language ideologies of authenticity and anonymity.

CHAPTER SIX

'… BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I'M A GAEL'

AUTHENTICITY, AGENCY, NATIVENESS

In a study of adult learners of Gaelic in the Uists, linguistic anthropologist Emily McEwan-Fujita (2010: 46) observed: 'the general equation of Gaelic with "local" and English with "incomer" is still prevalent among Gaelic speakers, and newcomers are socialized into it'. This chapter builds on the previous chapter's analysis of the fluidity and performed nature of these social categories to complicate this seemingly common-sense equation. It turns attention to how the uneven (im)mobilities and relations between 'locals', 'incomers' and 'flybys' discussed in Chapter 5 become de/reterritorialised, (re)scaled and drawn into the cultural politics of place – notably through the linguistic ideologies of authenticity, anonymity and nativeness.

First, I draw linguistic anthropology's spatial metaphors for linguistic authenticity and anonymity into closer conversation with geographers' attempted rescaling of notions of 'authenticity' (Jones & Royles 2020; Taylor 2001). This, I suggest, in response to the project's first thematic research objective of language and relation, can help to ground Italian feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero's (2005) philosophy of revocalisation in multicultural contexts of less-than-fluency, partial understanding and, most importantly, uneven power geometries. This agential, 'revocalised' reconceptualisation of 'authenticity', I will argue, allows for greater engagement with how moments of Cavarero's relational 'absolute local' might be rescaled or translated into a 'progressive sense of place' (Massey 1991, 1993) that moves within, against and beyond the nativist ideologies at the heart of 'the monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012).

I then delve deeper into the 'anti-abstractionist' (Edwards 2003) politics by which speakers translate between forms of language marked by 'authenticity' or 'anonymity' as part of the contested political processes of remaking and rescaling place. In the context of the Outer Hebrides, I argue that this maps closely onto the tensions between 'locals', 'incomers' and 'flybys' and the geographies of uneven (im)mobility discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, I consider how these tensions can become territorialised 'in the process of appropriating space for political projects' (Halvorsen 2019: 795) through contested discourses of 'nativeness', in particular, 'Gaelness'. This more geographically nuanced reading of 'territory' hopes to advance the divisions and false dichotomies that have characterised the 'Gaelic crisis' debates, as introduced in Chapter 4.

6.1. AUTHENTICITY, AGENCY, ANONYMITY

Minority language standardisation projects are riven with tensions. Promoting a variety of language that is supposedly 'decontextualised, neutral, widely accessible and learnable' (Lane, Costa & Korne 2017: 5), they are encouraged as an instrument of reversing language shift and countering falling numbers of speakers. On the other hand, they are inherently a suppression of linguistic diversity and thus themselves a mechanism of language minoritisation, and, as such, 'at best contentious and at worst a Faustian bargain' (*ibid*: 1). As I first introduced in Chapter 4, the standardisation, institutionalisation and corpus development of Scots Gaelic, while raising the public profile of the language, has exacerbated a 'disconnect between the carriers of the language and the professionalised language and media sector' (Maclean 2019: 255).[48] This disconnect, considered by some to be verging on diglossia (Birnie 2022; Smith-Christmas & Ó hIfearnáin 2015),[49] is very closely related to socioeconomic class, generational shifts, and the structure of rural belonging as outlined in Chapter 5. Iain, a young Gaelic speaker living in a village on the West side of Lewis, spoke of how keenly these 'quite considerable differences' between 'village Gaelic' and the standardised Gaelic of 'more of an academic settifng' are felt by some speakers of the former:

> I did a SpeakGaelic training course, and I just went along because we might put it on here [his workplace]. […] It was made by a sort of collaborative project between MG ALBA, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, UHI,[50] and kind of straight away, the first lesson is saying ''s toil leam cupan tì', and then all the, my mum and all the Lewis ladies: 'we would never say that', sort of raging against them, 'we'd say ''s caomh leam'.

My focus in this chapter is not on linguistic or formal variation within Gaelic (on this subject, see, for example, Wilson 2021), on 's toil leam versus 's caomh leam', but rather on how the ideologies of 'authenticity' and 'anonymity' are embodied in struggles for linguistic authority between, for example, MG ALBA, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, UHI, 'all the Lewis ladies' and speakers of various other languages and linguistic varieties in the Outer Hebrides.

Linguistic Anthropologist Kathryn Woolard (2008, 2016, Gal & Woolard 2001) uses explicitly spatial metaphors to describe the how the ideologies of 'authenticity' and 'anonymity' are mobilised by 'glottopolitical agents' (García & Amorós-Negre 2020; Guespin & Marcellesi

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48 'Carriers of the language' is, of course, a loaded term. I here understand it to mean speakers using Gaelic in vernacular, noninstitutional settings.

49 'Diaglossia' is a situation in which two languages or language varieties are used in fairly compartmentalised and hierarchically organised social situations (Ferguson 1959; Fishman 1965, 1967). One example might be the widespread use of Modern Standard Arabic in the media, education or government, or as a lingua franca, alongside the use of العامية, al-ʿāmmiyya or colloquial varieties used in more everyday, informal settings. Smith-Christmas & Ó hIfearnáin (2015) describe the sociolinguistic situation of Scots Gaelic as one of 'reverse diglossia', given the emphasis on the use of the language in 'prestigious domains' in recent language planning efforts, outlined in Chapter 4.

50 MG ALBA is the trading name for Gaelic Media Service, a Scottish statutory organisation producing Gaelic language broadcasts. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is the Gaelic Higher Education College in Skye. UHI is the University of the Highlands and Islands.

1986) in struggles for linguistic authority and legitimacy. Language varieties felt to be 'authentic', she argues, must be understood as 'profoundly local' (Woolard 2008: 304), a 'voice from somewhere' – Iain's 'village Gaelic' – as opposed to the anonymous, 'everyman' (*ibid.*: 306) 'voice from nowhere' – Gaelic 'more of an academic setting'. In this section, I suggest that bringing Woolard's 'post-naturalistic' reconceptualisation of linguistic authenticity 'as a project rather than as naturally given to a speaker' (Woolard 2016: 36; see also Coupland 2003, 2014) into closer conversation with geographic critique of 'localized sincerities' (Jones & Royles 2020: 1103) could shed useful light on how language(s) participate in the contested cultural politics of place.

6.1.1. 'A voice from somewhere': authenticity, sincerity and place

Rowan, a young Gaelic speaker living in North Lewis, recalled coming home from school – a Gaelic medium – in the late 1990s, and her mum pulling her pronunciation of 'bainne' ('milk') away from the 'standard' and closer to the local pronunciation:

> I was like, going home and doing my reading with my mum and she'd go, 'oh, not [p**a**n̪ʲə] – [pɔn̪ʲə]. […] She'd like, correct or attune to her own, how she sounded.

In contrast to the powerful 'naturalistic' (Woolard 2016) assumption that 'authentic' language cannot be learnt, only picked up 'naturally', with no work or will on behalf of the speaker, here we see Rowan's self-described '*very* North Lewis' Gaelic emerging through a confluence of multiple speaker agencies. Local, place-based, 'authentic' language was being explicitly taught to and learnt by someone who closely fits what most people would think of as a 'native' or 'mother tongue' speaker:

> Mum's a Gaelic speaker and my grandparents on my mum's side were Gaelic speakers, so Gaelic was always our first lang- and still is our first language at home. It's all I speak to my mum, my sisters, cousins. […] I also don't remember much English being spoken in the home until I was at school, and I was learning English like, you know, as a 'Language', as a… it was the classroom language.

While having no such claims to anything approaching 'nativeness' – in fact feeling somewhat self-conscious about an English accent – I experienced something not dissimilar while attending a couple of evening classes of the same SpeakGaelic course that Iain mentions above, encouraged by the manager of a hostel in West Lewis that it would be a good opportunity to learn 'local Gaelic'. While the classes generally followed the structure of the SpeakGaelic curriculum, the teacher, Catherine, stressed that she adapted the material, because 'we learn Lewis Gaelic here'. On several occasions, after addressing her two regular students, she would turn to me, whose broken Gaelic (and, of course, how I explained my interest and participation in the course) indexed the University of Glasgow, and cast around for 'the Gaelic' to explain the Leòdhasach word or turn of phrase she had just used. As I started trying to imitate her

pronunciation, use local vocabulary and (happily) forgo 'correct' grammatical structures such as the genitive case,[51] she laughed, 'you're going to go back to Glasgow speaking like this and they'll ask where you've been!'.

Once again, the way that a marked, place-based Gaelic was here being set against an 'anonymous', standardised, 'from nowhere' form of the language and taught to two students on the 'local–incomer spectrum' and to me, a species of 'flyby', evidenced a 'post-naturalistic', 'alternative valorization of an authentic relation to language as a *project* rather than as naturally given to a speaker' (Woolard 2016: 36, emphasis added; see also Coupland 2003, 2014). Reminiscent of the previous chapter's discussion of the performance of localness, the emphasis here on speaker-learner-teacher agencies in reproducing the 'blas' (flavouraccentrelish) of 'authentic' or 'local' Gaelic reveals a view of language as 'not an index of but rather a comment on' (*ibid.* 34) place and the speaker's relation to it. The notion of authenticity is thus expanded, mobilised, with 'authentic' language use emerging not only out of 'where you come from', but also, to echo Catherine, 'where you've been', 'where you're choosing to stay'[52] or 'where you hope to go'.

We might here also, for instance, recall Margaret's use of the Urdu دین to translate Hebridean customs of leaving a dish of cream for the fairies, discussed in Chapter 5. Few would argue that this makes her an 'authentic Urdu speaker', whatever that might mean, but it speaks to an authentic, 'topoglossic' (Hammond & Cook 2023: 794–797) relationship through language to place as a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey 2005: 130). Bounded notions of authenticity are unsettled as a 'voice from somewhere' speaks through the translocal trajectories and relations between Bradford, the Hebrides, India and Pakistan.

Woolard's (2016) reflections on the not necessarily antithetical relationship between linguistic authenticity and artifice (on this theme see also Barton 2021) finds a geographic counterpart in the efforts of Welsh geographers Rhys Jones and Elin Royles (2020) to rehabilitate and rescale the notion of (national) authenticity through understanding it as derived from 'its localized sincerities' (1103). Through the agential notion of sincerity as 'meaning what one said within particular social situations' (1096), they aim to offer a 'relational, flexible and contextual' (1097) reconceptualisation of authenticity, stressing that in this way, 'understandings of a particular group identity can vary – and can be held to be equally sincere – across space' (1096). Bringing together the emphasis in Woolard's (2016) 'post-naturalistic'

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51 Catherine joked that if she said in standardised 'correct' Gaelic 'chaidh mi dhan taigh peathar', using the genitive of piuthar, 'people would look at me as if I'd grown horns', and tease her for having worked in Edinburgh.

52 Liam, for instance, a Gaelic learner in North Uist, originally from Ireland and with a competence in Irish Gaelic, told me, 'if I could get the North Uist accent that would be brilliant […] it's the one in the place where I'm living so, you know, if I'm going to learn Gaelic, I'd like to learn the Gaelic of North Uist'.

authenticity on speaker agency with Jones' and Royles' proposal of 'sincerity' as 'meaning what one said within particular social situations' (2020: 1096), I suggest, can deepen our understanding of the role of language(s) in the cultural politics of place. In particular, this interdisciplinary dialogue can help to ground Cavarero's (2005) philosophy of revocalisation in everyday, embodied contexts of multiculturalism, partial fluency and uneven power dynamics.

Conor, a Doric-speaking ship engineer, for example, spoke of the vulnerability, intimacy and trust entailed in sincere or authentic relations across language barriers, drawing a comparison between encounters in which he was positioned with the authority of the 'native speaker' and in which he used his partial, less-than-fluent 'shipyard' Spanish:

> When I first got my heavy goods licence, I was driving a truck for one my dad's friends at home, and I went to pick up the truck, and there was four of us. It was a fish lorry, going to Thurso to load from a boat and one of the other drivers that was going was a Polish – I can't remember his name, but he was very quiet and quite shy, and Mark, the guy that owned the truck, said – I think it might have been Igor – 'This is Igor. Igor, this is Conor'. And he says, 'Igor, go on then, say it. Go on, say it. […] Just say it, I told you, it'll be fine.' So the Polish guy turned to me and he went, 'fit like the day?' [laughs], which is like, 'how are you?'. 'Fit like the day!' […] I was like, that's brilliant! You know, not only is he learning English, he's learning bits of Doric as well! […] I was just like 'aye, nae bad yersel? Guid on ye fer makin the effort', you know. Again, that's maybe a bit like me being in the Spanish shipyard tryna make an effort to fit in and to, you know, be respected and try and be included. I like that kinda interaction. It can be fraught with embarrassment and aw, I don't wanna get it wrong or sound like an idiot…

In both less-than-fluent encounters Conor describes here, 'authenticity' lies not in a sense of essential, closed or static 'origins', but in the sincere desire to, through language, 'fit in' and 'be included', to *belong* and *participate* in a relational place which extends beyond the typically imagined territorial reach of a language. A shipyard in La Coruña and the cab of a fish lorry emerge as sites of Cavarero's 'absolute local': 'not a nation, nor a fatherland, nor a land', but 'a relational space that happens with the event of this communication and, together with it, disappears' (2005: 204–205). In these instances of vulnerable, 'fraught with embarrassment' translingual communication, authenticity is a characteristic of the translational agencies propelling the encounter, with the 'meaning [of] what one said' (Jones & Royles 2020: 1096) necessarily lying in the *relation* between interlocuters. These are not the territorialising claims of a 'voice from *everywhere*' – extrapolated to allegedly represent all Doric, Spanish, Polish or Shipyard speech – but simply the expression of a 'voice from somewhere', with that local somewhere understood as existing in translation, as 'an ever-shifting constellation of trajectories' (Massey 2005: 151) and relations.

This understanding of linguistic authenticity as deeply place-based while not place-bound (Amin 2004; Massey 1995), as driven by multiple, sometimes conflicting, languaging agencies, also offers a means of exploring sociolinguists Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouk's

(2005: 198) question of whether place itself can 'be seen as constitutive and agentive in organizing patterns of multilingualism'. Several participants in this research spoke of how living in the Outer Hebrides had inspired or galvanised a desire to learn Gaelic. Helga, a Swedish-speaker in Uist, for example, told me she felt she should improve her Gaelic out of 'a sense of justice [because of the] past injustices that have happened here'.[53] An 'authentic relation to language as a project' (Woolard 2016: 36) thus figures as part of a commitment to place, participation in local collective memory practices and the performance of localness as outlined in Chapter 5. Similarly, Judith, a German woman living in Benbecula, in a WhatsApp voice note sent to me after our interview, described the emotional impact of reading a book about destitute Gaelic speakers being cleared off Barra and transported to Australia, and watching a documentary about the determination of the last remaining inhabitant of Eorisdale, the southern-most settlement on Vatersay, to stay in his home in the 1970s. She came to the word 'honest' to describe how this felt:

> [It] really got to me, and for the first time in a while, for some reason that triggered in me the urge that I want to make another effort, a proper effort at learning Gaelic. Because I kind of felt like, even though it's a while ago, not as long ago as you would hope, but even though it was a while ago, I found it so horrible, […] I actually almost started crying. […] It felt really honest to me**.** Maybe that's the right word. It felt *honest* and open and it was really beautiful. And the combination of these two things that I saw-slash-read, made me more determined to try my hand on the Gaelic again.

The emphasis once again is placed on the 'honesty', 'openness', 'sincerity' of one's relation, through language to place, its histories and the multiple agencies and relations that continue to (re)shape it. Which histories, agencies and relations one is 'honest', 'sincere' or 'authentic' to, is, of course, a question of the ongoing and contingent negotiation of social meaning and the cultural politics of place – a question to which I will return below. The point here is that conceptually expanding notions of linguistic 'authenticity' to include multiscalar, relational expressions of 'localized sincerities' (Jones & Royles 2020: 1103) allow it to be conceived of as an act of entering into the relations that make place 'in good faith', with intentionality, respect and 'responsibility' (Massey 2004). This agential focus gives greater scope for conceiving 'authentic' relations between place and language at the site of the 'absolute local' not only beyond 'nativeness', but also even beyond fluency. Aleena, for example, described the early stages of refugee resettlement in Stornoway and her less-than-fluent interactions in English:

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[53] As discussed in Chapter 2, 'what happened to people here' and what happened 'where they went' (Ezeji 2021: 234) are very unevenly remembered, with the result that Gaelic figures as the language to learn 'out of a sense of justice', rather than, say, Aleena's Arabic, or even, for instance, Bungi (Blain 1994, Stobie 2010), a creole spoken by Scottish Red River Métis in Canada and influenced by multiple dialects of Cree, English, French, Gaelic, Orcadian, Ojibwe and Scots.

> 'I know what you mean' – here, they say it to us all the time. 'OK, it's not properly, properly correct, it's not correct one hundred per cent, but I know what you mean'. [laughs] So you feel OK, 'phew'! [exhales/laughs] They understand me!

Once again, we see a version of linguistic authenticity as an agentive relation, in which 'meaning what one said within particular social situations' (Jones & Royles 2020: 1096) is trusted to be sincerely, intersubjectively negotiated in particular embodied, relational and place-based contexts, rather than as an abstract characteristic of rational, devocalised (Cavarero 2005) and 'properly, properly correct' forms of language as naturally the 'authentic' property of legitimate or native speakers. Such a revocalised view of linguistic authenticity, with its emphasis on the embodied relationality of adopting 'a voice from somewhere', can therefore offer a means of narrating against the nativist language ideologies of the monolingual paradigm (Yildiz 2012), but, crucially, without denying the often highly embodied and emotional relation between language(s) and place.

In all the instances of revocalised authenticity discussed so far, the relation between language, place and (in)authenticity or (in)sincerity is embodied and affective – from the 'rage' of the 'Lewis ladies' at the lack of representation of their dialect, to the acute sadness and sense of injustice propelling Judith's desire to improve her Gaelic ('I almost started crying') to Aleena's relief ('phew!') at having been understood. Liam's excitement at the thought of learning the local Gaelic of North Uist was echoed by Hanna's discussion of the 'mystery' and 'wonder' of learning Gaelic: 'it's almost like these curtains are kind of pulled back, and all of a sudden you understand a place much better when you know the language'. Conor's delight at his Polish co-worker greeting him in Doric was reflected in numerous other instances in which 'unexpected' linguistic encounters were met with gleeful laughter – Annie, for example, a volunteer befriender for refugees in Stornoway, recounted how she 'fell about laughing' when her Syrian friend first greeted her with a cheery 'feasgar math!'. Conor's acknowledgement of the vulnerability of multilingual encounter, of how it can be 'fraught with embarrassment', was echoed by Imogen, a retired languages teacher, describing her first attempts to speak Greek on holiday: 'I was like a rabbit in the headlights when somebody would then speak to me, like "oh my goodness, I can't speak!"'.

In Chapter 8, I return to these feelings of linguistic authenticity, sincerity or honesty as a useful resource for understanding the embodied relationship between language and place within, against and beyond the nativist language ideologies 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012), arguing that the phenomenological experience of (linguistic) 'authenticity' can be pluralised. Here, it has primarily been my aim to introduce how notions of linguistic authenticity participate in the ongoing negotiation of social meaning and the cultural politics of place, to show how speakers embody notions of 'authenticity' not merely to index certain places as

'origins', but as part of the ongoing negotiation and rescaling of the meaning of these places, encounters and relations. The following section continues this analysis through attending to struggles for linguistic authority and legitimacy through contrasting ideologies of 'anonymity' as authenticity's opposite 'pole on an axis of linguistic differentiation' (Woolard 2016: 22, citing Gal 2012). This discussion proceeds keeping in mind the tensions between 'locals', 'incomers' and 'flybys' and the geographies of uneven (im)mobility discussed Chapter 5, with a view to then considering the politics by which these relations might become territorialised or closed into 'nativeness'.

6.1.2. 'A voice from nowhere': authority and anonymity

Foregrounding multiple, sometimes conflicting, speaker agencies in revocalised articulations of linguistic authenticity allows for greater scope for engaging with the dynamic role of language(s) in the cultural politics of place. Above, I alluded to this in my discussion of place itself as 'constitutive and agentive in organizing patterns of multilingualism' (Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouk 2005: 198), especially with regards to Gaelic and the memory politics of the Highland Clearances. Here, I turn to how the contrasting language ideology of 'anonymity', a 'voice from nowhere', is deployed in the political processes of remaking and rescaling place.

As outlined above and in Chapter 4, language planning efforts to standardise Gaelic and develop 'new', 'anonymous' terms for use as a 'national language' across Scotland has led to a divide among Gaelic speakers that maps closely onto socioeconomic class, generational shifts, and the structure of rural belonging and localness. As mentioned above, this situation has been described as verging on diglossia (Birnie 2022; Smith-Christmas & Ó hIfearnáin 2015). I was frequently told of considerable proportions of Gaelic speakers being unable to understand the 'Gaelic from nowhere' that has been consciously developed for the 'prestigious' domains of media, government, education and administration. Dàibhidh, a young Gaelic speaker with competence in both vernacular 'village Gaelic' and the standardised Gaelic of 'more of an academic setting', explained:

> You get a lot of people who want to ensure that the language is pure and not polluted by English. So they're introducing terms that can be used in Gaelic Medium Education, terms that […] a certain section of the speaker community have not been consulted on, won't understand because they haven't been to Gaelic Medium Education, and then feel disenfranchised and feel like they have poor Gaelic, because they're not following the news, they're not following documentaries on a channel that was set up to serve their needs, BBC ALBA.

As Dàibhidh mentions, education plays a key role in shaping these generational divides, with older speakers who did not attend GME most prominently, though not exclusively,[54] complaining of not being able to understand 'new Gaelic'. Given the relationship between Gaelic education and 'the professionalised language and media sector' (Maclean 2019: 255), GME also shapes divisions among Gaelic speakers along lines of class: an anonymous participant told me of their decision to enrol their son in GME partly because 'he'[d] be with those nice Gaelic mediums [who] tended to come from these nice middle-class families who had invested in their education', while another, offended, told me of a colleague who had had a meeting with the Scottish Qualification Authority in Glasgow discussing teaching materials for Higher Gaelic, in which 'one of the city-based teachers' had commented, 'we can't have too much of a whiff of the croft about it though!'.

Evident in these accounts of Gaelic diglossia is how the 'Catherine Wheel' model of reversing language shift (Strubel 1996, 1998) – whereby creating opportunities to use a minoritised language in anonymous, 'prestigious' contexts is believed to increase its status and economic value and therefore attract new speakers – does little to challenge these assumptions and structures of linguistic prestige themselves. Conceivable as the trickle-down economics of language planning, in creating opportunities for a certain type of anonymous Gaelic to be used in an office or 'nice middle-class' environments, it does not dismantle structures of uneven power whereby forms of the language marked by 'the whiff of the croft' are accorded less value and thereby minoritised. In addition to overlooking 'prestige' domains in which higher registers have long been used in Gaelic-speaking communities (most obviously, the church, as I discuss further in Chapter 8), the approach also fails to adequately account for feelings of shame still experienced by a generation of Gaelic speakers who were, if not physically beaten for speaking Gaelic, then told in no uncertain terms it had no value and would only 'hold them back'. For many of these speakers, not understanding 'anonymous' Gaelic neologisms in BBC interviews about, say, inflation rates, is experienced as a sort of double alienation. Reminiscent of Catherine, whose Gaelic lessons I discussed in the previous subsection, reaching for 'the Gaelic' for a Leòdhasach word, Dàibhidh described the effects of this as a sort of disenfranchisement from the very notion of 'Gaelic' itself. In reference to his grandmother, he explained,

> I went to her and I asked her, I said, 'well, what's, what word did you use for 'fur' again?' 'Calach'. I was like, 'oh, I didn't see that word in the dictionary,' and she said, 'oh, well, maybe it's a Lewis word or maybe I made it up, I don't know', and I was just like, for me, it's such a shame that, erm,

[54] Rowan, for example, the young Gaelic speaker quoted at the beginning of the previous subsection, who attended GME and now uses Gaelic professionally in her career, recalled attempting to answer the 2021 census in Gaelic, but being unable to understand 'all those buzzwordy, you know, er, I don't know if it's political per se, but kind of, very super specific to the census words' that had 'probably [been] made up for, or translated specifically for that thing'.

> she doesn't feel like she has agency with her native language, with her first language. And so to some extent, I'm trying to re-enfranchise that group when I use the word 'native'. I'm trying to give them that authority back that I think, erm, they should feel that they have, even though I don't feel as though they should feel as though they have it over others.

I will further discuss the proposal of 'native' as 're-enfranchisement' in the following section. First, I note that what Dàibhidh is suggesting here is explicitly *not* the essentialisation of linguistic power and legitimacy in bounded or static notions of 'the native speaker' – 'I don't feel as though they should feel as though they have it over others' – as these tensions have been caricatured (see Chapter 4 and below). Rather, as we saw above with the stretching and negotiation of linguistic 'authenticity', he advocates for its circulation across different domains, places and speakers. Eilidh, a Gaelic speaker working in higher education and living in Lewis, echoed this sentiment, moving against the assumptions underlying the Catherine Wheel model of language shift that would accord 'prestigious' forms of language used in white-collar contexts greater value:

> My mother is 82 and she has better Gaelic than I have, which is what you would expect the older generation to do, but she will quite regularly have to ask me, she'll say 'I heard such and such on the radio this morning, what does that mean? What on earth does that mean?' And I'll know it and she won't, not because my Gaelic's better, but because I'm more exposed to that kind of Gaelic, the new Gaelic and that terminology and stuff as well.

Instead, she beautifully described relations between Gaelic speakers across generations and professional backgrounds as like 'a currency, [a] sort of trade':

> [When] the Scottish Parliament opened and Gaelic was adopted as one of its languages, they published the parliamentary dictionary. So there was that recognition that we do need a Gaelic for things like 'Standing Committee' and 'Private Members Bill' and all that kind of stuff. And all that was alien to her. Whereas if I want to know, you know, the Gaelic for a navigational term or a peat iron or something of that order, I would have gone to my father or herself or someone of that generation. And there are still people around that I, kind of, I'll ask those, if it's crofting terminology or something, you ask. But whereas if it's – in fact that friend I was talking about, he's a crofter and he's older, I might ask him, you know, 'what would be the Gaelic for such and such a term'. But equally, he's involved in things so he might phone me because he's going to be phoned on the radio about crofting, and it'll be something to do with the legislative side of crofting, and he'll phone me and he'll say, 'how do I say this', or 'what's the Gaelic for that'. It's quite an interesting – it's exactly the same thing as with my mother: we're exchanging their old Gaelic for my new Gaelic.

Relations between 'old Gaelic' and 'new Gaelic' become fraught when the circulation of linguistic authority is not approached with the sort of mutual respect, sincerity or 'responsibility' (Massey 2004) evident in this account and in the instances of linguistic authenticity discussed earlier in the chapter. This becomes especially strained when transposed onto the tensions between 'locals', 'incomers' and 'flybys' discussed in Chapter

5. The following example from Dàibhidh, which he described as 'extreme but not unusual', speaks to the apprehension felt by many 'village Gaelic' speakers towards the valorisation of anonymous, Gaelic 'from nowhere'. He described an interaction with a Gaelic speaking man from England, working in a prominent position in the 'professionalised language and media sector' (Maclean 2019: 255) in the central belt of Scotland:

> My granny will say, 'aig deireadh an latha' – 'at the end of the day', […] and I said 'aig deireadh an latha', and he turned to me and he said 'och, 's e beurlachas a tha sin' – 'that's an Anglicism'. […] and I said, 'well, that's what they say in Lewis, that's just what they say'. And he went, '[scoffs], *this* is why, *this* is why Gaelic is dying!'. I was like, 'oh, *that's* why Gaelic is dying? Oh, it's not lack of institutional support, it's not hostility from public discourses, it's not lack of funding, it's not, you know, neoliberal policies or socioeconomic developments that are pushing people out of their homes, it's […] English calques' […] And he's never lived in the Gàidhealtachd, he's never lived in the islands, and erm, I just, used to think like, it's such a superficial engagement with Gaelic that you don't really know idiomatic phraseology and you don't really know how it's used in some of these communities but you still feel like you are above it, and better than it […] I think he's an extreme example but not an unusual example of an L2 speaker coming in and trying to purify the Gaelic language, […] who's never been on the islands for longer than [voice gets angry] a week at a time, a handful of times in his life.

This complicates the seemingly straightforward proposal set out at the beginning of this chapter of a 'general equation of Gaelic with "local" and English with "incomer"' (McEwan-Fujita 2010: 46). Rather, the primary tension staged in this anecdote, recalling Chapter 5's analysis of the performance of localness, is between people who '*have* lived' in the Hebrides – not always, not forever, people at various points along the incomer–local spectrum – and have a respect for local language as embodied and emplaced ('that's just what they say in Lewis'), and 'flybys' who are never on the islands 'for longer than a week at a time' and who are understood as complicit in 'socioeconomic developments that are pushing people out of their homes'. Dàibhidh spoke at some length about this interaction – he seemed quite upset by it – and I don't believe he was setting up a simplistic or essentialised opposition between 'new' speakers and 'native' speakers. Rather, he offered this 'extreme but not unusual example' to illustrate the tensions that can exist between the two groups, relate them to the uneven (im)mobilities shaping rural belonging, and to emphasise the need for places that can facilitate 'sincere' or 'good faith' relations between speakers of various different forms and levels of Gaelic. I return to this in Chapter 8. In short, Gaelic certainly contributes to the 'performance of localness', but only insofar as it signals a 'sincere', 'authentic' or 'responsible' entering into the cultural politics of place. This is a decidedly anti-abstractionist account of the relation between language and place, offering neither 'an easy recourse to origins, nor […] a foolproof anti-essentialism', but rather 'forc[ing] us to articulate discourses of cultural and political linkage only through and across difference in full view of the risks of that endeavor' (Edwards 2003: 13).

Before considering more explicitly 'the risks of that endeavour' through an exploration of the territorialisation of these tensions through ideologies of nativeness, it is first important to note that the relationship between 'from somewhere' authenticity – especially when conceptually expanded as argued for above – and anonymity 'from nowhere' is not clear cut. Conor, for instance, a Doric-speaking engineer, described consciously 'neutralising' his speech when working with multilingual crews at sea, subduing linguistic place-markers and adopting a more 'anonymous' form of language precisely in order to enable 'authentic', sincere, honest, or as he put it, 'fair' relations in less-than-fluent contexts:

> I always felt when I was at sea as well, deep sea, […] I felt I had no choice. You know, I really, it wasn't fair to put people in a position where they wouldn't understand me, so I would make a real effort to sort of talk Proper English, you know, really make an effort to make sure they understood what I was saying. Cos I've been on the receiving end of that, and, 'sorry, what was that?', cos it can be frustrating and you don't wanna upset people.

It is noteworthy here that Conor stresses the 'fairness' driving his linguistic choices, evidencing a keen awareness of the uneven power dynamics structuring less-than-fluent relations and the vulnerability of moments of incomprehension. While feeling as though he 'had no choice', as a multilingual subject with, as he put it, 'probably half a dozen versions of the way I've learned to talk or conduct myself as far as language goes', in this instance, he did have the power to make himself understood or not, but power is not the same as brutality, and he consciously 'really made an effort' to enter into this relation in a way he understood to be 'fair', that would enable 'authentic' or 'sincere' relations. In a similar vein, he described how the ability to deploy a 'neutral' or 'anonymous' lingua franca – typically on the British flag ships he was working on, standardised 'Proper English' – and translate between 'voices from somewhere(s)' and 'voices from nowhere' in the highly multilingual maritime contexts fed into 'tiered' structures of power and authority:

> You always had like, say on the crew side of things, the Filipino deck crew and say, like, some of the assistant engineers, there would always be one or two of them who would be, not singled out, but their English would be a level above. So they'd immediately become, like, a intermediate boss type thing. So the jobs might be delegated to them and they'd keep the rest of the guys informed in their native tongue, so there's like a step there, you know. So you're talking to some of them in English and the rest are getting their, be it, Indian, whatever dialect, or Filipino. […] I was never on a ship where that never happened. You know, like the engine room fitter for example was always in charge of the engine room crew, he was like the boss there. The bosun on deck, he would be in charge of the ABs,[55] and again, they would mostly talk among themselves in their native tongue. They could all get, they all had some measure of English, but, so there was like a tiered kind of, you know, various levels of who could talk English at what level or whatever.

[55] Able-bodied Seamen.

It is clear in this account that it is not *either* an 'authentic' mode of language 'from somewhere' *or* an 'anonymous' lingua franca 'from nowhere' that wields greater or lesser linguistic authority, but rather the ability to translate between them, to situationally inflect one's way of speaking to encode various degrees, multiple orientations and intersecting scales of emplacedness. While in the context of highly structured power relations on a ship, translational labour carried the power of becoming a sort of 'an intermediate boss', also in contexts where there is less of an obvious or institutionalised 'tiered' power structure, the ability to translate oneself into different places and situations modulated speakers' access into the politics of place. Alice, a bilingual Swedish-English speaker living in Uist, for instance, recounted more or less consciously shifting from using an 'anonymous' mode of English 'where you couldn't tell' where she was from, to a way of speaking that encoded 'from somewhere' 'foreignness', aligning herself with narratives of Scottishness as set against particular notions of Englishness through orienting towards 'the foreign' (see Chapters 2 and 4):

> When I was in England, I sounded super English, to the point where you couldn't tell. And then I got to Glasgow and I was like, it's not such a nice thing sounding really English when you're in Scotland! [laughs] People are a bit more accepting if you sound foreign rather than English, which is hilarious!

Linguistic authority, like other structures of power, is shifting. It can be manipulated as parts of moves to border or territorialise (as, for instance, in Dàibhidh's angry account of efforts to 'purify Gaelic') or to de/reterritorialise (seen in the relational 'stretching' of linguistic authenticity in emergences of the 'absolute local' outlined above). Speakers variously deploy forms of language that encode multiple degrees, orientations and scales of 'authenticity' and 'anonymity' not merely to index places as 'origins', but in order to participate in the ongoing (re)construction and negotiation of the meanings of those places and relations. The next section takes a closer look at how, in the context of the uneven (im)mobilities and the tensions running through the performance of 'localness' described in Chapter 5, the contested relationships between language and place so far considered in this chapter can become territorialised – notably, through ideologies of 'nativeness' that, in the Outer Hebrides, are most prominently expressed as 'Gaelness'.

6.2. 'THAT ESSENTIALISING POWER, I THINK WE CAN RECLAIM IT'

In this section, I hope to advance polarised Gaelic sociolinguistics and language planning debates, as introduced in Chapter 4, through an interpretation of 'Gael' as a politicised identity that participants – 'native' and 'new' speakers of Gaelic alike (see also Dunmore 2019, 2021) – felt unevenly comfortable claiming.[56] Several participants – notably younger, female Gaelic

[56] For this reason, several of the participants quoted in this section will be kept anonymous.

speakers – when asked if they felt themselves to be or would describe themselves as 'Gaels', tightened their lips, drew a breath and cautiously hedged, 'that wouldn't be my first word', or 'I've not used the term before', explaining that they would sooner identify with terms such as 'Uisteach' or 'islander'. Rowan joked, 'it's just not a term I would use to describe myself, not on my Insta bio! [laughs]'. Others, meanwhile, marshalled 'Gaelness' or 'nativeness' as an expressly political project, a form of territorialising the contested politics of place outlined in the first half of this chapter. Recall Dàibhidh, for instance, quoted above, discussing 'nativeness' as an explicit 're-enfranchisement' or 'giving authority back' to a particular group of Gaelic-speakers. He continued, slipping between the terms 'Gael' and 'native speaker' and alluding to the highly contentious and polarised debates around 'Gaelness' first introduced in Chapter 4:

> I think that there has to be a certain openness from some people who, erm, can actually help to take away the aggression that can still exist with that word ['Gael'], like, for example, L2 academics in the Lowlands, who are just really against the word and not open to ever using – it's not going away. […] But certainly, in the islands, the word is not as dirty as they make it out to be. […] I feel like, 'native speaker', when used sensitively, can help us to understand the diversity within the Gaelic speaking community. […] I think we should take the power of the word 'native' in a way. You know, that essentialist, that essentialising power, I think we can reclaim it. A bit like the word 'queer', you can reclaim it, because, I don't think it's going anywhere. It's not going anywhere, you can't stop people from using it.

His firm emphasis on the 'stickiness' of the term, that it's 'not going away', recalls the argument I introduced in Chapter 2: that certain language ideologies, despite their potential for enduring, exclusionary 'aggression', persist because they 'encode needs and longings which will not simply evaporate at the touch of tough-minded analysis' (Eagleton 2009: 90, cited in Tomaney 2013: 668). Here, while stressing just as firmly that there is a need for 'ongoing work […] to take the sting out of that word', Dàibhidh proposes 'native' and 'Gael' as forms of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1988), territorialisations to appropriate space for the political project of minoritised language survival. The terms are manoeuvred as a means to meet place-based but by no means homogenous or static 'needs and longings' that are shaped by class, generation and the structure of rural belonging, and amplified by perceptions of the decline of Gaelic in rural communities.

As with all territorialisations, this was far from uncontroversial or uncontested. An anonymous, older, 'native' Gaelic speaker became quite angry when discussing this agential form of political identification with the term 'Gael'. In decidedly stronger terms than the cautious avoidance described at the beginning of this section, she explained:

> I never grew up hearing that. You know, people saying that you were a 'Gàidheal' or you were 'Gàidhealach'[57] or, you know… You didn't have to. You didn't have to do that. You knew what you were. You were an islander. You were a Gaelic speaker. You didn't have to put yourself in that box until you left. […] That's become, that's a term that's reasonably new in my lifetime, I'd say. […] I'm

[57] Adjective form – translatable as 'Gaelish'.

> confused why do they need to have that label? Is it an academic thing? […] I sometimes feel, might be controversial, but I think sometimes because the language is in such decline that maybe a lot of learners think, feel that they're saving us? And I feel we're bullied into agreeing to quite a lot of nonsense! [laughs] It has to be anonymous that bit!

Despite this participant's strong aversion to term 'Gael', the same motors of territorialisation emerge: uneven geographies of (im)mobility ('you didn't have to put yourself in that box until you left'), a class-related 'academicisation' or institutionalisation of Gaelic ('is it an academic thing?'), uneven power dynamics between different groups of speakers ('bullied into agreeing…') and the phenomenological, lived experience of ongoing language minoritisation ('the language is in such decline'). While the term is angrily dismissed as 'nonsense' – and tellingly attributed to (a stereotypical view of) the group the term is supposed to exclude, 'learners' or L2 speakers – it is still acknowledged as a political 'label' that draws on the uneven geographies of (im)mobility and remoteness and the structure of rural belonging as outlined in Chapter 5.

This territorialisation became more explicit when it came to the related question of defining the 'Gàidhealtachd' as the 'place of the Gaels'. As I was interviewing during the summer of 2022, the Scottish Government was seeking consultation responses about proposals to explore the creation of a formal Gàidhealtachd area (SG 2022a, see also Chapter 4). Seòras, a young Gaelic speaker in Uist, explained his support for the proposals, evidencing a clear sense of this 'territory' as 'produced as overlapping and entangled in the process of appropriating space for political projects' (Halvorsen 2019: 795):

> They've got a consultation at the moment, you may have seen, where they're talking about a Gàidhealtachd area. While there are I guess lots of concerns about that, I'm very excited about that prospect because I see it as sort of being a, like a, how would you describe it, it's like a mechanism to enable us then to have a lot more transformational change on all these other aspects such as housing and healthcare and jobs and so on – having that area designation would allow us to then have other policies in other areas that would have a positive impact on the language.

As with Dàibhidh's call above to 'reclaim' the label of 'Gael', the argument for a territorially defined 'Gàidhealtachd' here does not imply an unquestioned sense of essentialist ethnocentricism, but rather is advocated for as an explicitly imperfect political 'mechanism' for more embodied and emplaced language policies that are scaled towards a sense of the 'local', as opposed to a policy momentum towards scaling Gaelic as 'belonging to Scotland' (BnG 2018: 6) or as a 'national European language' (Armstrong *et al.* 2022: 75), as critiqued in Chapter 4. Problems with the specific policy areas he lists – housing, healthcare and jobs – are directly related to geographies of rural depopulation, and the 'Gàidhealtachd' is offered as a territorialisation, a rescaling of power to address them.

Again, as an 'anti-abstractionist' account of the relationship between language, place and territory, this is, of course, far from uncontentious, uncontroversial or 'risk-free' (Edwards

2003). Advocates of 'Gael' and 'Gàidhealtachd' as territorialisations of the places, (im)mobilities and relations described in the last two chapters themselves often recognised the danger of these being used in exclusionist, absolutist ways – consider Dàibhidh's caution about the need to 'sensitively' work through and undo the 'aggression' with which 'Gael' can be used, or Seòras's acknowledgement of the concerns around the delineation of the Gàidhealtachd (see also discussion of his nuanced reflections on 'Gael' below). One Gaelic-speaking 'incomer' to Uist, for instance, spoke of a naturalistic operalisation of 'Gael' as an autochthonous, ancestry-based identity that is primarily 'inherited' or 'naturally' given through birth:

> I think when you, if you're coming into the space, you will always just have that tag, and it's not necessarily a negative tag, but you'll always be a 'non-native' in some sense and the, kind of, way that I've maybe conceptualised it over the years, and this is just personal, this is not something that I've widely discussed with other people, but my observation would be that […] you probably wouldn't necessarily be considered a Gael, even if you had Gaelic, in the traditional Gaelic speaking communities, because I think it is a bit more of an identity that is also based on your origin or ancestry and things. Or at the very least, the place of your birth, or at least one parent. It's not like you have to be some kind of mythical pure breed, but just you know, have that connection to a place. […] I wouldn't consider myself a Gael, ever probably. I think if some really well-respected member of the community, kind of, referred to me as such, maybe I would reconsider that position, but I would not call myself that.

Such operalisations of 'Gaelness' – which this participant clearly felt ambiguous about – as a primarily ancestry- or inheritance-based identity are the biggest red flag for its opponents (Armstrong *et al*. 2022), for whom it runs disconcertingly close to the colonial 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012) of discretely bounded languages that can be authoritatively deployed, authentically possessed and legitimately inherited exclusively by racialised 'native speakers' (see Chapter 2). Without dismissing the importance of these concerns (they are considered in greater depth below and in Chapter 7), it is here, however, worth remembering that minority language geographies are 'rarely rehearsals on a smaller scale of majority language dynamics' but rather 'generate ironies, predicaments, and innovations that need to be appreciated in their full complexity' (Urla *et al*. 2018: 43). In this particular context, the 'ancestry-based' operalisation of 'Gael' could be considered in light of the 'performance of localness' discussed in Chapter 5: this participant's qualification, for example, that 'it's not like you have to be some kind of mythical pure breed but just, you know, have that connection to a place' resonates with the logic of sloinnidhean and the explicit articulation of roots/routes as a means of embedding and emplacing oneself within dense networks of social interrelation and collective memory that are shaped by geographies of deeply uneven (im)mobility – something also evident in this participant's understanding of 'nativeness' and 'non-nativeness' as related to the dynamics of 'coming into the space'.

The deeply uneven power dynamics coursing through the identity politics of 'Gaelness' or 'nativeness' – the awareness that, as the same participant put it, 'there's not, like, a clear and definite answer' to 'who is a Gael, who are The Gaels', but some people's claims to it hold more sway – was also evident in a fascinating, self-described 'monster thread' on Twitter from Soillse academic Mark McConville (2022), who in response to the barbed series of ripostes and rejoinders in the pages of *Scottish Affairs*, described in Chapter 4, provocatively proposed a division between 'cisGaels' with a claim to 'nativeness' and 'transGaels', without 'recent Gaelic ancestry'. While disagreeing with the terms on which McConville advances this metaphor, along with several of his asides,[58] I find the analogy to gender here an interesting one,[59] especially in light of my argument for understanding 'Gaelness' as a territorialisation of the intersectionally disciplined performance of localness. While this line of argument might attract accusations of 'postmodernist individualism' (Ó Giollagáin *et al*. 2020: 5), it is in fact a highly relational understanding of identity: 'Gaelness', like gender, 'exists, if it is to exist at all, only in the structural generosity of strangers' (Long Chu 2019: 38) – consider the above quoted participant, explaining 'I wouldn't consider myself a Gael […] [but] if some really well-respected member of the community, kind of, referred to me as such, maybe I would reconsider that position'. It is relational, and as such, structurally disciplined and (re)defined, (re)delineated, (re)territorialised in the contested processes of renegotiating the terms of those relations and 'appropriating space for political projects' (Halvorsen 2019: 795).

Getting to the heart of these debates, Seòras homed in on the spatial and scalar tensions tugging at this relationality. Recalling a recent intervention at a public discussion on Gaelic language policy, he emphasised the impossibility of separating self and structure, the futility of attempting to 'polarise' the different scales at which identity operates:

> When [the speaker] got up he just started with, 'I'm a Niseach, I'm a Leòdhasach, I'm an Albannach,[60] but I don't know if I'm a Gael' […] I find it interesting and [sighs] sort of concerning if there's such fear or, kind of, walking on eggshells around that term, 'Gael', by someone such as him who, you know, is just a hundred per cent islander, fluent native speaker and has got just a deep inheritance of the culture and the language and all of that. […] There is obviously a tension between the… kind of, yeah – it's where that word gets dragged, I guess. Because there's those that have the kind of

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58 In particular, I disagree with McConville's assertion that trans identities should accept 'resistance' from cis identities 'tactfully, diplomatically and deferentially'. I also take issue with his characterisation of 'anti-racism' as something specific to 'the cultural moment in which we are living' and reference to it as 'not remotely helpful'. Further, I do not share his centrist warning that 'academics should think twice before becoming politically active in the subject they specialise in'. I cite his arguments here not because I agree with them, but because I find the metaphor he uses to advance them interesting and generative for my own purposes.

59 While Dàibhidh's focus was specifically on language reclamation or reappropriation, we might recall here that he, too, reached to gender politics for an analogy in suggesting that 'native' or 'Gael' could be 'reclaimed' 'a bit like the word "queer"'.

60 Niseach: from/of the villages that comprise Nis (Ness). Leòdhasach: from/of Leòdhas (Lewis). Albannach: Scottish.

> macro-scale, national, civic place of the language, and so then the word attaches to just speakers, wherever – I'm not setting this up as a polarisation because it's anything except a polarisation because you can't polarise it and that's been the issue [laughs bitterly] – and then opposing that to a viewpoint that's then based on heritage.

The awkwardness, ambivalence and wariness towards the notion of 'Gaelness' here is understood as stemming from spatial and scalar tensions between various degrees of 'authentic', 'from somewhere' (Woolard 2016) 'localness' ('Niseach', 'Leòdhasach') and an 'everyman' (*ibid.*) anonymity represented by the 'macro-scale' of 'impeccably civic' (Keating 2009: 217) Scottish nationalism. This recalls both my spatial analysis of Scottish language policy in Chapter 4, and the discussion introduced in section 1.3 of Chapter 2 of the prickliness of 'ethnicity' in light of the multinational context and uneven memory of colonialism in the Outer Hebrides. As Seòras notes, as these scales cannot be polarised, and the crux of the debates around 'nativeness', recalling Charlotte Williams' (2007) discussion of race and ethnicity in rural Wales, is to where these contested notions of 'Gael(ic)ness' 'get dragged', if they (re)produce or disrupt larger scale structures of European (post)coloniality, racial capitalism and white supremacy. This discussion is continued in Chapter 7.

While operalisations of 'Gael(ic)ness' based exclusively on a narrow sense of 'ancestry' or 'origins' do indeed run uncomfortably close to the colonial, racialising language geographies set out in Chapter 2, in most cases, at least in my research, there was something rather more complicated going on, shaped by multiple, shifting relations and (im)mobilities at intersecting scales. 'Ethnicity', as Hall (2017: 134) notes, can appear 'both in its restricted, unified, closed, absolutist, defensive, and essentialist forms and as a "weave of differences" that is looser, more permeable, and more porous in character'. In this chapter, I have attempted to show how these two forms can antagonistically coexist as linguistic and cultural difference is continuously 'dragged' into the scalar politics of de/reterritorialisation. While ethnocentrist, racist, white supremacist mobilisations of ethnicity must indeed be fought against (see, for example, Hague, Giordano & Sebesta 2005; McCarthy & Hague 2004 on 'Celticness'), it is not enough to deconstruct or even refuse (Armstrong *et al*. 2022) any use of ethnic terms of difference. Rather, there is an ongoing need to carefully, flexibly, 'sincerely' *re*construct, since, as Dàibhidh so concisely put it, 'that essentialising power […], it's not going anywhere', but rather is readily harnessed by the powerful but by no means unassailable scripts of race and nation(alism). This spatial, scalar tension is the subject of the following chapter, in which I consider the interlocking scales to which the relations, (im)mobilities and de/reterritorialisations discussed in the past two chapters 'get dragged'. I will situate the (often quite self-referential and inward-looking) debates around 'nativeness' in a broader, 'macro-scale' geographical context of both racialised nation(alism), but also of the translocal 'weave of differences' of Outer Hebridean multiculturalism that might 'transrupt' it (Hesse 2000).

6.3. CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered how the uneven (im)mobilities and complex relations between 'locals', 'incomers' and 'flybys' discussed in Chapter 5 become de/reterritorialised, (re)scaled and drawn into the cultural politics of place through the linguistic ideologies of authenticity, anonymity and nativeness.

I first drew linguistic anthropology's (Gal & Woolard 2001; Woolard 2008, 2016) spatial metaphors for linguistic authenticity ('a voice from somewhere') and anonymity ('a voice from nowhere') into conversation with geographic attempts to rescale authenticity (Jones & Royles 2020; Taylor 2001). This led into my argument that language users translate between multiple forms of language that encode different degrees, orientations and scales of 'authenticity' and 'anonymity', not merely to index places as 'origins', but as part of the ongoing (re)construction of the meaning of those places and the relations that constitute them. I connected this relational, revocalised conceptualisation of 'authenticity' to moments of Cavarero's (2005) 'absolute local', arguing that it could offer a useful resource for pushing against the colonial 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012) but without jettisoning the embodied and emotional relationship between language and place. This discussion is continued in Chapter 8, which explores in greater depth the relationship between place, embodiment and meaning through considering particular sites or spaces in the Outer Hebrides that facilitate, preclude or modulate such revocalised, 'authentic' or 'sincere' encounters.

In the second half of the chapter, I turned attention to how the uneven (im)mobilities, tensions and relations shaping the 'performance of localness' become territorialised in the highly contested 'process of appropriating space for political projects' (Halvorsen 2019: 795). I argued that this happens in part through linguistic ideologies of 'nativeness', which in the Outer Hebrides is most frequently and controversially mobilised as 'Gaelness'. It is important to stress again that this use and understanding of 'Gael' as a political, territorialised identity is highly contested, far from homogenous, flat or universal. I once against adopted a feminist perspective to situate my proposal of understanding 'Gaelness' as a territorialisation of the 'performance of localness' in a multiscalar context, stressing the impossibility of separating the intersecting scales at which identity and the de/reterritorialisation thereof operates. This led to an argument that while it is important to narrate against where cultural and linguistic difference 'gets dragged' – namely, as the following chapter explores, into the 'fateful triangle' (Hall 2017) of race, ethnicity and nation – the terms used to describe notions of difference, identity and attachment cannot be simply deconstructed or critiqued away into a 'foolproof anti-essentialism' (Edwards 2003: 13). Rather, I suggested, to move towards 'reparative' geographies of the mother tongue, there is the need to engage in the harder political work of articulating

them ‘translationally’, formed only through and across difference, while still remaining vigilant to how they are contingently and contestedly mobilised in the scalar politics of de/reterritorialisation.

This is in part the aim of Chapter 7, which analytically ‘scales up’ the relations, (im)mobilties and de/reterritorialisations considered in these last two chapters. This ‘scaling up’ will also inevitably involve a collapsing of scale, as I critically situate encounters with and across linguistic and cultural difference in the Outer Hebrides as structured by but also potentially disruptive of geographies of race, nation and coloniality.

CHAPTER SEVEN

‘ON THE ISLANDS, IT WASN’T THERE’

RACE, NATION AND THE RURAL IDYLL

On an island in an island, just a sliver away from the Atlantic, stands squatly Scolpaig Tower. Built in the 1830s to provide employment to starving North Uist workers for the purpose of famine relief, the folly has more recently been adopted as the poster-monument for local opposition to plans to use the site for a rocket launching spaceport. ‘Spaceport 1’ is proposed by a public-private consortium that includes the local authority, the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the private military contractor, QinetiQ, who run the Ministry of Defence’s missile firing range on the neighbouring island of Benbecula, and Commercial Space Technologies Ltd (CST). In addition to warning of the ecological and environmental damage likely to be wrought by Spaceport 1, local objections also decry the encroaching militarisation of the Hebrides, urging the Council to remember its ‘responsibilities to the people of Ukraine and the free world’ (Friends of Scolpaig WWW) in view of the military links between CST and Russia. QinetiQ has also profited from the deployment of its military robots to wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Figure 8.1. Scolpaig Tower, by Anne Burgess, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9517271

In this stubby tower coalesce the complex geopolitics, longstanding entanglements between local and global and the 'historical palimpsest of racialised social and cultural relations' (Woods 2022: 317) that lie beneath the surface of 'idyllic' rural landscapes. This is the subject of the present chapter, which turns attention to how the various relations, (im)mobilities and territorialisations considered in the previous two chapters, far from being 'anodyne occurrences' (Featherstone 2017: 165), are instead complexly entangled with global structures of racial capitalism, nation(alism) and European (post)coloniality.

Picking up where Chapter 6 left off, I will interrogate the scalar politics by which localised articulations of identity and difference in the Outer Hebrides 'get dragged' into the 'fateful triangle' (Hall 2017) of race, ethnicity and nation. This aims to contribute to a geographical grounding of Cavarero's (2005) philosophy of (re)vocalisation, considering the embodied ways in which the 'absolute local' emerges in everyday contexts of *multi*lingualism, uneven or partial linguistic and cultural fluency and, especially, differential, racialised power relations. Adopting the theoretical lenses provided by the 'new ethnicities' paradigm, as introduced in section 2.1 of Chapter 2, I approach 'race' not as a static object, but rather as a relational 'series of events, happenings or encounters' (Nayak 2017: 296), attending in particular to the racialising implications of mis- or nonrecognition. In sitting with the ambiguities of 'ethnicity' as something that can appear 'both in its restricted, unified, closed, absolutist, defensive, and essentialist forms and as a "weave of differences" that is looser, more permeable, and more porous in character' (Hall 2017: 134), I hope to critically situate encounters with and across linguistic or cultural difference in the Outer Hebrides as structured by but also with the potential to 'transrupt' (Hesse 2000) larger scale structures of race, nation(alism) and coloniality. In addition to advancing sometimes rather inward-looking and circular debates about language ideologies of 'nativeness' or 'Gaelness' as discussed in Chapter 6, it is my hope that this approach will also contribute to a broader analysis of coloniality in engagements with rural multicultures (see Stead *et al.* 2023, and sections 1.3 and 2.2 of Chapter 2).

I will first offer a reminder of how encounters with and across difference in the Outer Hebrides are inflected by the contexts of multinationalism, narratives of Scottish exceptionalism and whitening discursive constructions of the 'rural idyll'. This discussion proceeds through reflections on three distinct 'moments' of racialisation that can be revealing as to how articulations of race, nation and ethnicity are modulated in and by the specific context of the Outer Hebrides. The second section of the chapter then considers how this particularly situated 'weave of differences' (Hall 2017: 134) might offer a useful resource for envisioning alternative forms of collective belonging, political community and solidarity characterised by embodied,

'anti-abstractionist' (Edwards 2003), translational forms of labour to produce and sustain transcultural solidarities or 'differences-in-relation'. Finally, in section 7.3, the chapter offers an empirical counterpart to the critical analysis of language policy first introduced in Chapter 4, demonstrating how the potential of these more translational, 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000), relations is somewhat neutralised by complacently 'post-racial' (Joseph 2018) articulations of Scottish nationalism and 'New Scots' integration policies.

7.1. SCOTTISH EXCEPTIONALISM AND THE RURAL IDYLL

Many of the participants in this research often reproduced – although, as we will see, not without significant nuance and complication – an exceptionalist narrative of 'impeccably civic' (Keating 2009) Scottish nationalism, introduced in Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis and analysed in greater depth by other authors elsewhere (for example, Davidson *et al.* 2018; Hopkins 2016; Meer 2015; Soband & hill 2022). The contested constructions of remoteness discussed in Chapter 5 were strategically mobilised in representations of the Hebrides as 'remote' from issues of race, racism and exclusive, xenophobic forms of nationalism. In Ahmed's account of moving to the Hebrides in the 1990s, for example, racism is clearly presented as of English, urban origin:

> You suddenly realise the contrast between, you know, English cities – I'm sure you're aware of, you know how some of the English cities are when you talk about racism – and even in Scotland, it's coming up to Glasgow area and so on. It's quite bad, it's getting to be quite bad. But on the islands, it wasn't, it wasn't there.

Nasrin, a Scottish-Pakistani woman, similarly reflected on perceived differences between her childhood in the Western Isles and that of her cousins in Glasgow, who she observed 'weren't able to just go out on the streets as much […] they'd as well witnessed a bit more racism and stuff like that in general.' Acknowledging that 'even' in the Hebrides, 'you're going to get underlining stuff, aren't you, sometimes, it's not all gonna be, like, roses…', she drew comparisons between her childhood in a more rural part of the islands and the more recent experiences of a South Asian family in Stornoway:

> I actually saw recently, […] their child's actually had a lot of racism in [a school in Stornoway] – really bad, horrific, and they're quite struggling with that now. But I've always thought Stornoway was a bit different […] Like, going to [school] in Stornoway is a whole different kind of ballgame.

In both instances, race and racism were recursively rhetorically distanced – primarily as 'English', then as metropolitan, existing only in 'more fabled global cities' (Valluvan 2019: 41) such as Glasgow; and in the final instance, in less-than-rural places on an intra-island scale,

namely – the town of Stornoway and 'Stornowegians'.[61] In this context, it becomes important to interrogate the 'tension *between* multinationalism and multiculturalism' (Meer 2015: 1479): to continue to challenge and qualify narratives of Scottish exceptionalism and the 'rural idyll', but with an eye to how they are lived-in, negotiated and reproduced by a range of different political actors at a range of different scales, rather than merely promulgated 'from above' by political elites. Homa, a refugee living in the Isle of Lewis, for instance, explained her and her family's decision to stay in Scotland by situating herself in an explicitly multinational context:

> I believe there are more support in Scotland. Also, it's my feeling, I cannot say that it's true, that Scotland, Scottish people are more kind than English people [laughs]. I'm in contact with some friends in England, in different cities, that they face a challenging time and a difficult time when they just arrived, just in the first week, they've faced people who are just, who hate migrants. They use bad words, even some of them they beat them, so that makes me to not go to England. […] This is much better than there! [laughs] I check about the support for the children also from education part, it's much better to stay in Scotland.

There are, in short, a range of vernacular meanings ascribed to narratives of Scottish exceptionalism, and, as I explore in greater detail below, by (re)articulating it phenomenologically, individuals do not necessarily reproduce it without qualification. As such, it is not my aim in this section to prove or disprove the existence of racism in the Outer Hebrides. Rather, I am interested in exploring the nonetheless racialising effects and implications of this 'displacement, deflection and disengagement' (Hopkins 2016) from race, to consider how racialisation works in what are, through this recursive distancing, perceived and reproduced as 'predominantly white preserves' (Nayak 2017: 291). As Daniel Burdsey (2016: 11) has written of small towns and villages along the southern English coast, it is precisely the 'systematic or subconscious expurgation of its presence and effects from popular narratives that make the manifestations and repercussion of race at the English seaside so significant'. A similar dynamic is at play in the Outer Hebrides, where various material inequalities and signifying processes coalesce in processes of racialisation that are inflected not only by narratives of Scottish exceptionalism, but also by particular performances of 'localness' and 'idyllic' rural belonging as outlined in Chapters 5 and 6. As evidenced in the above three accounts from Ahmed, Nasrin and Homa, this dual discursive 'absence' of race in rural Scotland is never simply an absence, but rather indicative of significant 'tensions between presence/absence' (Rose & Wylie 2006: 475, cited in Jones, Robinson & Turner 2012: 258; see also Jones 2012) that co-constitute each other to shape geographies of race and nation at multiple intersecting scales. Responding to this, in the rest of this section I hope to offer a preliminary, provisional, partial account of how 'the "floating signifier of race" is made intelligible' (Nayak 2017: 289, citing Hall 2002) in contexts of

[61] A neologism calquing 'Glaswegian', in gently teasing reference to Stornoway as the biggest town in the Western Isles.

Hebridean multiculturalism, focusing on three accounts of instances in which encounters with cultural and linguistic difference become racialised through non- or mis-recognition. The choice of the three 'moments' of racialisation included in this analysis has been informed by Stead *et al.*'s (2023: 5, original emphasis) assertion that, given the coloniality structuring rural placemaking in the Global North, such an endeavour requires 'simultaneously an analytical move towards [i.e. to interrogate], and also *away from* [i.e. to decentre] whiteness'.

7.1.1. Nasrin and (Hebridean-)Muslim-consciousness

Nasrin spoke generously about her childhood in the Hebrides and the emotionally complex 'big turning point' prompted by moving away from the islands as a young woman to study on the mainland:

> We are around a very white community [in the Outer Hebrides] – who did really appreciate our culture though, like there was, you know, my mum always wears her shalwar kameez, and my auntie and that, and people would always be like, 'oh this is lovely!' And they'd want to know more about culture, and we were very lucky because we had a big community in Stornoway, and so celebrations like Eid, […] there would be a really big gathering, so we were able to experience cultural celebrations. But then, as well. we're growing up with white Western friends, who are going to, who are not seeing it a lot. And I think at a point as well, you go through your like, you know – we'd watch Bollywood movies, if mum was on, they used to listen to Bollywood music – and the food as well, culturally the food is massive, so we grew up with Pakistani, with South Asian food, but I do feel because of the way that I was maybe, I maybe felt more Western? […] I think we were very, well, kind of, in a weird way I almost think protected, in a way, because we didn't get bouts of racism and this and that, I had a very good childhood growing up with friends and there was none of that.
>
> [It was only after moving to study at University on the mainland that] I realised how most people, the stereotypical view people had on, like, Muslims and Islam. […] It was anger as well, like, 'oh, this is what my family have gone through', of, like, having to put up with, or dealing with. I think then I just started looking at everything very different, and I was, like, I realised – that was a big turning point actually – because I realised there was people who would, I want to call it, like, soft racism, but you know, that way of people make jokes culturally […] I think that was a big shift for me, in realising maybe what I'd kind of missed out on, but maybe just been a little bit blind in? And I think a big thing about that was because I grew up in this kind of bubble in [the Hebrides].'

She explained how becoming aware of the disjuncture between her fond memories of the 'bubble' of her Hebridean childhood and recognition of Islamophobia at a larger scale in young adulthood led to her actively, agentially 'trying to get identity as like, a West– a British Muslim, a Scottish Muslim' – an identification she continues to explore through her creative practice. Her move away from the Hebrides catalysed a sort of 'double consciousness' (Du Bois 1903; Gilroy 1993; Meer 2012), a complicated coming to a hyphenated, shifting, multiscalar identification with 'Muslimness', 'Pakistaniness', 'Westerness':

> It's not me thinking, 'I'm white', but I think because you grew up in such a white community, it's like, 'oh, I'm not really Pakistani', you know? […] I think that I was so in Western culture, and then you read stuff on, like, that the media would put out, and I think I would be like, 'oh, that doesn't really concern me', when it does, really, you know what I mean.

The experience of the patchy perception of race in the Hebrides – with some markers of cultural difference such as the shalwar kameez being visible or becoming intelligible through the lens of race within 'such a white community', but simultaneously, 'white Western friends […] not seeing it a lot', and Nasrin feeling as though her younger self before a form of Du Boisian 'second sight' (1903) was maybe in some way 'blind' to – collided with highly mediatised, Islamophobic, racialising representations of Muslim people orchestrated at a larger scale. Crucially, while this particular form of 'Muslim-consciousness' (Meer 2012), inflected by the rural logics of (in)visibility, familiarity and strangerness first introduced in Chapter 5, was expressed in primarily *reactive* terms, Nasrin also emphasised its more 'proactive' co-articulation with linguistic difference. She described, for instance, speaking Urdu as a deliberate way to 'kind of zone out from the kind of Western like society a wee bit', explaining that 'when I do speak Urdu it does make me feel more Muslim and Pakistani and more in my culture'. She also reflected on her relationship to Quranic Arabic, discussing the language not only as a 'technical' skill for various aspects of practising Islam, but as a more integral, fundamental part of maintaining her identity as a 'Pakistani, a Muslim woman, in general as a person of that ethnicity and culture':

> Now Ramadan's coming up, and I want to relearn [Arabic] with Dad. […] We don't speak Arabic, but I used to be able to read the Quran, I wouldn't be able to translate it, but I think that's something I would like to learn again. And it's more just for knowing? I think I've realised as well actually, as a Pakistani, a Muslim woman, in general as a person of that ethnicity and culture, like, you kind of like maybe should know it, anyway. Not like have to, it's not like you have to know it, I dunno, there's something inside me that's always a bit like, oh I wish, I want to bring that out more, I want to make sure the culture doesn't just go away and it doesn't get fully Westernised? I think that's really important.

Echoing Chapter 6's discussion of revocalised 'authenticity', for Nasrin the connection between language and subjectivity extended beyond arbitrary standards of 'fluency', evidencing instead a more embodied, phenomenological account of belonging in and through language:

> I love, one of the things when I'm back home around Ramadan time, or if it's Eid time, and you do the namāz, you do the prayer, […] I don't know what it translates to, because it's in Arabic […] but there feels something different about saying it in Arabic language, Arabic's so beautiful to listen to, and I love hearing it, […] it's such a therapeutic thing to hear, and even reading it, I always felt there was something so calming and therapeutic about hearing Arabic, or hearing someone, you know, they could be saying anything, but […] it has that kind of a song to it.

The co-articulation of religion and language here figures as a central channel for transcultural, diasporic belonging. Multiple degrees and orientations of multilingualism operate as a form of resilience to racialised geographies of public (Anglophone) monolingualism, a means of 'mak[ing] sure the culture doesn't just go away and […] get fully Westernised'. I will return to this in section 7.4 below. Here, I first note that Nasrin proceeded in 'trying to get identity' through the resources provided by narratives of nation, with narratives of Scottish exceptionalism and nostalgic constructions of the rural idyll *themselves* offering a partial means of potentially synthesising the disjunctures of racialised 'double-consciousness'. Expanding on

the complexities of a multiscalar identification as 'a West– a British Muslim, a Scottish Muslim', she explained that 'with the Scottish side, I look more at, like, my upbringing and my island influence':

> I feel like that's such a different thing. And I think because, when I talked about the bubble before, and I think in general, because with the islands, there's a whole big thing with the Gaelic, the cèilidhs, the music, everything, it's so different from when I moved away [to mainland Scotland]. […] But looking at it from a British viewpoint, because a lot of the [Islamophobic] articles as well would be England-based, and I think then, actually it's all connected, but I think if I was focusing more on the islands and that, I think it would be a more positive light if I was focusing just on, like, kind of, home, and I think it would be more scenic and stuff. I know there's that thing with Britain, but I think for some weird reason I've always separated it. I think of myself as Scottish-Pakistani, that's what I usually say, but I think with the British one, when I'm like 'oh, British-Pakistani', I think sometimes if I'm looking at something that's negative, I'm looking at it as a whole? Whereas because I didn't have a lot of that negativity when I was growing up, to me for when I was in [Hebridean island], and for what [Hebridean island] was at the time when I was younger, it's a bit more sacred.

In these reflections, Nasrin acknowledges the uncontainability of nation(alism) – that 'it's all connected', that there is a larger-scale 'whole' within which such identifications operate – and her account of Hebridean multiculturalism, while explicitly viewed 'in a positive light', is not entirely uncomplicated (remember her qualification, quoted above, that 'even' in the Hebrides, 'you're going to get underlining stuff, […] it's not all gonna be, like, roses…'). And yet, recalling Chapter 5's analysis of 'translocal tradition', her rescaling of Scottish-Pakistani identity through articulations of Hebridean cultural particularity – the 'bubble' of 'the Gaelic, the cèilidhs, the music', the 'sacredness' – is set against a 'liberal view of a so-called civic nationalism in which no cultural particularism is permitted to override the secular universal forms of citizenship in public' (Hall 2000: 415). Indeed, it is worth mentioning, on a final note, that Nasrin ended our conversation by voicing the desire for the 'proud, enduring hyphenation' (Levering Lewis 1993: cited in Meer 2019b: 59) of such a form of 'Hebridean-Muslim' consciousness to be more publicly recognised, rather than confined to the private, relatively less visible realm of the domestic:

> If it was Eid coming up, I'd want to make it a sort of a community thing, where you can have an event showing stuff where the community can get more involved. […] [If] people were doing, like, charity things, they'd ask my parents if they'd do a curry night, so my parents would make the curries for them and stuff like that, so that was really good, and they did, you know, we'd have people over at the house a lot to show them bits of the culture, and we were lucky in, like, doing that, but I think maybe that's something in the Western Isles that's missing, is being able to have [public] events that show maybe the community more of the colourful side of it.

I will return to the various public and private spaces of Hebridean multiculturalism – and their relation to rural constructions of 'strangerness' – in the following chapter. First, having here outlined how the patchy or lacking recognition of rural 'minority subjectivities and their transformative potential' (Meer 2019b: 59), provokes, in complex and contingent ways, a sort of

racialised 'double consciousness', in the following section I turn attention to how encounters with *mis*recognition were just as significant 'moments of racialisation'.

7.1.2. Homa and misrecognition

Several accounts in my research in the Western Isles echoed Michael Woods' (2022: 323) critique of the limits of 'rural cosmopolitanism' in Ireland and Wales, in which he observed something of a 'racialised tendency to see non-European cultures as undifferentiated entities'.[62] Homa, for example, spoke of her frustration at the homogenisation of diverse migrant groups, highlighting in particular how this often operates through gendered tropes of vulnerability that are central to 'good migrant' narratives (see later in this chapter and Shukla 2017):

> People don't know about the migrants, so if they see one or two families, they believe all other will be the same like them. Like, here, it was very surprising for them that we know the language. It was surprising for them that we are more open, open-minded. Still, after a year of living here, when I do an interview with someone, or I meet a new group of people, they are surprised that I'm talking in English and I can talk in English, and that I want to continue my studies, or I want to work. Because they believe whoever who is a refugee or asylum seekers, they don't know the language, they are just dependent on the government or they are illiterate, these kind of things. It's, it is in their mind before meeting someone new, so it's challenging. After a year, I'm trying more and more to know more people, to just change their minds about – when people here are different from each other, it's the same case about refugees and asylum seekers as well. They are different. Their backgrounds are different, their hope in future is different.

Again, linguistic difference here features as a key component of the racialisation of 'migrants', with Homa's account of presumptions of a lack of English proficiency – or even literacy – recalling raciolinguistic ideologies of 'languagelessness' (Rosa 2016) and language ontologies that are fundamentally entangled with the constructs of race, nation and epistemic privilege (Veronelli 2015). Homa further detailed how this racialising homogenisation of 'migrants' had led to her being misrecognised as an Arabic speaker, indicative of a wider Islamophobic tendency for racialised people in Europe to be misrecognised as Muslim or 'Arab' (El-Tayeb 2011; Hopkins *et al*. 2017; Modood, Triandafyllidou & Zapata-Barrero 2006; Rexhepi 2018):

> People were thinking that because we are [sic] in Afghanistan and we are Muslim so we know Arabic. But I don't know even one word!

More than betraying a 'lack of due respect', misrecognition can inflict 'real damage, real distortion' (Taylor 1994: 25–26). For Homa, this was exacerbated by the relative 'smallness' of Afghani-Hebridean communities. She explained that while it had been useful to speak with 'another [Syrian] refugee family than the people who are from here because the kind of problem that you have, you just share that problem with them, and it's similar to the problems that they

[62] The racial construction of 'European cultures' is discussed further in section 7.1.3 below.

faced when they arrived here',[63] she also missed the opportunity to be in community with people with whom she shared a closer cultural background:

> I was checking if another Afghan family comes here. It's just good. It's a kind of feeling that, er… I dunno. You feel you're back in Afghanistan. Sometimes I just miss the talk in Dari with someone. […] Sometimes you just need a support group, and we don't have that here. Like, Syrian families who's living there, a new family came just a month ago, so they are around 6-7 families. Together, they can do different things, they can meet up. Gathering or even a cultural activities, to just feel connected to your own country. With us it's difficult.

As with Nasrin's reflections on speaking Urdu as a way to 'kind of zone out from the kind of Western like society a wee bit' and 'feel more Muslim and Pakistani and more in my culture', here too, language – 'the talk in Dari' – figures as a crucial channel of resilience for a racialised consciousness that is 'benignly ignored or malignly coerced' (Meer 2019b: 59). I discuss this further below, and in Chapter 8 return to the question of (mis)recognition in considering the places in which such encounters occur. First, I conclude this section by stressing that countering the assumption of rural places in the Global North as 'already-constituted and imagined as white' (Stead *et al*. 2023: 2) requires Homa's feelings of isolation and the lack of a larger Afghan community in the Hebrides to be understood not as an unfortunate but in some way natural, unsurprising or unavoidable feature of the islands' 'remoteness', but rather as implicated in a global context of racial capitalism, (post)coloniality and evolving geopolitical tensions.

7.1.3. Ricky, Europe and 'whiteness'.

The resettlement of Afghan refugees after the Taliban takeover in 2021, while already patchy and inadequate (House of Commons Defence Committee 2018; IRC 2023; Refugee Council 2023), was made even more so by the more or less explicit prioritisation of refugees fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. During my first visit to the Outer Hebrides in April 2022, I was told unofficially that a house that had been allocated for a resettled Afghan family had 'stood empty' for months because of the Home Office's prioritisation of displaced Ukrainians. Situating this in the context of Western media relentlessly presenting Ukrainians as 'European people with blue eyes and blond hair', or of Kyiv as 'not like Iraq or Afghanistan' but 'a relatively civilized, relatively European city' (Macleod 2022), it becomes hard to deny a racist 'two-tier' system of resettlement (Hunter 2022), informed by colonial geographies of Europe, race and 'deservingness' of asylum.

The ways in which the 'Europeanness', 'civilised-ness' and 'whiteness' of Ukrainians – and Eastern Europeans more broadly – is manipulated, contingent and intersecting in complex

[63] She gave several examples of these shared concerns: 'you don't know if the Government will support you, you don't know about the support you will get to learn the language, you don't know about the culture and how people will react to the migrants'.

ways with nationality, class and gender (Botterill & Burrell 2020; Fox *et al*. 2012; Garner 2007, 2009; Kalmar 2023; Krivonos 2023; Moore 2013; Nayak 2007, 2009) can be revealing as to the ways in which difference is racially inscribed and effaced in the making of place and belonging in the Outer Hebrides. Ricky, for example, who had been living in the Outer Hebrides for twelve years and who had been active in Ukrainian solidarity efforts following Russia's invasion, including hosting a Ukrainian woman and her young son as part of the 'Homes for Ukraine' private hosting scheme, recalled his Ukrainian father's contingent 'proximity to whiteness' in the context of post-WWII displacement and Britain's evolving labour demands (see McDowell 2009):

> My father was a refugee here from Ukraine in 1945, so I'm part-Ukrainian, but I grew up in an incredibly racist household, where my father was told he had to change his name, not admit to being Ukrainian, and in fact tried to be something he never was, which was British.

Comparing his father being forced to subdue cultural differences and 'pass' (Barber 2015; Gilbert 2005) as British to the experiences of present-day Ukrainian refugees fleeing a very different geopolitical conflict eighty years later, he complained:

> I'm tired of seeing the whingeing on Facebook, [from people] who thought they were getting almost clones of a Brit coming to be their guest [as part of the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme], and then finding out quite suddenly that Ukrainians are different. […] They might be the same colour-wise, but my feeling has been there's been an awful lot of people who really just thought, 'oh well, they're Ukrainians, they're gonna be just the same as any other European and will fit in so seamlessly', and then found it a wee bit challenging.

This subsumption or elision of difference – the construction of Ukrainians as 'just the same as any other European', as 'clones of a Brit' – in large part shaped by changing geopolitical relations between Britain, Europe and Russia (see Kalmar 2023; Krivonos 2023) and by demands for cheap labour by 'the West' (see McDowell 2009), is directly entangled with the racialisation of Ukrainians as being 'the same colour-wise' – implicitly, as white.[64] It might therefore, be considered an 'absence' that is 'as powerful a racialising force as presence' (Keith 2005: 30). Ricky's allusions to Ukrainians' movement in and out of whiteness – especially when this is embedded within broader racialising constructions of Europe – demonstrates how the Hebrides are not remote nor removed from geographies of racial capitalism and European (post)coloniality (see also Hržić forthcoming for discussion of racialised migrant labour in Hebridean fishing industries). As such, as Helen Moore (2013: 32) stresses in her PhD thesis on the intersections of whiteness and class in a rural English village, there is a need to 'recognise the historically, politically, and socio-economically privileged position of hegemonic whiteness, whilst also accepting that "white" individuals are differently positioned in relation to the privileges that whiteness is assumed to ensure'. It is, in short, white supremacy as the material

64 For recent analyses of the operalisation of whiteness within Eastern Europe, see, for instance, Balogun & Pędziwiatr 2023; Krivonos 2023; Sow 2022.

and discursive 'hegemonic structures, practices, and ideologies that reproduce white's privileged status' (Pulido 2000: 337) – and who can access these – that are at stake, rather than supposedly already settled, static or monolithic 'whiteness' itself (Nayak 2007, 2009). This is a particularly important to remember when considering, as I do below, the multiscalar relationship between these structures and the more localised articulations of belonging, identity and community that Chapters 5 and 6 explored.

7.1.4. Moments of racialisation

In this section, I have attempted to offer a preliminary, partial account of how difference is variously inscribed and effaced in processes of racialisation in the Outer Hebrides. I considered three instances in which encounters with cultural and linguistic difference become racialised through nonrecognition or misrecognition. In each of the three 'moments of racialisation' considered, this 'absence' of recognition – propelled in particular by the powerful narratives of Scottish exceptionalism and imaginaries of the rural idyll – was revealed 'as powerful a racialising force as presence' (Keith 2005: 30), whether Nasrin's memories of feeling 'not really Pakistani' and her white friends 'not really seeing it'; the subsumption of Homa's ethnic identity and subjectivity into an aggregate (albeit gendered), vulnerabilised 'refugeehood'; or the discursive whitening of Ukrainians as 'just the same as any other European', as 'clones of a Brit'. This has been with the aim of demonstrating how the 'local' relations, (im)mobilities and de/reterritorialisations considered in Chapters 5 and 6 are implicated in larger scale structures of racial capitalism, European (post)coloniality and white supremacy. In the Chapter 8, I return to the interaction between this racialising (non/mis)recognition of difference and the rural structuring of public and private space, (in)visibility and strangerhood. First, I turn attention to how such encounters with and across difference, if not distanced or subsumed as we have seen in the three 'moments of racialisation' considered here but instead held 'in relation', might promise potential multicultural 'transruptions' (Hesse 2000) to these structures, foreclosing alternative, 'translational' forms of collective belonging, political community and solidarity.

7.2. 'COMING TOGETHER IN A CULTURAL WAY': TRANSLATIONS AND TRANSRUPTIONS

Margaret, a retired languages teacher in North Uist, recalled her childhood as part of a Hebridean, Gaelic-speaking family living in an industrial town in the North of England in the 1930s:

> It was like a wee ghetto. And so, our social life was all Gaelic because the Teuchters,[65] have you heard that word? [*imitates a posh, Southern English drawl*] in Edinburgh and places, very refined places [*drops accent*], they saw Teuchters as barbarians, so we were a bit like Pakistanis today. And gathered in small patches in different places.

In drawing this temporal link between different groups of people varyingly marginalised, (dis)placed and contingently 'integrated' (or not) into conceptualisations of 'Britishness' at different points in time, Margaret hints at a different sort of historical continuity to that which is trumpeted in nostalgic narratives of nation – that of national identity as historically enduring, contained and self-evident. The historical continuity posited here is not one of nation(alism), but nation(alism)'s exclusions. In recalling the malleable status of 'Teuchters' as 'white but not quite' (Agathangelou 2004: 23), there is a possible move to narrate against the 'fictive ethnici[zation]' (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991) of nation effectuated by the temporal distinction between 'new' and 'traditional' or 'historical' minorities in the policy and legislative instruments analysed in Chapter 4. Similar moves to re-narrate the memory of 'integration' into Britishness were implicit in the resolute statements of Welsh and Gaelic speakers that 'I am not an Anglophone by choice' (Dàibhidh), that 'my motivation for learning English was I had no choice' (Osian). In other instances, the malleability of ethnic or 'minority' status was deployed to more explicitly political ends: one interviewee recalled campaigns for improvements to Gaelic-language broadcasting in the 1980s adopting a dual strategy of lobbying 'ethnic minority politicians', situating Gaelic in a broader context of multiculturalism and cultural diversity, while simultaneously 'feeding the Tories a "protecting national heritage" line' by characterising Gaelic as 'traditional British heritage' under threat.

I cite these examples to show how the slipperiness of 'ethnicity' and 'race' can be manipulated (more or less consciously) by various actors at multiple scales – from 'small patches in different places' within a city, to national broadcasting and the contested meaning of 'national heritage'. This section is concerned with how such 'translations' and relations with and across difference might operate as potential 'transruptions' (Hesse 2000), with the potential to 'recast, challenge and/or stretch' (*ibid*.: 18) the structures of European (post)coloniality, racial capitalism and white supremacy outlined above. Wary of a 'celebratory diversity drift' (Neal *et al.* 2018) in many accounts of multicultural conviviality, I employ the argument first introduced in Chapter 2, that engaging with the 'anti-abstractionist' (Edwards 2003) politics of the embodied, everyday but often invisibilised labour of translation might allow for a better understanding of the frictious processes by which such relations of solidarity are produced, maintained and negotiated, as well as what might be at stake in positing of such commensurabilities.

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[65] A derogatory term for Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, expressing, in a similar way to 'yokel', a lack of education, sophistication, civility – a general 'backwardness' – deriving from rurality.

For example, 'back translating'[66] the comparison Margaret draws above between 'Teuchters' and 'Pakistanis' can be instructive in revealing the unequal, racialised power dynamics structuring this relation. Social Anthropologist Edwin Ardener (1987: 529), for example, discussing how relations between 'incomers', 'Gaels' and 'the Lewis Pakistanis' in the Hebrides are narrated in ways that generate or amplify particular structures of belonging in 'remote' areas, writes:

> The Lewis Pakistanis may not all speak the fluent Gaelic that legend says, but the legend marks their assimilation to the averageness of strangeness that characterizes incomers. *No amount of Gaelic would turn them into Gaels*, but their existence is used to contrast with those incomers who have learnt no Gaelic at all (emphasis added).

This reading (however accurate or not it may be) raises useful questions for engaging with accounts of diversity as more frictious than 'simple plurality' (Feathersone 2017: 170). While Ardener here perhaps somewhat takes for granted the coherence of 'the Gaels' and 'the Lewis Pakistanis' as distinct or preexisting social groups, the asymmetrical, uneven directionality of his and Margaret's 'translations' draws attention to their unequal, racialised nature. As Kalmar (2023: 1467) suggests through discussion of Noel Ignatiev's (2009) work on Irish-Americans, 'white privilege is an object of negotiation and struggle, but is nevertheless granted to some extent to all or almost all, white people'. If we are to take these accounts at face value for a moment: while the 'Teuchters' became British and the Irish became white, the 'Lewis Pakistanis' cannot, allegedly, become 'Gaels'. This assumed-to-be-unquestioned, unspoken white privilege shaping constructions of 'Gaelness' is one of the key contentions for those who are wary of where the term can 'get dragged', raising important questions about the potential for forms of 'precarious multiculturalism and contingent conviviality' (Nayak 2017: 296) to coalesce into more critical relations of solidarity or coalition against structures of racial capitalism and European (post)coloniality. Recalling Chapter 6's discussion of 'good faith' engagements with the politics of place, questions of agency and directionality are thus central to understanding what is at stake in the translational, political labour of producing and maintaining 'solidarities [that] do not presuppose integration into a predefined community […] but require a willingness to negotiate the diversity of people, practices, claims and networks that affect a particular place' (Oosterlynck *et al*. 2017: 14).

Various empirical instances in this research pointed towards a more generous and generative – potentially 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) – account of multicultural encounter and more open, porous articulations of 'ethnicity'. Iain, a young Gaelic speaker living in North Lewis,

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66 'Back translation' or 'reverse translation' is the process of retranslating a translation 'back' from the 'target language' to the original 'source language'. It is used as a process of revealing more clearly what has been 'lost' (or gained) in translation.

for instance, reflected on the highly mediatised (Cochrane 2021; Macleod 2021) story of a Syrian schoolboy winning a Gaelic prize in Stornoway in 2021. He considered:

> I think that's sort of a wee bit of a resistance against a global, everything becoming the same, and yeah, these special things about places just kind of disappear […] It's a hard one because it's sort of like, everything with community and identity, in a sense that they're sort of exclusive in one way, but I never really see it like that, because I think it is a way to then, you know, it's a way to engage with other people and invite people in. […] Did you see, I dunno if it was a Syrian boy, I dunno where the thing was posted up, but that was quite an interesting sort of, er, instance of a kind of pride of language, and especially someone coming from another country and learning some Gaelic. […] People on the islands were saying, well look, there's a kind of coming together, a nice meeting of different, not so much different cultures, but people coming together culturally, in a cultural way.

The distinction Iain makes here, in contrast with Ardener's reading, between a coming together 'of different cultures' and a coming together 'in a cultural way' is significant. It hints at not a *distancing* of difference – in the guise of assimilation and subsumption on the one hand, or the fetishisation of absolute, irreconcilable Otherness on other – but the translational process of a coming towards difference, a holding of 'differences in-relation' (Hammond & Cook 2023: 794). Importantly, this was multidirectional: teachers and other pupils at the school were also learning Arabic in a move towards a multilateral 'linguistic hospitality' (Ricoeur 2004). Aleena, a Syrian woman living in Stornoway, explained, echoing the Welcoming Languages' project (Fassetta *et al*. 2023; Fassetta & Imperiale 2023; Imperiale, Fassetta & Alshobaki 2023) discussed in section 2.5 of Chapter 2:

> There are some teacher, they are learning from kids, some [Arabic] words, to make it excit-interesting for kids to learn English also. […] They say to them, 'what that mean, can you say that to them in Arabic', to my son or my daughter. […] When my son come or my daughter, say 'OK, I taught my teacher like, *hello* in Arabic, or *how are you* in Arabic. Or my friend' – even their friends like learning Arabic, some words in Arabic.

Rather than 'exclusive', static or bounded forms of 'community and identity', reified 'different cultures', these accounts of 'coming together in a cultural way' hint at the valuation of forms of collective belonging, community and solidarity that through multilingual relation become 'defined by imbricated difference rather than self-identity' (Hammond & Cook 2023: 802), a move towards reworking 'common characteristics of "we" at the border with "them" […] [to] the "we" as constituted through its commitment to always translating its differences' (*ibid*.). Reminiscent of the articulations of 'translocal tradition' analysed in Chapter 5, the instances of 'revocalised authenticity' and the 'absolute local' considered in Chapter 6, and Nasrin's moves to rescale her Scottish-Pakistani identity through articulations of Hebridean cultural particularity discussed above, such efforts to understand and to be understood in others' languages, to translate and be translated, might be understood as a potential indicator of:

> A reconfiguration of ethnicity, marking looser, more porous, more open-ended, and increasingly hybridized forms of cultural identity, which are thus the site not of the

> unilateralist triumph of the global postmodern but of something more difficult, complex, and historically specific, namely, new articulations between 'the local' and 'the global' that cannot be mapped within the terms of nations and national cultures as we might have tried to do in the past (Hall 2017: 138).

The 'wee bit of a resistance against a global, everything becoming the same' that Iain refers to above is not 'ethnicity' in in its 'restricted, unified, closed, absolutist, defensive, and essentialist forms', but rather 'a "weave of differences" that is looser, more permeable, and more porous in character' (Hall 2017: 134). This is not to say, clearly, that such relations are immune from structuring forces of racial capitalism, white supremacy and European (post)coloniality – I hope that the arguments set out above have demonstrated that they are not – but rather that they might have the potential to 'transrupt', to 'recast, challenge and/or stretch' (Hesse 2000: 18), them. In the following section, I aim to show how the nonetheless racialising 'displacement, deflection and disengagement' (Hopkins 2016) of 'race' in the Outer Hebrides, introduced in section 7.1 above, operates to neutralise these sorts of potentially 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) linguistic encounter.

7.3. 'YOU JUST LEARN THE LANGUAGE AND MOVE ON': NEW SCOTS, INTEGRATION AND LANGUAGE

This section offers an empirical counterpart to the policy analysis set out in Chapter 4. I consider how an uncritical and complacently 'post-racial' (Joseph 2018) policy momentum in Scotland towards the 'integration' and 'inclusion' of 'New Scots' both inadequately redresses nonetheless racialised exclusions and inequalities, while concurrently failing to propel the sorts of 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) encounters and emergent 'new ethnicities' that the previous section explored.

As I argued in Chapter 4, while recent iterations of the 'New Scots Strategy' (SG 2017, 2018, 2024) have evidenced a progressive understanding of integration as a multilateral, intercultural process (Ager & Strang 2008; Phipps, Aldegheri & Fisher 2022; Platts-Fowler & Robinson 2015), this rhetoric remains decidedly aspirational (Hill 2020: 164; Hill & Meer 2020; Meer 2015). Insufficient material support for the practice rather than simply the optics of multiculturalism, in addition to nonetheless racialising 'post-racial' (Joseph 2018) articulations of Scottish exceptionalism, mean that in practice 'integration' can tend towards a muting of difference, rather than facilitating a relational process that concerns not 'the decrease of objective difference, but rather the meaning of perceived difference' (Klarenbeek 2019: 4). Homa, for example, explained that while she would like her young son to learn Dari and maintain a connection to Hazara-ness and Afghanistan, the possibilities for such intercultural hybridity or

'proud, enduring hyphenation' (Levering Lewis 1993: cited in Meer 2019b: 59) felt limited, because:

> I just don't want him to be different than others. Otherwise, he will face difficulties as well, and he will feel different from his friends, both in nursery and later on in school. So, I want him to know more the culture and the language of here, because this is the place that we will live. And it will affect his future as well. […] There are a lot of differences from here and from Afghan culture, so it will be better to be connected to here than to Afghanistan.

I will return to schools and classrooms as spaces that discipline and structure the possibility for potentially 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) encounter in Chapter 8. Here, I note that, as we saw above with Nasrin's description of speaking Urdu as a way to 'kind of zone out from the kind of Western like society a wee bit' and 'feel more Muslim and Pakistani and more in my culture', as well as Homa's reflections on 'missing the talk in Dari' to 'just feel connected to your own country', private multilingualism here emerges as in tension with public monolingualism.[67] Contrasting with Homa's belief that it would be better for her son 'to know more the culture and the language of here', for instance, Arezo, another woman from Afghanistan, drawing unprompted comparisons to the sociolinguistic situation of Gaelic, reflected 'it's important that our sons and our daughters learn what language we are talking, we used to talk':

> I think it's important to keep our language alive. For example, […] when we arrive [in Outer Hebrides], many people suggested us that besides learning English we should speak Gaelic as well because it's another language that's spoken here […]. It's a language that's, like – some languages are dying, day by day, because less people talking in that language. […] I think it's good to keep our language alive and our next generation can talk in that language if possible. […] It's important that our sons and our daughters learn what language we are talking, we used to talk. Probably no one knows about the future, maybe one day we go back […], and it's good that they know their language to talk to the people.

In addition to maintaining a sense of diasporic cultural identity, especially intergenerationally, language figures as condition of potential return, a means of reproducing networks of translocal or transnational mobilities and relations. This was the case also for people whose migration was less drastically 'forced' and for whom the possibility of return was much more feasible. Judith, for instance, discussed her sister raising her child bilingually in German and English, which meant that he 'would be able to go to Germany, get the free education, that kind of stuff: […] if you can have both passports, have both languages as well'. Multilingualism should be understood not as an 'indicator' of an individual's more or less successful linear, unidirectional integration *into* (static, singular, bounded) place. Rather, it should be seen as part of the collective, relational process of integrating 'the diversity of people, practices, claims and networks that affect a particular place' (Oosterlynck *et al*. 2017: 14) *with* those that do multiple other places. I return to this in Chapter 8.

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[67] The dynamic between 'public' and 'private' space will also be discussed in the following chapter.

Such 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) relations, however, are precluded not only by fears of racialised, negative reactions to perceptions of cultural difference, as we saw in Homa's account above, but also by inadequate material support for language learning and translation. Participants in this research lamented long waiting lists for places in oversubscribed and under-resourced ESOL classes. While this is the case throughout Scotland (see Pietka-Nykaza & Baillot 2022; Stella & Kay 2023), Homa pointed to the uneven (im)mobilities discussed in Chapter 5 to explain why the problem is particularly acute in rural areas such as the Western Isles:

> [A family member] just received an email a month ago that an English class is available, *after a year*. […] After a month we receive just – we heard last week that the teacher is leaving, so we don't know what will happen after that [laughs]. […] I think those teachers – not just teachers, those who come from other cities to work here – they cannot survive here more than six, seven months. After six, seven months, they just leave and go back. It happens with other kind of jobs as well.

Arbitrary standards of English language proficiency meanwhile continue to function as a prerequisite for 'integration'. 'English', as Homa put it, is understood as something that one simply must 'just learn and move on'. Evidencing how raciolinguistic standards of fluency or 'languagelessness' (Flores & Rosa 2015; Khan 2021; Rosa 2016) are deployed in racial capitalism's 'sorting out' (Heng 2018) of workers (see Hall 1980; Robinson 1983, 2019; Virdee 2019), she explained:

> It's really good to have an intense [ESOL] class in the first year and you just learn the language and move on, for university or for a job, and if learning a language takes five years, so it's a disaster. You will just depend on the Government and Universal Credit and cannot apply for a job that you really want to. They may apply for some kind of jobs that they don't want to, like to work in a restaurant, or in somewhere for cleaning, but that's not what we want, because my husband was a teacher at universities in Afghanistan, and he was working in an attorney general office, and he don't want to start, he don't want to be a cleaner, or just working in a restaurant or something. So it's good to find an English class, intense one, and to work in a year and then just move on.

Even in circumstances in which limited funding for translation and interpretation services has been made available – such as under the SVPRS, which was funded out of the UK Government's Overseas Aid budget (Home Office 2017) – there remain several barriers to access, including issues relating to language variation and sociocultural background (see also Llywodraeth Cymru/Welsh Government 2023). An employee of the Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, for instance, recalled that following the resettlement of Syrian families to Lewis under the SVPRS:

> Most [communications from the Home Office] were already translated but, you know, the Home Office don't really translate everything, you know. We had to explain it to the families sometimes. Even if they were translated, they weren't really, you know, very clear for them.

While increasingly onerous and externalised language testing regimes as a formal requirement of citizenship or residency function as a powerful bordering technology (Blackledge 2005, 2006, 2009; Carlson & Rocca 2021; Extra *et al*. 2009), a patchiness of language provision – both in terms of access to translation and interpretation services and wider opportunities for

community language learning and multilingualism – operates as a sort of *internal*, everyday bordering (Trafford 2021; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy 2018). This results in a heavy reliance on friends, neighbours, teachers, befriending volunteers or employers for interactions with the state. Homa told me that given a lack of appropriate ESOL classes, they relied on a friend to,

> when he's free he just, erm, contact him through Zoom call, or sometimes he's coming here to work with him, and that was really helpful. Otherwise, because there was no English class, it was really difficult.

Margaret and Dorothy, a community ESOL teacher and volunteer befriender respectively, recalled that their work with recent international migrants to the Hebrides often bled over into broader casework or advocacy due to inadequate language services:

> I did a lot of extra help with them getting their temporary residences and, you know, help with social services, and one was done for drunk driving, and all the getting of the licences back, all that hygiene tests if they worked with food, which some of them did. (Margaret).

> Last few times they've wanted help filling in a form. They want a bigger house, so we've both helped, Tom [another volunteer befriender] and I have – mostly been Tom, men's work, you know, filling out official forms. He's helped them. And one time I think it was just me and the wife, she wanted me to phone the doctor. She hadn't the confidence to do it herself, so I had to phone the GP practice and I had to tell them, of course, what was wrong. (Dorothy).

Fred, an employer of migrant workers in a fishery, also explained:

> It was a lot of work at the outset because they didn't speak any English, and they had to have housing and they had to have, you know, had to learn how to do online shopping and all the things that people have to learn, get doctor's appointments, and, you know, everything. Everything that you need […], we had to do it ourselves. We had to do quite a lot of things with them.

A de facto policy skew towards English proficiency as a prerequisite for 'integration' produces vulnerability, precarity, reliance on and trust in the goodwill of others more confident in wielding an authoritative form of English, constituting a powerful technology of racialised everyday bordering and exclusion from essential services. This can also, of course, be extremely socially isolating, with harmful consequences on mental health. Arezo, for example, described changes in a family member resulting from his struggles to learn English:

> He used to be very socialised person […] and right now, he's, like, a bit depressed, because he don't have much friends here. He don't have the ability to make friends here because of the language.

Dorothy, similarly, recounted a 'less-than-fluent' interaction with a fellow participant on a befriending project:

> The husband, the older man, I'd taken him shopping and gone back and while the wife was doing women's work in the kitchen, he was talking to me, with difficulty. And he showed me a photo on his phone of his daughter, and I knew that they'd told me one of the daughters lived [abroad]. And I said, 'is it the daughter who lives [abroad]?' And he said, 'no. No. House. Fall down.' And right enough, we had been told that they'd lost a daughter in Syria. The house was

> bombed and collapsed and she and the baby died. So it was all… I felt actually quite honoured that he'd shared it with me. And I tried to find photos of my family on my phone, and oh, he got quite cross, I had to put the phone away and watch the television. […] There's all that… *stuff* in the background, and it must be very difficult to learn another language with all that going on.

This speaks to the inadequate provision of linguistically and culturally appropriate professional mental health support, especially for refugees and asylum-seekers with complex psychological needs (see Bignall *et al*. 2019; National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health 2023). It also, however, indicates how a lack of appropriate provision for language learning and translation – for 'linguistic hospitality' (Ricoeur 2004) – not only functions as a raciolinguistic bordering technology for formal, legal aspects of citizenship, but also limits the potential for the sort of 'emotional citizenry' that Kye Askins (2016: 524) sees as pushing against 'dominant norms and national scales of citizenship'. I do not mean to suggest that uneven fluencies made this encounter any less 'meaningful', but that the emotions that might be triggered by degrees of 'language barriers' – in the above account, for example, 'honour' and 'crossness' – can modulate the 'emotional practices of belonging and citizenship' (Askins 2016: 524) that might emerge through embodied, everyday activities such as going shopping, sharing food or photos of family members. We saw this in Chapter 6's reflections on the embodied and affective nature of 'revocalised (in)authenticity' and will return to it in Chapter 8's expanded discussion on the spaces that structure language(s) as embodied encounter.

7.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to explore the scalar politics by which certain localised articulations of identity and difference in the Outer Hebrides are implicated in structures of race, ethnicity and nation. It aimed to interrogate how encounters with and across linguistic, cultural difference in the islands might reproduce, or conversely, 'transrupt' – 'recast, challenge and/or stretch' (Hesse 2000) – larger-scale geographies of racial capitalism, European (post)coloniality and white supremacy. This has been part of a broader effort to 'ground' Cavarero's (2005) philosophy of revocalisation in everyday contexts of *multi*lingualism, uneven or partial linguistic and cultural fluency and, especially, differential, racialised power relations. I considered, for instance, how the relational articulations of 'translocal tradition' analysed in Chapter 5, or moments of 'revocalised authenticity' and the 'absolute local' considered in Chapter 6, exist in tension with racialising language geographies of territorialised monolingualism.

I first offered an analysis of three 'moments of racialisation' in the Outer Hebrides, in a move to offer a preliminary, provisional, partial account of how 'the "floating signifier of race" is made intelligible' (Nayak 2017: 289, citing Hall 2002) in contexts of Hebridean multiculturalism. In each instance, I argued that the recursive 'displacement, deflection and disengagement'

(Hopkins 2016) from 'race' effectuated by the powerful narratives of Scottish exceptionalism and mythology of the 'rural idyll' was in fact as 'powerful a racialising force as presence' (Keith 2005: 30). I also noted that these imagined geographies were themselves occasionally used as a means of potentially synthesising the disjunctures of a racialised 'double-consciousness' prompted by mis- or non-recognition.

I then argued that turning attention to the processes of translation, language learning and 'linguistic hospitality' (Ricoeur 2004) might offer a means of theorising forms of collective identity and political belonging 'defined by imbricated difference rather than self-identity' (Hammond & Cook 2023: 802). I drew on various instances of language learning and cultural translation in the Outer Hebrides to explore how the translational labour of facilitating encounters with and across linguistic and cultural difference – that are often disjointed, fumbling and by and large 'less-than-fluent' – can provide a useful way of understanding the frictious processes by which a 'precarious multiculturalism and contingent conviviality' (Nayak 2017: 296) is produced, maintained and negotiated.

The chapter ended by arguing that despite the Scottish Government's rhetoric of 'impeccably civic' (Keating 2009) nationalism and 'aspirational pluralism' (Meer 2015), a de facto policy tendency towards English proficiency as a prerequisite for 'integration' operates as an internal, raciolinguistic bordering technology for legal, formal and emotional forms of citizenry alike. A policy momentum towards 'post-racial' (Joseph 2018) inclusion and diversity does little to redress nonetheless racialised inequalities and exclusions and neutralises the potential for forms of linguistic and cultural difference to coexist in more translational, 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) relations or emergent 'new ethnicities'. Highlighting the importance of language(s) for translocal or transnational relations and diasporic cultural identities, I argued for a view of language not as a mere technical prerequisite for linear, unidirectional models of 'integration', but of translation, language learning and linguistic hospitality as a means of building translocal or transnational solidarities that do not subsume or distance difference, but instead negotiate the tensions of holding differences in relation.

The following chapter picks up on the patchy, uneven perception of race in the Outer Hebrides, considering how the rural structuring of public, semi-public and private space – and related rural logics of (in)visibility and 'strangerness' – facilitate, preclude or modulate the potential for transruptive, 'revocalised' encounter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

'THE MEANINGS IN THESE PLACES'

EMBODIMENT, EMOTIONS, LAND

'I think Gaelic makes more sense here,' Eilidh, a Gaelic-speaking woman from the Isle of Lewis, told me, 'because you've got the cultural context for it.' She continued:

> You can speak any language anywhere as long as there's someone to speak it to, but it makes sense. There's a Gaelic song that has a line it in that says, 'the bird's voice is sweetest in its own habitat,'[68] and I think that's sort of what I'm trying to say, is that here and in these communities the language isn't sort of a self-conscious thing. It's a natural mode of communication, but it's more than that as well: it's bound up with all the other things I've been saying about, you know, your sense of humour, your understanding, your connection with people and so on.

Language here emerges as deeply embedded, embodied and emplaced. It is not only a way of naming the world, but inextricably 'bound up' with ways of being with and of the world, of feeling 'natural' or 'unself-conscious', of the interrelations that constitute a shared 'habitat'. It might thus be seen as moving towards a 'revocalisation' of material feminist arguments that 'bodies [and language as embodied communication] do not simply take their places in the world […] rather "environments" and [communicating] "bodies" are intra-actively co-constituted' (Barad 2007: 170). This chapter probes this 'intra-active co-constitution' in greater depth, exploring how people conceive a language's 'habitat': the relationality, emotionality and physicality that allow language(s) to 'make sense' or feel 'natural' in particular places. Throughout, I remain sympathetic to the political anxieties fuelling wariness towards 'ontopological' (Wylie 2016) accounts of this relationship that might skew towards determinism and thus risk reproducing essentialising 'one-nation, one-language, one-people' language geographies at a smaller scale. As I first argued in Chapter 6, however, phenomenological experiences of 'feeling at home' or 'belonging' in and through language 'will not simply evaporate at the touch of tough-minded analysis' (Eagleton 2009: 90, cited in Tomaney 2013: 668) – nor is it necessarily desirable that they should. My aim in this final empirical chapter, therefore, is not to deny or critique away the co-articulation of language, bodies and place, but to reparatively move towards pluralising it.

This is an especially important challenge for minoritised languages and cultures, as the uneven power dynamics entailed in this plurality are often cast as a threat to their survival,

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68 'Nach binn guth an eòin far na dh'fhàs e', from *Air Baile,* written by Cairistìona NicDhòmhnaill.

sometimes prompting territorialisations, 'strategic essentialisms' (Spivak 1988) or standardisations as a strategy of 'appropriating space for [the] political project' (Halvorsen 2019: 795) of minoritised language survival, as we saw in Chapter 6. This chapter also, therefore, explores the spatial strategies adopted by various 'glottopolitical agents' (García & Amorós-Negre 2020; Guespin & Marcellesi 1986), and considers how the particular Hebridean structuring of public and private space and related rural logics of (in)visibility, strangerness and familiarity preclude, facilitate and modulate the possibility for moments of relational 'revocalised sincerity', of 'transruptive' encounter (Hesse 2000) or of racialising non- or mis-recognition, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Most geographic engagement with the production of space through embodied encounter has focused on urban settings (with notable exceptions: Faier 2009; Horton 2008; Jones 2012) – on benches in public squares (Rishbeth & Rogaly 2018), travelling on public transport (Wilson 2011), in playgrounds (Wilson 2013) or shared urban spaces like parks, libraries or sports centres (Amin 2002). However, as first introduced in Chapter 5, rural space is often structured quite differently, marked by particular logics of (in)visibility, 'strangerness' and familiarity, and specific rhythms, flows and tempos of (im)mobility. Although these geographies are not flat throughout the archipelago – it makes a difference if you're in Stornoway, Balivanich or Castlebay, Pairc, Grimsay or Linaclate – this chapter is structured by considering the spatiality of embodied, 'revocalised' encounter in various public, semi-public and private rural places. After a reminder of the importance of considering language(s) as embodied, embedded and emplaced, I turn attention to how language geographies of belonging in the Outer Hebrides are modulated by public spaces where there is the possibility of encountering strangers, by networked, semi-public spaces such as schools and places of worship, and then by 'private' households. Finally, I consider the co-articulation of language with 'land' not as a place as such, but as a complex and evolving set of sociomaterial relations underlying the spatial structures considered earlier in the chapter.

8.1. LANGUAGE AS EMBODIED, EMBEDDED, EMPLACED

'Revocalising' language geographies, as I have argued elsewhere (Chapman 2023) and in Chapter 2, requires fuller appreciation of language not as a disembodied, rational, universal system of signification, but as embodied, embedded and emplaced. Reminiscent of Cavarero's emphasis on 'uniqueness-in-resonance' (2005: 199) as the foundation of politically responsible 'revocalisation', it is the singularity, physicality and relationality of place that allows language(s) to 'make sense', to use Eilidh's words quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Helga, a Swedish speaker living in Uist, similarly told me about her relationship to French, a language she learnt

first at school and then used for work, emphasising again the importance of relational 'use [of] language in its environment', rather than as a solitary, abstract, disembodied exercise:

> It might be hard for me to start speaking French right now, but if I go to France, after a week, it just kind of flows, because you hear it all the time and it's not just one of those silly things that you sit and do, you actually use the language in its environment, so then, that's, I suppose it boosts your own ability to use it.

While Chapter 6 considered how speakers inflect their speech to encode various degrees, multiple orientations and intersecting scales of emplacedness in the ongoing negotiation of the cultural politics of place, here we see place or context itself as a powerful actor in 'semiotic assemblages' (Pennycook 2018: 91), structuring not only speakers' *choice* of language, but even their *ability* to use language in a certain way (see also Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouk 2005). Place shapes how speakers dwell in language, behave in language, embody language. Helga and I, for instance, laughed about how, while it is customary to wave at every other road user you pass on the single-track roads of Uist, not only in thanks for pulling into a passing place but also just in greeting and acknowledgement, this is a hard habit to kick on the drive back down to Glasgow, during which your fingers flick less and less frequently up off the steering wheel the further along the A85 you drive, a sort of reining in and remoulding of communicative muscle memory. Conor, a Doric speaker, described in similar terms how his language changed 'subconsciously' during the journey from the Western Isles to the village where he grew up on the East coast of Scotland:

> Last time [my wife] and I visited Portsoy, maybe six weeks ago, we were driving up and my dad phoned to see where we were, and she said, 'your accent seems to change the closer we get to Portsoy'. […] It's like I knew I was going home, it's like a subconscious thing, I dunno.

Importantly, participants in this research spoke of such relationships to embodied, embedded and emplaced language as existing at multiple different scales, not necessarily tied to bounded notions of a nation or village. Nasrin, for example, explained how the materiality of the smells, objects and images coming together in her auntie's house made it feel a more conducive, comfortable or 'natural' environment for speaking Urdu:

> When I go into my auntie's house, you can smell the food, some decorative stuff that's very, you know, it's Muslim or Pakistani, or, you know, it's South Asian, and it's just like you're in that environment in a sort of way.

While Chapters 5 and 6 considered this relationship in primarily performative or behavioural terms – discussing, for instance, the relationship between Gaelic language politics and the 'performance of localness' – here we see the materiality of an assemblage of smells, tastes, associations, decorations, memories and relations coming together to constitute a language's 'environment' or 'habitat'. Smell (specifically the smell of peat) also featured in Iain's description of the island of Islay as 'feeling like a Gaelic place', and when I visited the then recently opened *An Taigh Cèilidh,* a Gaelic café and bookshop in Stornoway, further discussion of which follows below, tealights were burning underneath small clods of peat to diffuse their smell throughout

the room, creating an 'environment', a 'habitat' for Gaelic by emulating a peat fire in a traditional cèilidh house.

With an eye to languages in this way existing as part of and drawing their meaning from emplaced 'semiotic assemblages' (Pennycook 2018: 91), in the following sections, I explore in greater detail the nature of various minoritised languages' 'environments' or 'habitats' in the Western Isles, considering in particular how they are structured by the divisions of rural private and public space and rural logics of (in)visibility and familiarity.

8.2. 'THE WORLD OUT THERE IS ENGLISH': IN PUBLIC

In Chapter 7, I discussed the racialising effects of the uneven 'seeing' of multiculturalism in the Outer Hebrides. I quoted Nasrin, for example, expressing a desire for a form of 'Hebridean-Muslim' consciousness to become more publicly recognised. Aleena, a Syrian woman living in Stornoway, similarly discussed speaking Arabic, her first language, only in temporary, private niches emerging in public when 'there's no people close by', describing a discomfort arising from displaying linguistic difference in public because 'we're not in our country':

> In public, in street, we speak Arabic when there's no people, like, close by, really. But in shops and things, we prefer to speak English to each other. […] For me, for us, for my family, […] it feel, because we're not in our country, it's much bett- […] in front of you feel, like, more comfortable.

Raciolinguistic expectations of the monolingually Anglophone listening subject (Flores & Rosa 2015) and the harnessing of linguistic difference as a racialising signifier operate to 'purge' (Nayak 2017) multilingualism from public space in various ways. While for Aleena and her Arabic-speaking family and friends this meant choosing to speak in a language they were less confident in when there was a risk of being overheard by strangers, for Michal, who could 'pass' as a native English speaker (Bucholtz 2012), it meant being subjected to anti-Polish xenophobia while 'incognito' as a Polish speaker:

> I have, two or three times in my life have heard, like, Poles being slandered by Scots, but I also know for a fact, you know, from friends and from family that have lived in other parts of the UK, that it's a lot more common than the two or three times that I've heard it. […] And also, because I don't sound Polish, I've actually, those are things that I've heard kind of incognito, if that makes sense. It's not like I was serving somebody [in the pub] and they responded with something hateful towards Poles. It's more like I heard them having that conversation, and I bet that they wouldn't have had it if, you know, if I did have an accent. It's just that they thought that it meant nothing to me, because they probably didn't think I was Polish.

Again, assumptions of the stranger as monolingually Anglophone operate to discipline, exclude and contain forms of speech racialised as 'foreign', whether a language or an accent, and whether the 'stranger' is speaking or listening. While for different reasons – not least the discursive construction of the language as not 'foreign', but firmly 'a national European language' (Armstrong *et al*. 2022: 75), as critiqued in Chapter 4 – and operating along different lines

(outlined below), speakers of Gaelic also described experiencing public space as predominantly Anglophone space. As Màiri, from Lewis, put it:

> The world out there is English. It's an English world. And it's hard, hard, hard to keep a minority language alive, without really trying to keep it alive. And there's nothing happening. When we were growing up, there were things happening in the communities all the time, where you were surrounded by the language, things that you had to do. This is the main thing: *had* to do. You had to dig peat to have fuel for your fire. And you all had to work together as a community to dig the peat. Nowadays, people don't dig peat or if they do, they do it as a family, not as a community thing. You had to gather the sheep together and you had to gather them and take them to a fank, and the whole village would be involved, the whole community would be involved. People would come from other areas to collect stray sheep, Gaelic spoken all the time. You were surrounded by it. You had to shear the sheep, you'd all be doing it together, speaking Gaelic. You had to bring in the hay, cut the hay, bring in the hay. You all went to church together; it was all Gaelic services; there would maybe be one random English service now and again, I dunno why, but they did. And everything was done as a community. Nowadays, nothing in our, well, my part of Lewis, is done where people have to meet. Nothing is done where you have to meet. It's *having* to. Nobody has to have to sheep, nobody has to plant potatoes, nobody has to get together to do anything. It's all these little bubbles that everyone lives in now. They're self-sufficient. […] The only place that they have to meet, that anybody has to meet now, is in school.

There are several interesting aspects to this account. Again, we see an understanding of language as embodied, embedded and emplaced, integral to systems of collective reproductive labour and participating in more-than-human community. She also makes a key distinction between rural public or semi-public places where 'everyone had to meet', and private, 'self-sufficient' 'little bubbles' of family units.[69] There is a clear emphasis placed on land, land work and land relations in Màiri's choice of examples of public places – the blàr mònach[70] or the fank, bringing in hay or planting potatoes – that I will return to in section 8.5 below. First, I consider the importance of public spaces more broadly for minoritised languages within a broader 'English world […] out there', especially given that many such public spaces in rural areas are threatened by the geographies of uneven (im)mobilities considered in Chapter 5.

8.2.1. 'Breathing spaces' and strangers

Named after the loch that lies just to the south, Grinneabhat was originally the school serving the villages of Bragar and Arnol on the West side of Lewis. When the school closed – the canary in the mine of rural depopulation – its classrooms were converted to host a community café, laundrette, hostel and exhibition space.

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[69] While much could be said about Màiri's emphasis on the relationship between agency, labour and community – on '*having* to work together as a community, […] it's *having* to' – my focus in this chapter is on the places in which such comings-together happen. I return to the relationship between labour, language and land in section 8.5 below.

[70] Peat stretch, field of peat banks.

Figure 8.1. Grinneabhat, Isle of Lewis. Photo: https://www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk/see-and-do/grinneabhat-p562411

The organisation describes itself on its website as aiming to provide a 'real taigh cèilidh meeting house […] for ourselves and for the outside world'. In addition to providing a space for meeting friends and neighbours, it organises regular public events and activities, are often conducted in Gaelic. Iain, who lives nearby, explained:

> Part of the idea for fundraising and trying to refurbish the building was to create that kind of place. In all the funding applications back when they were doing it, they were like, people aren't really meeting in the villages anymore. […] There's no real facilities for people to meet, there might be a café or that, but is that, not necessarily if it was run by someone without Gaelic, but I think, as well, people have been, some kind of stigma as well, so a kind of public language or a language that you would meet and greet people with would tend to be English if there was uncertainty about what language people spoke. So traditional places where people would speak Gaelic, at the fank or you know, at the post office,[71] that kind of thing, most of these places have been shut down or aren't being used any more. So that was part of the idea.

Grinneabhat might thus be described as a 'breathing space' (Fishman 1991), a physical environment curated within a broader Anglophone 'out there' so that speakers of a minoritised language can use it freer from 'stigma' or 'uncertainty about what language people spoke'. Many such community spaces in the Western Isles developed out of the co-chomainn, rural community co-operatives active in the 1970s and '80s. Ravenspoint, in South Lochs, for instance, another former school building that now houses a tearoom, local history museum and archive, and runs a hostel to subside a community shop serving the local community – a lifeline for a community isolated even by Hebridean standards – is ran by the Co-Chomunn na Pairc, one of the first such co-operatives.

[71] While not considered in depth in this chapter, post offices figured in several participants' accounts as important public meeting places in the Outer Hebrides.

'Breathing spaces' might be intentionally and carefully curated, defined and delineated – territorialised – public spaces, such as Grinnnebhat, but they might also emerge as relational moments of chance encounter in conducive environments. Seòras, for instance, a younger Gaelic speaker in Grimsay, was highly encouraged by the use of Gaelic as a 'casual' language in the pub, attributing this to the 'deep desire' of younger generations of Gaelic speakers to continue to use the language in public environments, with relative strangers:

> It would seem like there are definitely other young adults who are wanting to have Gaelic as the language of, kind of, socialising and of the craic, you know, in the pub or at the cèilidh or whatever. And just while I'm on that, a wonderful example was this summer, where I was in a pub in Benbecula, and there were a few young guys there, they would probably be around about 20, and they were the ones who greeted me in Gaelic, and continued to speak in Gaelic, […] and these guys aren't, they didn't study the language, you know, they studied other subjects and so on, and they wanted to speak the language in that social environment, and for me, I think that's really significant if in the pub, they're wanting to use the language to speak to other folk, to speak to folk who are a bit older than them and so on, That really shows that there are people coming through now, coming into adulthood, that have competency and have a real kind of, deep desire to use it at the most natural and casual level, which is really exciting. That for me shows that things are turning.

The key feature of a 'breathing space', then, however intentionally it presents itself as such, is in creating an environment in which it feels safe, 'natural and casual' to use a minoritised language with a stranger, a space that resists assumptions of the stranger, the public realm, 'the world out there', as monolingually English-speaking.

For a minoritised language such as Gaelic, the importance of this goes beyond an inability to assume proficiency in the language. The double-edged sword of what Becky, a young teacher in Benbecula, described as 'the Gaelic shame' – arising from experiences of language minoritisation compounded by the 'reverse diglossia' (Birnie 2022; Smith-Christmas & Ó hIfearnáin 2015) discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 6 – means that many people, especially of older generations, feel comfortable speaking Gaelic only on certain subjects, in particular places, and with trusted, known people – very much not with strangers in public. While Margaret, an older Gaelic speaker in Uist, reported neighbours refusing to speak English to her because 'they know it [Gaelic] is my birthright', the reverse was true for the vast majority of younger Gaelic speakers I spoke to. Michal, a 'new speaker', explained:

> Because of the whole, kind of, effectively Gaelic being colonised out of the islands historically, it's still an uphill struggle even with people who do have Gaelic, where sometimes they just think, 'oh well, here's a young learner, maybe their Gaelic is better than mine and what if they don't understand me', and it causes all these feelings of shame, I think, to surface.

These suspicions or hesitations arose even with younger L1 or 'native' speakers who could present Gaelic 'sloinneadh' (see Chapter 5) or claims to 'localness'. Seòras, for instance, an L1 speaker who lives on the croft where he grew up, compared intergenerational conversations in Gaelic as a 'battle of the wills'. He described an encounter in public with an older Gaelic-speaking neighbour:

> [There was] this old guy, from the island, from Grimsay, and I remember speaking to him in Gaelic, just started a conversation with him. And he would know that I'm, like, regularly on Gaelic media, I'm quite involved in language discussions, as well as previously spoken to him numerous occasions in Gaelic. He knew my father, my grandfather, great-grandfather, and yet we had this conversation that went on for a bit where I would say a bit in Gaelic and he would reply in English, I'd go in Gaelic, and he'd go in English. Again, just this total kind of prevailing attitude that that generation – he would be in his, erm, 80s, mid-80s or something like that – that people of that generation would have, that people younger than them, they wouldn't speak to them in Gaelic because you know, they were just totally, it was totally drilled into them that it was valueless, that the next generation to do better, needn't have Gaelic, in fact they should just disregard it. They themselves would have been beaten for having it and so on.

Compounding this situation further, several interviewees alluded to the complex emotionality of being positioned unexpectedly, perhaps even reluctantly, as tradition-bearers of a language and culture that is urgently and persistently declared 'dying'. Màiri discussed the complex emotions such encounters can provoke:

> I've sometimes come across learners complaining that they were on a bus and they were trying to speak Gaelic to somebody and they weren't, you know, all that helpful. Thing is, these people are just going about their business! They didn't go get on that bus thinking that they had to, you know, do this thing today and have this on their shoulders today! I mean, it can be hard speaking to a learner, […] it can be very, very tiring.

The complex, multilayered emotional geographies of speaking a minoritised language necessitates the creation of an environment in which speaking the language in public with strangers feels safe, a space of bilateral, collective 'linguistic hospitality' (Ricoeur 2004) that can facilitate the sort of revocalised 'authentic', 'sincere' or 'good faith' relations discussed in Chapter 6. As Teàrlach Wilson, the founding director and Fear an Taighe (host/man of the house) of *An Taigh Cèilidh* – a café and bookshop in Stornoway that organises public Gaelic events and uses Gaelic as its operating language – explained, this benefits both 'native' and 'new' speakers of the language alike:

> Having lived [abroad], I never felt rejected from native speaker communities. I felt that getting to go into [cafés in those countries], and having to use the local languages is actually what really benefited my competence and my confidence in the language. So, I actually feel by targeting the native speaker community, we actually are being inclusive [of non-native speakers], and replicating a world where Gaelic is not a minority language.

As discussed in Chapter 6, here we see an understanding of (linguistic, cultural) 'authenticity' as 'not an index of but rather a comment on' (Woolard 2016: 34) place; speakers grow into 'competence and confidence' as 'multilingual subjects' (Kramsch 2006) through embodied, emplaced encounters. The importance of the labour of hosting and hospitality for facilitating such relations of revocalised authenticity in public 'breathing spaces' – evident in Grinneabhat's mission of 'provid[ing] a real taigh cèilidh meeting house' and the name of *An Taigh Cèilidh,* alongside the fact that both Grinneabhat and Ravenspoint subsidise their work through running hostels – will be returned to in section 8.4 below.

Recalling discussions in Chapter 7 and constituting an important distinction, 'breathing spaces' for minoritised languages other than Gaelic in the Outer Hebrides tended to be less public, more 'subterranean' (Jones 2012), occurring in private or, at most, semi-public, networked settings. Michal, for instance, a Polish speaker, reflecting on how he would like to get to know or participate in 'the famous Uist Polish diaspora', wondered:

> I don't know if it's always been like this or if it's a post-Covid thing, you know, it's perhaps, they're not really the type of folk that will just come down to the pub, or I might see at something I might go to like a trad music concert or something […]. There's always the language barrier issue, and yeah, I have, kind of, it's something that I've heard, that 'oh yeah, you know, the Poles tend to keep to themselves', is a thing that I've heard being said.

There are several possible interpretations of Michal's account of barriers to building relationships with the established Polish community in the Uists, including the relative 'hiddenness' of rural migrant workers in the agricultural or fishing industries (ITF 2022; Milbourne & Coulson 2021; Rye & O'Reilly 2021); 'language barriers' and the lack of public rural 'breathing spaces' for minoritised languages and cultures that are construed as 'foreign' not 'traditional'; the logic of 'sloinnidhean' and what Judith described as 'proper cèilidh culture' in the Outer Hebrides, introduced in Chapter 5 and discussed further in section 8.4 below; or in fact a genuine desire to 'keep to themselves'. As I was unable to speak to anybody who understood themselves to be part of this group – likely for all of these same and related reasons – I will not speculate further, but rather turn attention to the more hidden, 'subterranean' (Jones 2012) spaces where such types of rural multicultural encounter are more likely to occur. While many more such places exist, for reasons of space, in the next section I adopt a more selective focus on educational and religious spaces.

8.3. SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES

8.3.1. School and Classrooms

Unsurprisingly, school featured in many interviews as a key site of sociolinguistic control. In the previous chapter, I quoted Homa discussing her belief that it would be better not to pass her first language, Dari, to her young son, so that he would not 'face difficulties […] [or] feel different from his friends, both in nursery and later on in school'. Ahmed, too, spoke of school as a disciplinary space which can curtail the expression of cultural difference. Discussing his and his wife's desire that their children learnt Urdu, he explained:

> Before they started school, it was easy because they were mostly at home. We kind of made a pact, me and my wife, [when] they're at home we will do our utmost to speak Urdu. So, they did pick it up at that time. But once they start school, then it becomes more and more difficult as they progress in school, because they were the only Asian children. All the others being locals, it was all English for them.

This key spatial tension between school and home also arose in Alkapathi's discussion of 'passing on' his first language, Kannada, to his children:

> My kids, they were speaking [Kannada] until they go to school. Once they went to school, they realised the language we speak at home is only limited to our home […] Though there are other Indian families [living in Stornoway], they are totally different languages, as I said. So, children realised there is no point speaking this language if it is only my parents speak, no one else.

In line with the uneven, racialising inscribing and effacing of difference discussed in Chapter 7, here, a language with over 43 million native speakers in India alone (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India 2022), and many more people who speak it as a second or third language in and beyond India, is rescaled to be 'limited to [the] home'. This stands in marked contrast to the experience of Aleena's children, discussed in Chapter 7, whose classroom could operate as a space of collective 'linguistic hospitality' (Ricoeur 2004) as their teachers and classmates 'became multilingual subjects' (Kramsch 2006), 'learning from kids, some [Arabic] words, to make it excit- interesting for kids to learn English also'. Decisions taken in the highly disciplined and unequal space of the school – by pupils, parents, teachers and other school-workers, educationalists and policy-makers – are in this way implicated in the spatial politics of (re)scaling a language's 'environment' and emplacing its speaker community.

This tension between the two main environments where children in the Western Isles spend most of their time – school and home – also relates to an issue in Gaelic medium schools where large numbers of students do not necessarily live in Gaelic-speaking households, and so the lingua franca of the playground tends to be English. Eilidh explained:

> Quite a lot of kids go [to GME] and there's no Gaelic in the home. So, all the Gaelic they're getting is in the educational environment, and that's putting quite a lot of pressure on the school, and people then go, 'oh, Gaelic medium's not working because look at the levels of fluency'. Gaelic medium can only work if there's a community surrounding it, and if the home is a mirror of the school environment and vice versa.

While this spatial distinction, the lack of 'mirroring' between school and home, clearly impacts the extent to which Gaelic is used outside of the classroom, schools are not hermetically sealed spaces: people move in and out the classroom, and this fluidity and porousness gives rise to more dynamic language geographies than perhaps a 'lack of mirroring' conveys. Several parents of children who attend GME schools, for instance, spoke of learning Gaelic through and alongside their children, a sort of reversed intergenerational language transmission for which there exist many resources and support from national Gaelic organisations. Helga, for example, spoke of her aspirations to improve her Gaelic not through her Gaelic-speaking partner, but through being involved in the (Gaelic medium) education of their five-year-old son. Liam, an Irish man, similarly, spoke of the role of GME in his hopes for 'picking up' the local, 'authentic' Gaelic of North Uist:

> It's the [dialect] in the place where I'm living so you know, if I'm going to learn Gaelic, I'd like to learn the Gaelic of North Uist, really. My son is my best hope for picking that up I think! If anyone can get it now he can, his teachers are all from North Uist.

Reminiscent of Ingeborg Birnie and Kerrie Kennedy's (2023) discussion of the extension of a 'Gaelic environment' into the home through online Gaelic medium distance learning technology during the Covid-19 pandemic, Liam also discussed the role of GME on the language of his young daughter, who uses a speech generating device to communicate:

> We're trying to do all her communication stuff in Gaelic. She's nonverbal, but we try and keep her in the Gaelic environment as much as possible. […] She has a switch that she uses to talk, to press the button and says something, and her main word that she says is 'again', so we've recently changed that over to 'a-rithist' […]. I think it's good for the kids in the school around her, it's not appropriate to have English in the classroom.

Here again, we see multiple, more-than-human agencies[72] coalescing around the space of the school to extend, perforate or rescale notions of a language's 'environment'. The space of the immersion classroom leaks in both directions: the majority language 'comes in', but beliefs that it is 'not appropriate to have English in the classroom' also mean that 'the Gaelic environment' comes out. While it holds true that, as Eilidh argued, 'Gaelic medium can only work if there's a community surrounding it', there remains scope for further material feminist engagements with the implications of language 'immersion' as a relational, mobile space, and, more specifically in an institutional language learning context, with the embodied, spatial relations between classroom and 'the community surrounding it'.

This is especially the case for adult learning environments, where distinctions between the classroom and 'the community surrounding it' become even more blurred. As I introduced in Chapter 7, less formalised or structured language learning spaces such as conversation practices or community ESOL evening classes constituted an important site for the emergence of forms of 'emotional citizenry' within and beyond 'dominant norms and national scales of citizenship' (Askins 2016: 524). Margaret, for instance, reflecting on her years teaching an ESOL class as a volunteer in a village hall in Benbecula, placed an emphasis on the polyfunctionality of the community space – 'it was used for was for slimming class and for odd meetings and things' – which allowed the classroom to function as a space for building 'close social bonds':

> We celebrated, we had lots of parties, celebrating birthdays, they [the students] were so generous. And even when all the summer celebrations had to stop, […] we'd still celebrate in the room, birthdays and things.

I return to the reciprocity implicit in Margaret's description of her students as 'so generous' in section 8.4's discussion of hospitality. My principal argument in this section has been that despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that classrooms – especially in schools – are often highly

[72] This account, for instance, raises questions around embodiment, language and technology – relating most immediately to disability geographies, but also to, for example, the extremely prevalent use of machine translation tools such as Google Translate to navigate everyday language barriers, and the related confiscation of migrants' mobile phones that allow access to this life-saving technology on EU borders (see Isakjee *et al.* 2020; also O'Gieblyn 2021 for a fascinating account of language and technology more generally).

disciplined and structured spaces, 'interruptions' (Baynham 2006) of 'glottopolitical' (García & Amorós-Negre 2020; Guespin & Marcellesi 1986) agency in various forms can be particularly useful for exploring how imagined geographies of a language's 'environment' are reproduced, rescaled or resituated. A similar tension between structure and agency was evident in religious spaces – semi-public places that too can be characterised by structures of unequal power, and in which, as such, moments of 'glottopolitical' agency can be particularly generative. It is to this that the following subsection turns.

8.3.2. Religious Spaces

Church spaces were identified by several interviewees as constituting important 'breathing spaces' for Gaelic, not only because they function as semi-public places for Gaelic-speaking congregants to meet, but more specifically because they have provided an opportunity for the use of a local form of higher register Gaelic. Eilidh, a Gaelic-speaking woman working in Higher Education, explained:

> Church has been the one place that has carried on using quite formal, high register Gaelic. So even when you weren't, you know, I wasn't schooled in Gaelic as I said, so you weren't exposed to formal, high register Gaelic in school, so you had your colloquial Gaelic at home, but you had church to keep your formal hand in, if that makes any sense. And I think it's definitely helped the language, just in the round, that it's maintained it as a formal written and spoken language.

As was alluded to in previous chapters, churches are very powerful social institutions in the Islands. In the Presbyterian northern islands, this is most obvious in the widespread observance of the Sabbath, including by non-Sabbatarians, for whom it constitutes a central aspect of the 'performance of localness', as discussed in Chapter 5. Throughout the Outer Hebrides, however, churches are often key sites in the social life of rural communities. Liam in North Uist, mentioned 'having had a lot to do with [the Free Church] because of our involvement with the squash court'; with a click of her fingers, Helga described churchgoing as an 'automatic in' to the social life of North Uist. Nasrin recalled how her and her auntie, both Muslim women, would attend church services with family friends, 'more for the craic, really':

> They went to church every Sunday, you know, religiously, and they'd go another day if there was something on, but then there were times where – like, I've been to the Christmas Eve service because they were like, 'right, you're coming!', and then as well, well my auntie's passed now, but years before, […] she started going to church, more for the craic, really, but she would go because they'd be like, 'come along!'

The polyfunctionality of places of worship as semi-public sites of encounter and socialising also emerged in Ahmed's description of the Stornoway Mosque as a regular 'social hub', accessible not only to people already known to each other, but also, for example, visiting locums working for the NHS Western Isles:

> The Pakistani families and the Bangladesh families, after the prayers and all that kind of thing, we obviously used it as a social hub as well. Let's just stay, have a chat, you know, tea

> and coffee and stuff like that, so we would all sit together and talk. […] And obviously in the hospital and all that, we get quite a few locums kind of thing, who are either, er, not necessarily from Pakistan, it could be from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, even Middle East countries. Obviously over the last 5-6 years since we've had the mosque, we know more of them because […] we always meet at the prayer times.

Speaking again to the sequestering of racialised cultural difference to the domestic, prior to the opening of the Mosque in 2017, Ahmed recounted, Hebridean Muslims would 'have to gather in somebody's house, and everyone felt a bit uncomfortable like that' (see also Jones 2012 on the spatiality of Muslim worship, especially regarding the implications of its publicness or privateness, in rural West Wales). The Mosque provides more appropriate facilities for worship, enables encounters between Muslims at various points along the rural local–incomer spectrum discussed in Chapter 5, and is an important symbolic milestone in histories of (non)recognition of Hebridean Muslims. Ahmed continued:

> For us, for the Muslim community on the island, it was a miracle, because […] Muslims were here for over seventy years. There's records that indicate that they were actually here even during the First World War, some of the Muslim troops that came with the British – you know, the British ruled India and during the War some of the Indian troops had come to Britain, were stationed in Britain, and there are records that indicate that even at that time, […] there was somebody here, but definitely by Second World War there was a family here. And so, all that time, everybody was talking about building a mosque, kind of thing, but it didn't happen. So, seventy years, but then when it did happen, it was several weeks and we got it up and running.

The Mosque also, however, was a contested space, in no small part due to the large cultural and linguistic diversity of Muslims it serves. Ahmed reported that English tends to be used as a lingua franca, with children sometimes acting as language brokers, and the diversity of religious practices and cultural traditions *within* the congregation makes it an important site for interrogating how 'differences-in-relation' or 'commonness in difference [is] imagined and constructed' (Hall 2000: 411) by Hebridean Muslims. Ahmed continued, discussing the participation of Syrian refugees in the Stornoway Mosque:

> But they do have [sighs] a different, obviously tradition-wise, but that is only noticeable when we get together. Like when I say tradition, for example, families from Pakistan, it doesn't matter where you are from, if you know them or not, if we get together, we will all get together – men, women, children, you know, will be there in the one hall, because we're all from the same country, we have that, we don't have any taboo. Whereas with Syrians, their traditions, we find that men and women will not, er, sit together, you know, even at a festival or something like that. Initially you know, they said, 'look, it's not that we don't want to mix with you, it's just the way we are, even back home, women will always be segregated'. Men and women will be segregated. […] Even at a festival, after prayers and that kind of thing, we say 'OK, let's all go and join and enjoy together' – they won't do it. They say – well, it's a tradition, for them, they say even back in Syria, at a festival, men and women will not sit together, you know.

In providing a physical site for diverse communities of Hebridean Muslims to 'get together', the Mosque functions as a space in which such 'differences-in-relation' become 'noticeable', are recognised and their meaning(s) negotiated. The Mosque, therefore, (unsurprisingly) figures as

a crucial though by no means uncontested node in the emergence and ongoing negotiation of forms of 'Hebridean-Muslim consciousness'.

In addition to the fact that the Mosque is in Stornoway and the archipelago is 130 miles long – ferries willing, it takes over six hours to drive from Castlebay to Stornoway – however, there are, obviously, many reasons why places of worship cannot operate as 'neutral' semi-public social places for the formation of such convivial forms of rural multiculturalism. Homa, for instance, who expressed a desire for more opportunities to speak Dari and enjoy 'gathering or even a cultural activities, to just feel connected to your own country', explained why she did not feel comfortable or able to use the Mosque to facilitate such relation or attachment:

> They came to our house, they were asking us for the Mosque, to go to the Mosque, but because we are not that much religious people, our answer was negative [laughs] because we left everything behind, we run away from that kind of situation, and from the extremist Muslims, we just didn't want to contact, or be in that group again.

For various different reasons, there are, of course, exclusions that similarly arise from churches being, to use Iain's words, sometimes 'overbearingly powerful' and exercising great control over rural community life. Described somewhat tongue-in-cheek by Annie as 'the spectre of religious thinking on the Christian side', Hebridean Free Churches are often associated with a strict form of fundamentalist Calvinism, though the theological, political and historical complexities of these religious geographies expand beyond the scope of this thesis. Here, I note that while religious spaces constitute important semi-public spaces for the formation, expression and renegotiation of various forms of rural 'new ethnicities', they are also contested spaces of often highly structured, unequal power relations (as with schools and educational spaces as discussed above), meaning that some articulations of religious or ethnic difference might still be relegated to the domestic. This is the subject of the following section, which turns attention to how particular logics of rural (in)visibility and familiarity, first introduced in Chapter 5, shape encounters with and across difference in private places in the Outer Hebrides.

8.4. MEETING HOUSES, CÈILIDH HOUSES: HOSTING AND DWELLING

In Chapter 5's discussion of the centrality of the rural logic of sloinnidhean to the 'performance of localness', I referenced Judith comparing her experiences of integration into the social life of Uist and Skye. In contrast to the public place of the local pub in Skye, she recounted, where events, encounters or places would be 'happening for me as well, because I can just go there', in the Outer Hebrides, she found it necessary to present a social connection, some sort of 'sloinneadh', to 'open doors'. As Nasrin similarly put it, the Outer Hebrides are 'open communities to those who know each other'. Recollecting her childhood in the islands, she explained, 'you can go out and play, it's safe, you know everyone there. If you get stuck, if it's bad weather, you can go to a house, you know, you'll know them'.

Judith encapsulated these dynamics in the phrase, 'proper cèilidh culture', referring not necessarily (or exclusively) to a dance, but to the traditional social practice of 'dol a chèilidh' – visiting other 'private' houses for chat, stories, food and drink. Cèilidhing could take place in different houses on different evenings in rotation, or a specific house in a village or settlement could come to function as a semi-public cèilidh house – replicated by *An Taigh Cèilidh* in Stornoway, or the 'meeting house' of Grinneabhat, described in section 8.2.2 above. Cèilidhs were an important site of the generation, transmission and adaption of local memory and Gaelic language and culture. Although the contemporary practice of dol a chèilidh tends to be seen as a different sort of activity (Course 2019, see also *Dùthchas,* a poignant documentary portraying cèilidhing in Berneray in the 1960s and '70s), the practice continues to blur distinctions between public and private space in the Hebrides, with an impact on geographies of language and multicultural encounter.

Ahmed, for instance, attributed the 'harmonious coexistence' between locals and the first 'Pakistani newcomers' to the islands in the 1940s and '50s in part to the fact that the work of the latter group entailed visiting private homes:

> Because all the Pakistani newcomers that came in, […] they were door-to-door salesmen initially, they were going around the island, so because of the very nature of their work, they had to integrate with the local people. They had to speak to them! They didn't keep to themselves, […] that happened here simply because the very nature of the jobs that the Asians did, they had to integrate with the local community.

While there are many ways in which these relations could be interpreted, this account evidences the importance of 'private' houses as sites of encounter in geographies of rural multiculturalism. Several of the volunteer befrienders and English conversation partners working with the Syrian refugees in Stornoway also spoke of the importance of private homes as 'meeting houses'. Dorothy, whose faltering, 'less-than-fluent' conversation with a fellow participant on a befriending project about the loss of his daughter I discussed in Chapter 7, ventured that such a moment of 'revocalised authenticity' could only have taken place in a private house:

> I don't think he would have brought the phone out in a public place to show me [his] family. I could be wrong, but in the privacy of his own home, quite different.

Annie, another volunteer befriender and English conversation partner, stressed the importance of bilateral hospitality in private homes for 'oiling the gears' of integration as a multidirectional, intercultural process (Phipps, Aldegheri & Fisher 2022):

> The other thing that I think is quite, er, important there is just the, they're very hospitable people. And of course they are, they'd got, they had been given houses by the council and all that kind of stuff, and um, I think once they realized, and I like to have folk round as well, so that, I think that kind of oiled the gears quite nicely actually.

Reminiscent of Margaret's emphasis on her ESOL students as being generous hosts of birthday parties and other celebrations, discussed above, Aleena, a Syrian woman living in Stornoway, also stressed the importance of hosting people in her home:

> I really like cooking. And not just cooking, but cooking for others. I'm like, 'OK, come, taste it, do you like it? Do you want some?!'

Through enabling people to agentially express hospitality – something precluded by the widespread use of cruise ships or hotels to accommodate asylum-seekers since early 2020 – in private homes, there is greater opportunity for the sorts of transcultural, 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) intimacy that might, for the various reasons discussed above, be precluded in public, coded as Anglophonic, space. Annie continued, still in reference to her Syrian friends:

> They've had a new baby in the past year and a half, and they call him, you know, Arabic words. They call him habibi which means 'darling', and so I call him habibi now as well. Things like that, it just oils the wheels. […] I think you're inadvertently picking up something of their culture, the way they do things or the kind of food they like or things like that, they cook things, there might be certain aspects of the culture you might be picking up as you learn, and as I learn a bit more about them.

Private homes in these accounts are not the sealed 'bubbles' that Màiri alludes to in her discussion of 'the world out there [being] English' in section 8.2 above, but 'meeting houses' implicated in the complex scalar politics of the 'cultural geopolitics of hosting' (Mason & Hughes 2024), gently pulling at what 'home' might come to mean for both hosts and hosted. Imogen, a retired language teacher, for instance, recounted learning Welsh, her husband's first language, initially so that they would both be able to raise their son in Welsh, but then as an act of 'linguistic hospitality' (Ricoeur 2004), so 'nobody had to take account for the fact that I was there' in the private space of her in-laws' living room:

> I went and learned [Welsh], because I was pregnant, so that this baby would then have Welsh. And it was really good to do that, because doing the class and everything, it meant, because we were living in Wales, I'd go and see my in-laws and, you know, could actually speak Welsh to them, and people could have conversations normally, in the living room, where they would normally all speak Welsh to each other, and nobody had to take account for the fact that I was there.

As with Annie's 'inadvertent' adoption of Arabic and 'picking up something of [her hosts'] culture' through the embodied experience of being in their home, sharing food and playing with their children, language in Imogen's account features as a key pivot point in the broader cultural geopolitics of home and hosting, of whose presence, speech or comprehension, at multiple, intersecting scales, is prioritised, 'taken account for' or recognised. The process of language learning – and the inevitable vulnerabilities, misunderstandings and fumbling 'less-than-fluency' it entails – in domestic spaces features as an important, infrastructural component of forging larger scale relationships of 'revocalised authenticity' and contesting broader geographies of language minoritisation. Imogen, for instance, described how the process of learning Welsh initially for the familial relationships with her son, husband and in-laws had a larger scale impact in that she 'suddenly felt this kind of entry to this whole other world, […] [it] suddenly opened up this whole world, the music and the culture and all these things'. The risk and vulnerability entailed in a multilingual, 'less-than-fluent' encounter can be, in Isabel's

words, 'exhilarating', surprising, potentially unsettling of larger scale power structures, even if the encounter is 'paradoxically organised' (Wilson 2017b), such as an act of hosting in a private, familiar home. The 'proper cèilidh culture' and logic of sloinnidhean in the Outer Hebrides complicates the extent to which encounters much be 'surprising' or 'inherently unpredictable' in order to be 'meaningful' in their potential to transform (Wilson 2017a, 2017b).

Finally, as well as important 'meeting houses' for structuring encounters across with and difference, private houses play an important symbolic role in geographies of uneven (im)mobility and contested 'remoteness' discussed in Chapters 5. The crumbling ruins of Hebridean 'abandoned' houses photographed by tourists – or professional photographers (see John Maher's 2016 exhibition, *Nobody's Home*) – for 'locals' can be the sites of often painful memories of many a cèilidh gone by, symbolising both the memory of multiple generations of displacement and persistent material barriers to staying in the Hebrides in the present. As Magnus Course (2019: 62) notes:

> Houses, both new and old, both inhabited and uninhabited, both pristine and in ruins, are important because they mark human dwelling on a landscape in which human dwelling cannot be taken for granted or guaranteed.

Figure 8.2 'Peat Fire' by John Mayer. http://johnmaher.co.uk/nobodys-home/. Reproduced with permission of the author.

The pivotal role – both materially and symbolically – of houses in geographies of rural belonging has been mobilised by minority language activists campaigning for more effective housing regulations, including calls for housing reserved for minority language speakers (see Misneachd

2021, 2022, or in the Welsh context, Cymdeithas yr Iaith 2022). An open letter published online in 2020 (Source 2020), for example, critiqued the unaffordability of rural housing and its negative impact on rural communities, drawing on the powerful symbolic salience of the Highland Clearances. Seòras, a young Gaelic speaker in Uist, explained:

> The big thing there is second homes, holiday home type situation, and I totally believe that that's having a terrible impact on the language. It has a terrible impact on the community if it's a second home that's empty for most of the year, and then if it's either a house that's like that or a house that a couple who retire from usually a place of kind of greater average economic wealth like the South of England, can retire up, and therefore with cash outbid somebody from here. Just because of that economic inequality, and also then that's no longer a house that's got Gaelic in it, there's much less Gaelic in the community, your schools then close and it all spirals downhill. So, I definitely think there should be a kind of, it's pertinent for this conversation, is housing that is specifically for Gaelic speakers. Obviously, not huge numbers, but there should be some I think, because the relationship between the housing and the community and the language is so interlinked, that I think there's a clear case to be made that, given the way the language is at the moment, there should be priority given in some areas for housing to be given to families really that are going to be speaking Gaelic and raising a family in Gaelic.

As in Chapter 6, here we see a politicisation of the private use of Gaelic through its co-articulation with uneven geographies of (im)mobility (specifically, rural gentrification and housing inequalities) and the intersectionally disciplined performance of localness. Accordingly, we might understand the proposal for 'housing that is specifically for Gaelic speakers' as a form of territorialisation, one of 'multiple strategies to appropriate space in pursuit of different political projects' (Halvorsen 2019: 795). Like any territorialisation, the proposal is contentious, raising complex practical and political questions: what level of fluency in what variety of Gaelic would meet the threshold to qualify for a house, and who would set the criteria and mechanisms by which this is assessed? What does it mean to 'raise a family in Gaelic', and what on assumptions of family or household structure does this rest?

Feminist critique of 'the relationship between the housing and the community and the language', however, is not incompatible with, nor should detract from, the need for housing regulations that mitigate against the negative impacts of second home ownership and short-term holiday lets for diverse rural communities (see SG 2023a). This is especially so in view of the argument set out in this section, that private homes are not only key nodes in the social reproduction of various structures of inequality (especially as they align with gendered, racialised ideologies of children's safety and 'family values' in the 'rural idyll' mythology, see Chapter 2); they also function as dynamic 'meeting houses', sites of 'paradoxically organised' (Wilson 2017b) encounter, implicated in the scalar politics of hospitality and rural multicultures.

8.5. LAND: 'THE MEANINGS IN THESE PLACES'

This chapter has so far explored how embodied encounters with and across cultural and linguistic difference are 'intra-actively co-constituted' (Barad 2007: 170) with the 'environments' or 'habitats' in which they take place. It has considered how relationships between 'public' and 'private' space in the Outer Hebrides are shaped by rural logics of (in)visibility, strangerness and familiarity, in ways that can preclude, facilitate or modulate the possibility for moments of 'revocalised sincerity' or 'transruptive' encounter (Hesse 2000). In this section, I now move to consider the co-articulation of language(s) and land, as not a 'place' as such, but as a complex and evolving set of sociomaterial relations that underlies the spatial structures so far considered in this chapter. This insistence on the sociomaterial relationality of land is part of a move to complicate cultural geographer John Wylie's disavowal of any possibility of ever 'belonging' to or with a landscape, while still remaining wary of 'ontopological' (Wylie 2016) accounts of this attachment as exclusively fixed or essentially determined. Instead, I argue that 'land' or 'landscape' can come to figure for people with multiple and shifting languages, migration trajectories and place attachments as an important site of re-identification, (re)negotiation and rescaling of identity, relation and community.

An understanding of land as something akin to the materiality of place, as the material substrata for systems of ethical and political interrelation (see, for example, living-language-land WWW, a project exploring these relations in the context of COP26 in Glasgow in 2021) is particularly salient in rural areas, where until very recently agriculture or other forms of land work has been the dominant mode of labour. In Màiri's recollections, quoted in section 8.2 above, of 'things happening in the communities all the time where you were surrounded by [Gaelic]', for instance, the primary 'public' for the transmission, adaption and ongoing negotiation of linguistic and cultural heritage is the collective labour of land work – the digging of peat, the shepherding of sheep, the planting of potatoes. In particular, crofting – a form of land tenure and use unique to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, whose history is entwined with the Highland Clearances and the land struggles of the late 19th century (see Hunter 1976) – was frequently evoked as a key site in the construction of Gaelic identities. Even participants in this research who, in the context of diversified rural economies, did not work on crofts, adopted crofting as a metaphor for a sort of Hebridean mode of labour. Rowan, for example, a young Gaelic-speaking woman living in the Isle of Lewis, described 'being a practising artist in the Hebrides as sort of a little bit like creative crofting', explaining:

> I totally see myself as a creative crofter [because] I do lots of, like, I do my freelance photography, my graphic design, but I also do stuff like PR and I do like interviews, radio stuff, but I also work part-time with [a community land trust]. […] That's just how most people work here. […] there's a lot of people doing a lot of things, and there's lots of crossover and community connection.

The close association between Gaelic and crofting speaks to broader co-articulations of language and land as a set of sociomaterial relations extending beyond labour. Margaret summarised, 'Gaelic explains the lay of the land', referencing Gaelic placenames that translate as 'the pointed hill or the rounded hill that looks like an old woman' or 'fields named after what was grown in them or the colour of them'. Anne, an artist and crofter from the West side of Lewis, similarly described how knowledge of Gaelic carried a particular *relation* to land, rather than with unpeopled, unstoried land*scape* as something 'you look at and take pictures of, but you don't *know*'. Language, she continued:

> is linked with the land in that way, and people knowing and loving the land and so wanting to preserve it. If you don't know something, why would you want to preserve it? Why would you have any interest in preserving it, if you don't know it or care about it?

Importantly, her various creative projects exploring the connection between language and ways of 'knowing and loving the land' placed an emphasis on this knowledge as 'alive', plural and contested. One such project, for instance, is *Dealbh-Dùthcha* ('*Pictureform of the Landcountry*'), a map of hyperlocal Gaelic placenames from around the villages of Bragar and Arnol, created in opposition to processes of green extractivism introduced in Chapter 5:

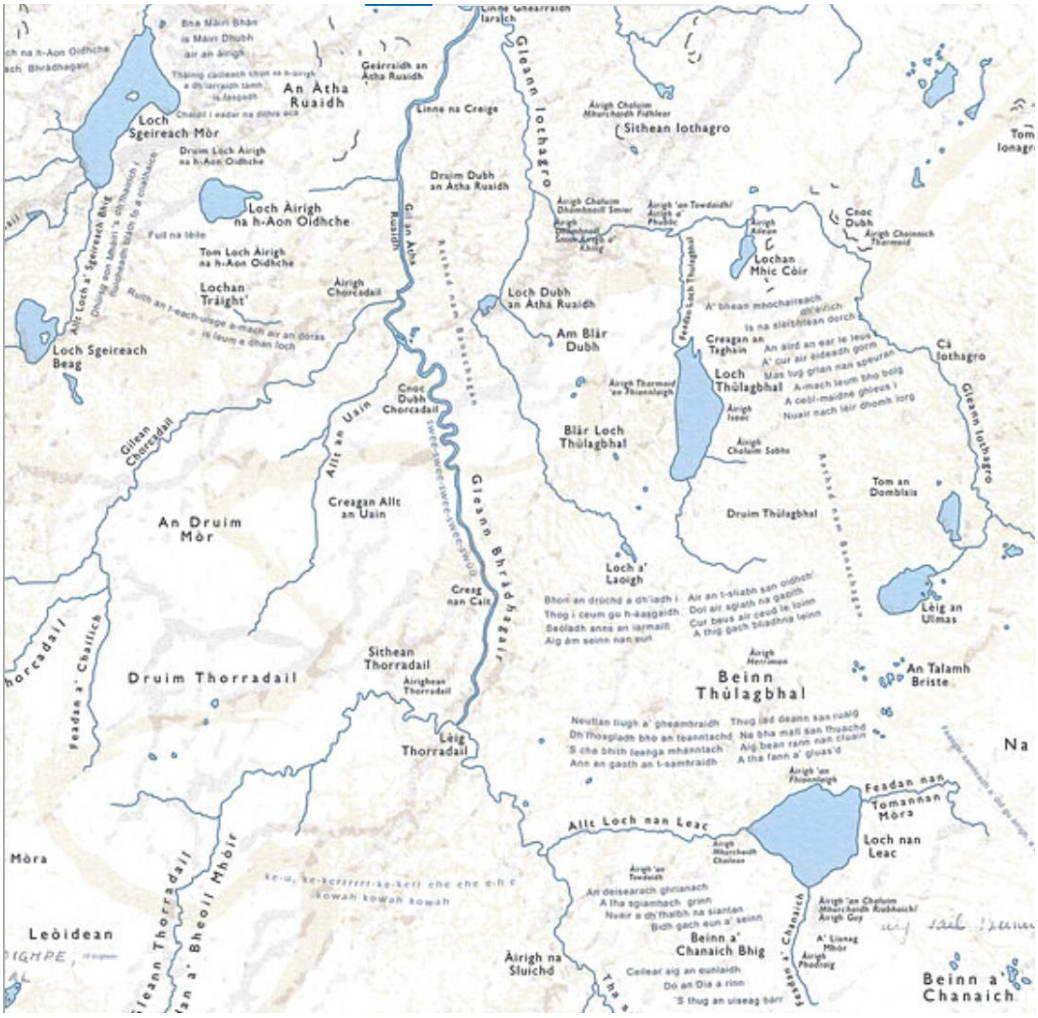

Figure 8.3. Detail from Dealbh-Dùthcha ('Pictureform of the Landcountry'), Campbell 2017, reproduced with permission of the author.

In producing the map, Anne recounted, she complemented her own existing knowledge of placenames deriving from her experience of going 'to the moor with [her] father' by asking for contributions in the Bragar post office, which was 'an important village hub at that point', to represent a more plural toponymy. She also stressed that even though 'people don't use the peatland in the way they used to', one of the key aspirations of the project was to emphasise the co-articulation of language and land not only as plural, but also as 'alive', embodied and practised, rather than as an 'unchanging artefact of a timeless culture' (Briggs & Sharp 2004: 669). She explained:

> I also put shieling names on the map I made for UCBA.[73] […] A lot of the shielings are recorded by the historical society[74], but the records are not very accessible. So, we wanted to publish something that anybody could buy for a fiver and carry with them walking.

[73] UCBA: Urras Coimhearsnachd Bhràdhagair agus Àrnoil, the Bragar and Arnol Community Trust. A shieling is a temporary dwelling, usually in upland areas, used for accommodation for people involved in transhumance.

[74] Comann Eachdraidh an Taobh Siar.

Continuing to discuss where the 'local knowledge' carried through Gaelic is located, she staged an opposition between its institutionalisation or 'freezing' (Briggs & Sharp 2004) and its continual renegotiation as multiple, embodied, evolving ways of 'knowing and loving the land'. She reflected:

> I think what people had here, I suppose what indigenous people had everywhere, was a really detailed knowledge of their land, […] the land that's their territory for grazing and using and cultivating. And then when you go outside that territory – for example if you ask somebody from one village the name of a small loch in a neighbouring village they may say, 'well, I don't know that it's got a name'. Whereas if you ask someone from that place they will tell you the name of the loch and possibly the derivation of the name and who drained it first and who drained it last and who used it and who lived there [laughs], but ask them something about another village and they're like, well, 'I don't know'.

The connections between land, language, knowledge, belonging and even territory here emerge as practised and processual (Ingold 2000), sedimented and deeply entangled with the ongoing (re)negotiation of local memory, in a way that precludes neither multiplicity nor change. Describing her work on a similar project, *Rathad an Isein* (Campbell 2013), a glossary of the Lewis moorland, Anne explicitly stressed this diverse linguistic ecology:

> One of the words [a collaborator on the project] gave me was 'caochan' for a feature that we would call maybe a 'feadan' - a little stream that's hidden under the heather. I asked (by this time my father had died so I couldn't ask him) an older neighbour, who was a very good Gaelic scholar, whether he knew the word 'caochan', whether it was used here? And he said, yes, he did know the word 'caochan', for the sound of a stream under the ground that you couldn't see. So that was its meaning here, slightly different: it means the sound here, where there it meant the actual stream itself. […] We tried our best to put in the different meanings and the different translations, […] the meanings in different places, what the meanings were in these places.

The co-articulation of language and (relations to) land proposed here does not rely on essentialised links between a static or homogenous linguistic community bound in place. The 'meanings in these places' instead emerge as translational, 'defined by imbricated difference rather than self-identity' (Hammond & Cook 2023: 802).

Albeit without always explicit reference to language, importantly, this was also the case for multilingual participants in this research who spoke of their relationships to land, land work and landscape in the Hebrides in ways that fracture Wylie's (2016) assertion of the ethical impossibility of ever belonging to or with a landscape. Michal, for instance, described how 'knowing and loving the land' in the Hebrides – through learning Gaelic, studying the history of Scottish land reform and helping on his neighbour's croft – offered a translational connection to rural Polish heritage, a means of articulating 'transrural' (Askins 2009) class identity 'as constituted through its commitment to always translating its differences' (Hammond & Cook 2023: 802):

> I think through learning more about life here and the kind of communal peasant past of the Highlands and Islands, I think for me that's also a road to recovery of my own heritage, where all of my grandparents' generation were all peasants born in the countryside.

Similarly, Lea, a new entrant to crofting, understood her work with the land as a dynamic point of re-identification. She explained it in terms of participation in collective efforts for local food sovereignty and resistance to geopolitical challenges on multiple scales, from the global energy crisis escalated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 to the more local 'ferry fiasco', delays and cancellations of 'lifelines services' to the Hebrides due to CalMac's ageing fleet of ferries:

> The main idea for having the croft was to be as self-sufficient as possible. […] The idea is to grow a lot of food for ourselves but also for the surrounding, for the township here. Because I really strongly believe that, well, as the last few months have proven, it's going to be a lot more difficult. We need to be more self-sufficient. Up here we can't just import all the food from the mainlands [sic], and the more food we can grow ourselves, the better it is for everyone.

Land – or more specifically, relations with land, here expressed as the labour of food production – in these accounts figures as a point of re-identification and the ongoing (re)negotiation and rescaling of 'the meanings in these places'. Lea also explained how the hills behind her croft offered an affective, translocal connection to the landscape of her hometown in Austria, a translation, a means of 'finding one place in another' (Pearce 2023):

> I still miss a little bit the mountains but you can just here, go behind my croft and just here there are hills and I can climb the hills and that's great, I love that. Absolutely love that.

Aleena similarly spoke of the beaches in Harris, not to compare them to her hometown of Damasus, but expressing a deep emotional, embodied attachment to landscape as fostering feelings of love, comfort and awe, almost as if experiencing a Romantic sublime. She told me happily, 'I can sit there for days. I love. Harris is a nice place. And all around. All around! And we swam!' Conversely, the experience of Harris' vastness 'all around!' for other people could trigger a deep sense of alienation or detachment: one tourist I shared a hostel with seemed to be experiencing a panic attack at what she described as a landscape 'so desolate' she felt like she was 'in prison'; another participant described bringing visiting friends to Uig Bay, who, with the mountains of Harris behind them and the full fetch of the Atlantic in front, had an intense emotional reaction, 'couldn't get out the car, couldn't breathe'. Land(scape), in short, is not *essentially* a 'homeland' (Wylie 2016), but might, in particular instances and for transient moments, provoke the fleeting, contingent phenomenological experience of being 'at home' – or conversely, feeling disturbingly, profoundly alienated.

Although there has been a variety of research into migrants' participation in urban community gardens and allotments (see Crossan *et al.* 2016; Egoz & De Nardi 2017; Gerodetti & Foster 2016), there remains scope for further research into pluralised co-articulations of language(s), land and belonging in contexts of rural migration.[75] Further, appreciating this

[75] Interesting case studies in this regard could include, for example, emerging work on cross-border practices of transhumance (Bindi 2022; Easdale, Michel & Perri 2023) or diasporic heirloom seed projects (see Sansour WWW).

entanglement as 'alive', plural and contested, not as an 'unchanging artefact of a timeless culture' (Briggs & Sharp 2004: 669), requires attention to how multiple languages and labours of translation can operate to rework the salience of 'the meanings in these places', with an eye to the material contexts that shape its generation, adaption and transmission, such as deeply unequal land access, the rural housing crisis discussed in section 8.4, and the barriers experienced by new entrants to crofting and racialised landworkers (see Terry 2023).

8.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to explore the various different places that constitute the notion of a language's 'environment' or 'habitat'. In particular, it aimed to pluralise this attachment, appreciating minoritised languages as existing within dynamic and diverse linguistic ecologies. As such, the chapter homed in on the spatial structuring of rural multiculturalism, considering how the nature of the relationship between public and private space in the Outer Hebrides facilitates, modulates or precludes relations of 'revocalised sincerity' or 'transruptive' encounter (Hesse 2000). It also considered connections between language(s) and 'land', not as a place as such, but as the material relationality underlying structures of space and systems of ethical and political interrelation.

I first outlined the importance of 'breathing spaces' (Fishman 1991) as environments in which it feels safe, 'natural and casual' to use a minoritised language with a stranger within broader constructions of public space as monolingually Anglophone. I discussed the complex emotionality and intergenerational tensions that constrain speaking Gaelic in public, and noted, as first introduced in Chapter 7, that minoritised languages and forms of cultural difference that are racialised as 'foreign' are often relegated to less visible, 'subterranean' (Jones 2012) environments.

The chapter then considered networked, semi-public spaces such as classrooms and places of worship, where participants might not 'know' every other person who uses the space but can assume some points of commonality. I argued that because such spaces are often highly disciplined and structured, 'interruptions' (Baynham 2006) of 'glottopolitical' (García & Amorós-Negre 2020; Guespin & Marcellesi 1986) agency can be particularly telling as to how imagined geographies of a language's 'environment' are reproduced, rescaled or resituated. In particular, I drew attention to the spatial tension between the linguistic environments of school and home, noting the generative permeability of the immersion classroom and the potential for classrooms to operate as space of collective 'linguistic hospitality' (Ricoeur 2004). I also observed that while religious spaces constitute important semi-public spaces for the formation, expression and renegotiation of various forms of rural 'new ethnicities', as contested spaces of

often highly structured, unequal power relations, they are far from 'neutral' spaces of encounter and can operate to exclude some forms of embodied difference to the private, domestic sphere.

I then noted the importance of 'private' houses not only as sites of dwelling, but also as dynamic 'meeting houses' in geographies of rural multiculturalism and hospitality. Especially given the rural logics of familiarity or sloinnidhean introduced in Chapter 5, related to what Judith described as 'proper cèilidh culture' in the Outer Hebrides, private homes constitute important sites for the sorts of transcultural, 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) intimacy that might be precluded in public, coded as Anglophonic, space. I argued that despite being sites of 'paradoxically organised' (Wilson 2017b) encounter, acts of bilateral 'linguistic hospitality' (Ricoeur 2004) in private homes in rural areas are thus an important, infrastructural component of forging larger scale relationships of multicultural 'revocalised authenticity' and contesting broader geographies of language minoritisation.

Finally, I discussed the importance of 'land', not as a place as such, but as a complex and evolving set of emplaced sociomaterial relations that underlie these more visible spatial structures, constituting an important site in language geographies of belonging in the Outer Hebrides. In a move to complicate cultural geographer John Wylie's (2016) assertion of the ethical impossibility of ever belonging to or with a land(scape), I noted that co-articulations of language(s) and (relations to) land need not rely on essentialised or 'ontopological' links between a static or homogenous linguistic community bound in place. Instead, I noted how 'land' figured for people with multiple different languages, migration trajectories and place attachments as an important site of re-identification, (re)negotiation and rescaling of 'the meanings in these places'.

Throughout the chapter, I have attended to language(s) as 'topoglossic', 'deriv[ing] their meanings from the places in which they are (and have been) used' (Hammond & Cook 2023: 795). I emphasised the relational plurality of this relationship, that language(s) can be grounded in multiple 'environments', 'in *and* across place' (Katz 2001: 1230, original emphasis). Co-articulations of language(s) and place(s) are plural, evolving and contested. They might, in certain instances, not essentially but contingently, provide a 'scene of attachment' (Anderson 2023), promising the fleeting phenomenological experience of feeling 'at home'.

CHAPTER NINE

‘BELONGING IN TWO’

A CONCLUSION

Conor, the ship engineer whose description of striving for ‘fair’, ‘sincere’ or ‘authentic’ relations across language difference and uneven power structures in the highly multilingual environment of a ship I discussed in Chapter 6, shared with me how it felt to be able to speak his first language, Doric, while working at sea ‘on the other side of the world’:

> I was on a ship and we were in the gulf and I had no idea this guy was joining. There was a crew change coming up, and you know, four or five people were getting off, four or five people were coming on to take their place, and I come out of the engine room back up into the control room and I walked in and there was a guy I was at school with, Mark. And he went ‘fit are ye daein here?!’ and I says, ‘fit fuck are ye daein here?!’ and everybody else was kinda like, ‘what are they saying’. […] I was third engineer and he was fourth engineer, so we were working close for nearly two months, every day together and we right back into broad Doric, the way we grew up, the funny words and stupid phrases we used to say. It was really… it meant a lot to both of us, I think. I mean, he’d just left home, but for me, having been halfway through my trip to have this link to my childhood appear unknown meant a lot. It made the trip more enjoyable, not that, there’s nothing against the rest of it, guys in the team, you know, it doesn’t matter where people were from, there’s a lot of good guys, but just having that, being able to talk Doric on the other side of the world was really cool and really helped that. Because you go through highs and lows when you’re away for that amount of time, it can be quite hard. A little lift like that went a long way.

In this ‘little lift’ – as in Màiri’s ‘connection, that’s always umbilical’ that opened this thesis – we might read the promise of belonging in and through language. Language grounded in and across place here figures as a ‘scene of attachment’ (Anderson 2023), promising the fleeting phenomenological experience of feeling ‘at home’, but without this necessarily being bounded, essentialised, static or ‘ontopological’ (Wylie 2016). This thesis set out to interrogate the nature of this attachment, to consider how, where, and to what extent it might be detached from the colonial structures of nation and race, and articulated instead through forms of multicultural, translational, translocal relation. In this final chapter, I review how the thesis has moved towards this aim, revisiting its core arguments, reflecting on their implications on theoretical, methodological and empirical levels, and finally, gesturing to directions in which they might be developed.

9.1. REVISITING CORE ARGUMENTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

In moving towards a 'reparative geography of the mother tongue', this thesis was propelled by three intersecting thematic objectives: (*i*) language and relation; (*ii*) language and territory; and (*iii*) language and embodiment. In this section, I review how the thesis has responded to these three interrelated aspects and reflect on their implications for interdisciplinary scholarship relating to rural multiculturalism, 'new ethnicities' and emerging geographies of multilingualism and translation.

9.1.1. Language and relation

This thesis set out to interrogate the political and ethical implications of (re)conceptualising language(s) as relational, especially in contested contexts of uneven fluency, translation and partial understanding. This was part of a related aim of advancing an argument I have previously elaborated elsewhere (Chapman 2023) – for the 'revocalisation' of human geography – by geographically grounding Cavarero's philosophy of (de)vocalisation in embodied contexts of *multi*lingualism and *multi*culturalism, partial fluency and uneven power geometries – in particular, through critically reading her philosophy through the lens of a modernity/coloniality framework. In responding to this objective, in Chapter 2 I argued that attention to the praxis of translation as the 'anti-abstractionist' (Edwards 2003) labour of producing and sustaining differences-in-relation might offer a useful entry point for understanding the frictious processes by which contingent and precarious relations of transnational, translocal or transcultural solidarity are produced, maintained and negotiated. This constitutes a key contribution to geographical scholarship on encounter, multicultural convivialities and translocal solidarities. It also advances the thesis' overarching aim by reading for alternative, 'reparative' language geographies of relation not with blithe positivity, but with careful consideration of what is at stake in their (re)production.

It was through this lens, for example, that in Chapter 5, 'A very small place on the edge', I identified articulations of rural 'translocal tradition' as a key aspect of the 'performance of localness' in the Outer Hebrides. I noted how participants of various different linguistic, cultural and national backgrounds articulated 'tradition' in a way that was not bound to closed, static or absolutist understandings of place, but rather that privileged translations between a 'local here' and various 'locals there', entangling the local with the global and thereby offering vernacular counterpoints to notions of global modernity as cultural homogenisation. Chapter 6, '…but I don't know if I'm a Gael', moved this analysis to a more explicitly linguistic context, considering how such translocal relations participate in the cultural politics of place as speakers translate between forms of language marked by varying degrees and orientations of 'authenticity'. Central to this analysis was an interdisciplinary expansion of the notion of 'authenticity' as an agentive, 'revocalised' relation. I considered emergences of Cavarero's 'absolute local' as instances in

which speakers embody notions of revocalised 'authenticity' not merely to index certain places as 'origins', but in order to participate 'sincerely' in the political construction of a 'progressive sense of place' (Massey 1991, 1993) within, against and beyond the nativist ideologies at the heart of 'the monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012). Chapter 7, 'On the islands it wasn't there', further developed this argument to stress that such translational relations or instances of Cavarero's 'absolute local' exist in tension with the structures of racial capitalism, European (post)coloniality and white supremacy. The chapter also considered what is at stake in the (re)production and potential scaling-up of 'meaningful encounter' (Wilson 2017a: 460–462), adopting translation as a lens through which to view emergent articulations of collective identity and political belonging 'defined by imbricated difference rather than self-identity' (Hammond & Cook 2023: 802). In this chapter, I suggested that relational practices of language learning, linguistic hospitality and cultural translation in the Outer Hebrides had the potential to 'transrupt' (Hesse 2000) or conversely, to reproduce structures of race, nation and coloniality – a tension to which I shall return at several points in the discussion below, in sections 9.1.2 and 9.3.

9.1.2. Language and territory

As part of its second thematic objective, the thesis explored how these multilingual, multicultural relations are pulled into processes of de/reterritorialisation at multiple, intersecting and contested scales. This focus on dynamic, embodied and contingent processes of de/reterritorialisation helps move us towards reparative geographies of the mother tongue by offering a more explicitly political analysis of how competing territorialisations of language, place and belonging are (re)produced, contested and negotiated. This has constituted a key contribution to sociolinguistic scholarship – nuancing calls to 'move beyond territory' (O'Rourke 2022: 73) through interdisciplinary engagement with geographical debates regarding the tangled relationship *between* relationality and territoriality (Painter 2006a, 2006b, 2010). This is especially useful, I argued, for geographies of minoritised languages, given the spatial strategies of displacement, containment and peripheralisation that have led to their minoritisation, and the importance of space and place to revitalisation or maintenance efforts. This was achieved primarily through the theoretical lens provided by a 'transepistemological' approach, drawing on translations between English and Romance-language geographies to elaborate a more dynamic conceptualisation of territory as a 'hybrid notion, caught between an incomplete colonial project, represented in the modern state and its political technologies (Elden 2010), and multiple strategies to appropriate space in pursuit of different political projects' (Halvorsen 2019: 795).

The first half of this 'hybrid notion' – territory as an 'incomplete colonial project, represented in the modern state and its political technologies' (*ibid.*) – was first analysed in Chapter 4, 'Our three voiced country?', which provided a spatial analysis of policy governing minoritised languages and multilingualism in Scotland and the UK. I argued that racialising distinctions between different minority languages operate as a bordering, territorialising technology, as part of a retrospective 'fictive ethnic[isation]' (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991) of nation, with the integration into nation of 'historical' cultural and linguistic diversity constructed as a fait accompli, while other minoritised languages or forms of racialised speech are perpetually 'migrantised' (Bhambra 2017; Tudor 2018). I noted that this perpetuates racialised exclusions and inequalities – despite the Scottish Government's aspirations to 'impeccably civic' (Keating 2009) nationalism – and masks a set of unresolved spatial and scalar tensions that shape the more complex and diverse language geographies of Scotland. The second half of Chapter 7, 'On the islands it wasn't there', then provided an empirical counterpart to this analysis, detailing how a de facto policy tendency towards English proficiency as a prerequisite for 'integration' and inadequate material support for multilingualism, translation and other forms of linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur 2004) function as a sort of internal, everyday bordering (Trafford 2021; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy 2018). In this chapter I also argued that complacently 'post-racial' (Joseph 2018) articulations of Scottish exceptionalism mute the possibility for 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) multilingual relations that might de/reterritorialise these nonetheless racialised and racialising language geographies. I return to this in section 9.2 below, reflecting on the ways in which this research might resonate beyond academic scholarship, with broader debates about race, multiculturalism and nation(alism) in contemporary Scotland.

Analysis of the second component of a transepistemological account of territory – as 'multiple strategies to appropriate space in pursuit of different political projects' (Halvorsen 2019: 795) at scales other than that of the nation-state – was first discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, 'A very small place on the edge', and '…but I don't know if I'm a Gael'. In these chapters, I considered how the uneven (im)mobilities fuelling constructions of 'locals', 'incomers' and 'flybys' in the rural, contestably 'peripheral' contexts of the Outer Hebrides can become de/reterritorialised and (re)scaled. In particular, I suggested an interpretation of discourses of 'nativeness' and 'Gaelness' as politicised territorialisations of the 'performance of localness', positing that such terms, while far from uncontroversial or uncontested, were sometimes mobilised as a means of contesting and rescaling the territorialisation of Gaelic as 'belonging to Scotland' (BnG 2018: 6) or as a 'national European language' (Armstrong *et al*. 2022: 75). Chapter 8, 'The meanings in these places', advanced this argument by considering 'breathing spaces' for minoritised languages – such as An Taigh Cèilidh or Grinneabhat – as smaller-scale

spaces which resist the territorialisation of the public realm, 'the world out there', as monolingually English-speaking, requiring the political labour of facilitating and safeguarding relations of linguistic hospitality. In this chapter, I also noted the relative lack of such public 'breathing spaces' in the Outer Hebrides territorialised for the expression of racialised forms of cultural or linguistic difference, or for facilitating potentially 'transruptive' (Hesse 2000) translational relations and encounters, which instead, I noted, tended to be relegated to private or semi-public spheres.

The difficulty of separating the intersecting scales at which identity and the de/reterritorialisation thereof operate was broached in the discussion at the end of Chapter 6 and continued in the second section of Chapter 7. These sections engaged with the scalar politics by which localised articulations of identity and difference (notably, in the Outer Hebrides, 'Gaelness') are complexly implicated in structures of race, ethnicity and nation. This tension – discernible in conceptualisations of territory as a 'hybrid notion' (Halvorsen 2019), caught between different scales, and in the ambivalences of 'ethnicity' as something that can appear 'both in its restricted, unified, closed, absolutist, defensive, and essentialist forms and as a "weave of differences" that is looser, more permeable, and more porous in character' (Hall 2017: 134) – remains somewhat unresolved: we shall return to it in section 9.3 below.

9.1.3. Language and embodiment

Thirdly, this thesis' movements towards a reparative geography of the mother tongue were propelled by engagement with the embodied, phenomenological experience of 'belonging' in and through language(s), with a particular focus on the ways in which bodies move through and are moved through by the borders of racialised, gendered space. Throughout, I adopted a 'revocalised' ontology of language(s) as a set of 'embodied, embedded, enacted and distributed' (Pennycook 2018: 89) practices in dynamic 'semiotic assemblages' (*ibid*: 91), as opposed to poststructuralist reductions of language to an abstract and disembodied structure of signification. As argued for in Chapter 2, I also strove to attend to race and gender as integral structural components of such assemblages, stressing, in short, the fundamental co-constitution of the 'devocalisation of logos' (Cavarero 2005) and the 'coloniality of language' (Veronelli 2015), and drawing on insights from Black feminist scholarship that race and gender are not merely 'ethnographically particular' (Weheliye 2014: 29–30), but are instead fundamental to inherited ontologies of the human, human embodiment and human communication.

My primary means of thinking with this argument empirically was through critical engagement with the ways in which embodied encounters with and across linguistic and cultural difference do not simply take place in space, but rather are structured by and structuring of space and place. For instance, in Chapter 6's analysis of 'revocalised authenticity', I

showed how the affective, embodied relationality of adopting 'a voice from somewhere' could be interpreted as an expression of 'sincere', 'good faith' participation in the politics of place, and that this is, in turn, was shaped by the powerfully disciplining, intersecting scripts of race, gender, class and nation – a dynamic that was then explored in Chapter 7's discussion of the multiple, interscalar articulations of 'Gaelness'. Accordingly, my aim towards the reparative was not carried by attempts to *deny* the co-articulation of language(s), bodies and place – mother tongues and mother lands – but rather, to pluralise it. This was primarily the subject of Chapter 8, 'The meanings in these places', which continued discussion of the phenomenological experience of the embodiment of language(s) by exploring various sites throughout the Western Isles that facilitate, modulate or preclude the possibility for potentially 'transruptive' encounters with and across linguistic and cultural difference. This involved critical attention to the rural structuring of private and public space and related logics of (in)visibility, familiarity and recognition in rural areas. The chapter concluded by arguing that co-articulations of language(s), bodies and place need not necessarily be articulated in static, closed or 'ontopological' (Wylie 2016) terms, but rather that they can be understood as plural, evolving and contested, that language(s) can be conceived of not (merely) as a tool for naming the world, but as an embodied way of being with and of the world, potentially promising the fleeting phenomenological experience of feeling 'at home'.

While my call for deeper engagement with language(s) as embodied and material – and, in particular, the connections I made in Chapter 2 between abstractions of language to discrete, disembodied, possessable structures of signification and the structures of coloniality, nation and race – constitutes an important contribution to geographical scholarship (see also Chapman 2023), the response offered in this thesis remains preliminary groundwork. There are, clearly, many ways in which enquiry into language(s), 'mother tongues', as material, embodied and, in particular, 'fleshy' (Spillers 2003, Weheylie 2014) could be furthered. I indicate some of them in section 9.3 below.

9.1.4. Rural multiculturalism and 'new ethnicities'

In empirically exploring these three interrelated aspects of geographies of minoritised languages, this thesis also speaks to various academic debates regarding rurality and (de)coloniality. As I set out in Chapter 2, both geographic scholarship on multicultural encounter, mobility and conviviality (e.g. Amin 2002; Rishbeth & Rogaly 2018; Valentine 2013), and sociolinguistic engagements with 'metrolingualism' (Pennycook & Otsuji 2014, 2015) or 'superdiversity' (Arnaut *et al*. 2015; Blommaert & Rampton 2012) have tended to predominantly concentrate on urban, even metropolitan, contexts, arguably perpetuating imagined geographies of (European) cities as racialising 'laboratories of modernity' (Ha &

Picker 2023) and rural places in the Global North as always-already white (Stead *et al*. 2023). This thesis has demonstrated, however, that in part because of these same discursive constructions of the 'rural idyll', rural areas constitute an important and generative site for exploring the emergence of translational forms of 'new ethnicities'. Chapter 5, 'A very small place on the edge', for instance, considered how particular rural rhythms and cycles of (im)mobility and logics of (in)visibility, familiarity, 'strangerness' and recognition feed into a 'performance of localness' that intersects in complex ways with larger scale scripts of race, nation, class and gender. Chapter 8, 'The meanings in these places', turned attention to how the structuring of public and private space in the Outer Hebrides shape encounters with and across linguistic and cultural difference, suggesting that the 'proper cèilidh culture' and logic of sloinnidhean in the Outer Hebrides complicates the extent to which encounters must be 'surprising' or 'inherently unpredictable' in order to be 'meaningful' in their potential to transform (Wilson 2017a, 2017b).

The thesis' multiscalar engagement with where and how cultural and linguistic difference becomes racialised also constitutes an intervention in ongoing debates regarding the complex and uneven memory politics of colonialism in the Gàidhealtachd, as well as the 'displacement, deflection and disengagement' (Hopkins 2016) from racialised inequalities and exclusions in articulations of Scottishness more broadly. I will return to the broader significance of this below. First, to conclude this section, I briefly indicate several potentially useful methodological points that might be gleaned from this research.

9.1.5. Methodological contributions

In Chapter 3, 'But you need data!', I introduced several methodological contributions. Firstly, I moved to address an enduring silence or 'mystique' about multilingualism and language learning in ethnographically informed research (Gibb, Tremlett & Iglesias 2019), arguing that multilingualism, translation and 'less-than-fluency' should be considered not as merely a practical, technical or operational challenge for data collection and analysis, but rather as an integral, generative feature of qualitative research. While the participatory translation exercise I had prepared was not feasible in the scope of this project, I hope that the translational, 'transepistemological' engagement with territory/territorio/territoire introduced in Chapter 2 goes some way towards demonstrating the potential of adopting translation itself as a qualitative research method.

Secondly, I introduced a reading of oral histories as a 'revocalisation' of feminist standpoint epistemology. I suggested that the method's emphasis on the relations not only between 'researcher' and 'researched', but additionally between context, discourse, theory, memories, desires and emotions invites more nuanced engagement with the tangled relationship between 'Big p' and 'small p' positionality issues (Hitchings & Latham 2020) and

thus allows for a more dynamic, relational and entangled conceptualisation of subjectivity and agency in research encounters to emerge.

Finally, I hope that lessons might be learned from my aspirations towards a 'methodological denationalism' (Anderson 2019). While ultimately it is for the reader to judge how successful my attempt to draw people of various different migration trajectories and legal statuses into the same frame of analysis has been, I would hope that the ways in which it might have been only partly successful or even failed might be instructive.

9.2. LANGUAGE GEOGRAPHIES WITHIN, AGAINST AND BEYOND NATION

There are three primary ways in which I see the accounts, analysis and arguments offered in this thesis as resonating with relevant political debates beyond academic scholarship.

Firstly, in the context of hardening nationalism and entrenched hostility towards racialised difference internationally, and deepening fault lines in 'progressive', 'civic' or 'anti-populist' articulations of Scottish nationalism, the thesis has intervened in critical debates about the (re)production of forms of (multicultural) belonging, identity and community *with*, not *despite*, difference. The research has turned to lived-in geographies of rural multiculturalism and the emergence of translational 'new ethnicities' as a valuable resource to narrate against 'anti-woke', reactionary politicians and pundits across Europe who would disingenuously pit feminist and anti-racist politics against 'bread and butter' issues. The project's empirical focus on Hebridean multiculturalism is particularly salient in this regard given strawman oppositions between rural Scottish politics and the supposed 'liberal elite' of the urban central belt.

Secondly, I hope that these efforts to challenge the 'fictive ethnic[isation]' (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991) of nation lying behind the siloing of issues relating to minoritised languages, migration and multiculturalism – exemplified by the recent Scottish Languages Bill (SG 2023c), which only provides for Scots and Gaelic while the languages of 'New Scots' are consigned to integration policy – might prove useful for navigating divisions in Gaelic language politics. By critically situating debates around 'Gaelness' in a multicultural context, I hope to have gone some way to unpicking the spatial and scalar tensions that exist between racialised nation(alism) and more localised discourses of difference, identity and belonging, in a way that might resonate with broader debates about the ambivalent uses of 'ethnicity', 'indigeneity' and minoritised cultures in European contexts (see, for instance, Lauwers 2024; van der Tol & Becker 2024).

Finally, especially in the context of increasing policy interest in promoting international immigration to alleviate population challenges in rural areas across Europe (see, for example, Gruber, Pöcher & Zupan 2022; Martins 2022; MPS 2023), the thesis has demonstrated the need for attention to geographies of rural belonging, mobilities and coloniality – both in efforts at

policy development for integration and multiculturalism, and in broader decolonial struggles for migrant justice and border abolition in rural localities.

9.3. FURTHERING REPARATIVE LANGUAGE GEOGRAPHIES

This section indicates – non-exhaustively – several unanswered questions and unresolved tensions running through this research and gestures to potential directions in which it could be developed.

As mentioned in section 9.1.3 above, there are many ways in which enquiry into the (im)materiality of language could be furthered – in particular with regard to the tension that exists between the 'devocalisation of logos' (Cavarero 2005) and the centrality of the rooting of language(s) in maternal bodies to colonial, racialising language ontologies. As I initially gestured to in Chapter 2, one way this might proceed is through deeper engagement with Black feminist scholarship on the 'hieroglyphics of the flesh' (Spillers 2003) or 'habeas viscus' (Weheliye 2014) as a challenge to the universalising tendencies of some posthumanist or new materialist approaches that profess to 'found a biological sphere above and beyond the reach of racial hierarchies' (Weheliye 2014: 53). Concurrently, another fruitful way of approaching this tension, especially given the salience of maternal metaphors to geographies of language, would be to draw on interventions in queer feminist science and technology studies, building on feminist geographies of the uterine (Fannin 2018; Lewis 2018) or the gut (Wilson 2015) to set out a 'cyborg' geography of the mother tongue. Such a line of enquiry might also be able to sharpen engagement with questions of socially reproductive labour in geographies of linguistic hospitality, as well as with the role of languaging technologies such as machine translation software, dictionaries or speech recognition in various forms of cross-language communication. Empirically, such an approach would benefit from engaging with the 'glottopolitical' labours and agencies of children – something that was outwith the scope of this project – especially, given the centrality of (certain gendered, racialised, classed notions of) childhood and heteronormative family structures to both the 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012) and discursive constructions of the rural idyll. Finally, geographies of signed languages constitute an important area for future research into the embodied (im)materiality of language.

Additionally meriting extended attention is the unresolved scalar tension between localised articulations of identity and difference and where, to use Seòras's words from the end of Chapter 6, they 'get dragged', how they get translated. In section 9.1.2 above, I related this to the ambivalences of territory as a 'hybrid notion' (Halvorsen 2019) and the slippery, heterogeneous nature of 'ethnicity' (Hall 2017). Here, I suggest that such tensions might be usefully evaluated through deeper consideration of the temporalities of reparative reading (e.g. De Chavez 2023; Sandford 2023). Throughout the thesis, for example, I have developed other

scholars' engagement with translation as a metaphor through which to better understand the '*persistent* epistemological preparation' (Spivak 2010: 38, emphasis added) of positing and negotiating commensurabilities, solidarities, relations across difference; of entering into the 'politics of difference as an *ongoing* negotiation of reciprocal give-and-take' (Hall 2017: 28, emphasis added); of envisioning forms of community, identity and solidarity defined through 'commitment to *always* translating its differences' (Hammond & Cook 2023: 802, emphasis added). But this raises the question: when, where, is the 'end' of translation? Empirically, future enquiry into how the geographical tension between relationality and territoriality is navigated in and through translation could attend to translational practices and relations in more explicitly, self-consciously political contexts, such as the contested histories of Esperanto and other attempts to 'end' or 'overcome' translation through the development of a 'universal language' in early 20th century internationalist socialist and anarchist movements. Other possible case studies might include the centrality of translation, on ideological, theoretical and practical levels, to internationalist movements such as the Kurdish Freedom Movement.[76] Of more immediate relevance to the empirical context of this research, there also exists a rich tradition of writing in Gaelic (and, as I intimated initially in Chapter 4, in Scots) that situates the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, the cultural politics of Gaelic and the memory of the Clearances in a explicitly internationalist context – consider, for example, Sorley Maclean's famous 'An Cuilithionn' (1939), in which the Skye mountains offer a stage for socialist and anti-fascist struggles in 20th century Europe – that would provide a generative resource for exploring 'translational' articulations of Hebridean identities from a longer-term perspective.

There are also several interesting aspects of language geographies that this thesis has broached but not developed as a central focus. For instance, while this thesis has complemented a predominant focus on religious difference in engagements with 'new ethnicities' by drawing attention to how linguistic difference is drawn into processes of racialisation, future research might productively consider the complex *co*-imbrication of language, religion and race. While the intertwining of philology, race and religion in Europe has been traced historically (e.g. Heng 2018; Olender 2009; Topolski 2018, 2020), empirical investigation into the contemporary forms of this relationship could consider, for instance, the political importance of various forms of vernacular language to proselytism; the spatiality of embodied language as ritual; or the relationship between language and faith in the context of uneven post-secular modernity. This would be particularly relevant in the Outer Hebrides given the religious and sacred geographies of the islands, something that I touched upon but was unable to fully explore in Chapter 8.

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[76] Consider, for instance, objections (methodologically, theoretically, politically) to Jineolojî as a 'translation' of feminism (Jineolojî Committee Europe 2021, in response to Al-Ali & Käser 2022), in addition to the practical labour of translation in diasporic and internationalist contexts (e.g. Demir 2022).

Through analysing multiculturalism, migration and minoritised languages in the Outer Hebrides, this thesis set out to explore how, where and to what extent geographies of language(s) might be detached from the colonial 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012) of race and nation, and articulated instead through emergent forms of collective identity, community and political belonging characterised by translational, transcultural, translocal 'differences-in-relation'. This final chapter has indicated several ways in which this groundwork might be built upon, in addition to revisiting the thesis's key arguments with respect to its guiding themes of language and relation, language and territory and language and embodiment. It has also restated how the thesis advances interdisciplinary scholarship on rural (de)coloniality, 'new ethnicities' and emerging geographies of language and translation, and resonates with wider political debates about the spatial and scalar tensions between racialised nation(alism) and more localised articulations of difference, identity and belonging.

In setting out potential routes into a 'reparative geography of the mother tongue', the thesis has explored how, to close with the words of Alice, a bilingual woman living in Uist, embodying multiple languages is not 'like being torn between two places, […] but belonging in two'.

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Appendix 1

Track list

Part of the playlist (1 to 4) that accompanies the thesis can be listened to here. Links to other tracks are provided below.

1. Calmac ferries, birds from Uist, participants imitating the sounds of the wind and of Gaelic (1 minute 21 seconds).
2. 'The advantages of the oral', excerpt from a reading group discussion with blackbird and sparrow. Glasgow, 30 April 2024 (1 minute 4 seconds).
3. 'Oh, I do like to be beside the seaside!' sung in Arabic by Susan Diab. Reproduced with permission of the artist, and also available here (38 seconds).
4. 'Geographical Exclusions Apply', by Pàdraig MacAoidh, read in Gaelic and in English by Pàdraig MacAoidh at the *Virtual Crossways 2021.* Reproduced with permission of the poet and also available here (4 minutes 12 seconds).
5. 'Disathairne Ghabh Mi Mulad', a waulking at Gerinish, 39 March 1951. Canna Collection CW0134.638. Available to listen to thanks to Tobar an Dualchais (2 minutes 21 seconds).
6. 'Afterwords: Stuart Hall', A Falling Tree production for BBC Radio Three, first broadcast 28th November 2021 (44 minutes).
7. 'Freedom Come All Ye', sung by Hamish Henderson (1 minute 44 seconds).
8. 'Elphinstone Sessions: Polish Scottish Singing Group Sings "Oj, Chmielu"' (1 minute 46 seconds).
9. 'My Albion' by Zakia Sewell. A Falling Tree production for BBC Radio 4 (each episode 28 minutes).
10. ya tal3een al jabal | يا طالعين الجبل performed by Fatima Lahham (1 minute 46 seconds).

Further Recommended Listening:

The Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches archive; every episode of Short Cuts; Tongue and Talk: The Dialect Poets; Lucy Cathcart Frödén's 'Cranial Nerve Number Eight'; Zineb Sedia's 'Mother Tongue'; Tape Letters; Safwat Saleem's '22 Words'.

Appendix 2

Participant Information Sheet

PhD project: **Mother-tongues and Motherlands**
Eleanor Chapman | e.chapman.1@research.gla.ac.uk | XXXXXXXXXX

You have been invited to take part in this research project. This information sheet will give you more information about the aims of the project and what it will involve. Please take time to read it carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you want to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?
This project is researching:

(a) the connections between language, space and belonging.
(b) what it is like to be multilingual and to live in different languages.
(c) the differences and similarities between speakers of 'native' minoritised languages and of 'migrant' minoritised languages.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to take part for one of the following reasons:
(a) You are a speaker or a learner of Scots Gaelic.
(b) You are a speaker or a learner of Kurdish living in Scotland.
(c) You are a speaker or a learner of another language and living in the Western Isles.

Do I have to take part?
No. You can decide whether or not to take part in the project. You can choose which elements of the project you wish to take part in. You can change your mind at any time before the submission of the PhD thesis and withdraw from the research. You don't need to give a reason if you change your mind.

What will happen if I take part?
You will be able to choose to take part in one or more of the following activities:
(a) An interview lasting 1–2 hours, discussing your previous and current language use and opinions about language(s). This may include discussion about your life experiences and personal beliefs, but you don't have to answer these questions if you don't want to.
(b) Creating a map showing where you hear, speak and see different languages.
(c) Contributing to a multilingual glossary of personally important words and meanings.

This information will be pseudonymised (your real name won't be used and identifying information will be removed), stored securely and analysed by the researcher for the purposes of this PhD project. Quotations from your interview (a) and pictures of your map (b) and glossary (c) may be reproduced anonymously in the PhD thesis and potential publications based on the research.

Will my participation in this study be kept anonymous?
Yes, if you want. All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and held securely. If you don't want your real name to be used, you will be assigned an identifying number and referred to with a pseudonym in any publications that arise from this research.

How will my personal information be processed and protected?

This project will collect basic personal information such as your name, phone number and email address in order to stay in touch with you about the project. Like all the other information you may give during an interview, this will be stored securely on password protected University servers and accessed only by the researcher. It will not be shared with any third parties. This research project will comply with data protection legislation and University procedures for collecting and processing personal data. Personal data held about you will be deleted within a period of ten years from completion of this PhD project. You will be asked to give your consent for your personal data to be used and processed in this way.

You can request access to the information processed about you at any time. If at any point you believe that the information relating to you is incorrect, you can request to see this information and may in some instances request to have it restricted, corrected or erased. You also have the right to withdraw your consent to your data being used at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project's use of your personal data, you can contact the researcher or her supervisors (contact details below), or the University of Glasgow's Data Protection Officer: dataprotectionofficer@glasgow.ac.uk.

What will happen to the results of the research project?
They will be published as a PhD project. Unless you requested otherwise, you will not be identified in any publication. You will be given a summary of the research findings and a copy of the collaborative multilingual glossary. You will be able to request a full PDF copy of the PhD.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The research is funded by the Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences. It is organised by the researcher, Eleanor Chapman, a PhD researcher in Human Geography at the University of Glasgow.

Who has reviewed the study?
The project has been reviewed by the College of Sciences and Engineering Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information
If you have any questions about the project, you can get in touch with **Eleanor Chapman**: **e.chapman.1@research.gla.ac.uk, xxxxxxxxxxxx**.

You can also contact my academic supervisor, **Dr Kate Botterill**: katherine.botterill@glasgow.ac.uk.

If you have any concerns about the project, you can also contact the GES Ethics Officer, **Prof. Hester Parr**, hester.parr@gla.ac.uk.

Appendix 3

Interview consent form

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

This form must be completed and signed by the participant prior to an interview commencing.

Please tick the appropriate box(es) below.

- ☐ I have read or listened to and understood the information sheet provided, including details of how my personal data will be used.
- ☐ I have had the opportunity to ask questions and to discuss this project with the researcher.
- ☐ I understand that anything discussed in the interview may be used in the research project unless I say that I don't want it to be used.
- ☐ I am aware that the interview may involve discussion of my life experiences and personal beliefs. I am happy to discuss these topics and am aware that I can decline to answer any question(s).
- ☐ I am aware that I can request anonymity if I don't want my real name to be used. If I don't want my real name to be used, I will be referred to in the research project with a pseudonym.
- ☐ I understand that all notes and/or recordings will be kept securely and privately on a password protected computer.
- ☐ I am aware I can stop the interview at any time and withdraw from the research without further questions.
- ☐ I give permission to be digitally recorded during the interview.
- ☐ I consent to my personal data being processed for the purposes detailed in the Participant Information Sheet and am aware that this can be withdrawn at any stage.

In accordance with the information on the information sheet and the statements above, I am happy to take part in an interview.

Signed _____ Date _____

Print Name _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Appendix 4

Ethical Approval Letter

Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology

School of Psychology

Prof Lawrence W. Barsalou

62 Hillhead Street

Glasgow G12 8QB

United Kingdom

Phone: +44 (0) 141 330 xxxx

Email: lawrence.barsalou@glasgow.ac.uk

12 Dec 2021

Ethical approval for:

Application Number: 300210073

Project Title: PhD: Mother Tongues and Motherlands

Lead Researcher: Eleanor Chapman (PGR)

This is to confirm that the College of Science and Engineering Ethics Committee has reviewed the above application and **approved** it. Please download the approval letter from the Research Ethics System for your records.

Please note that if your proposal involves face-to-face research, approval to carry out this research is only granted when one of the following two conditions has been met:

(a) You have a performed a risk assessment of your research protocol in your research facility, had it approved by your Head of School / Director of Institute, and received permission to proceed with this specific research project, or

(b) The University has generally lifted its social distancing restrictions on face-to-face interaction, including research.

In either case, your approval for this project lasts for 6 months from the date you are allowed to proceed with data collection.

If your research collects data in a format that **does not require social contact** (e.g., online research), you may begin data collection now.

Also please download and read the Collated Comments associated your application. This document contains all the reviews of your application and can be found below your approval letter on the Research Ethics System. These reviews may contain useful suggestions and observations about your research protocol for strengthening it. Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Lawrence W. Barsalou

Ethics Officer

College of Science and Engineering

University of Glasgow