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The First World War and the 20th Century  
in the History of Gaelic Scotland: a preliminary analysis

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## Abstract

This thesis considers the place which the First World War and the trends in 20th century Gaelic history associated with its aftermath have in the study of the modern Highlands.

The conflict's treatment in established academic works like James Hunter's *The Making of the Crofting Community* is discussed to highlight the way that the continued emphasis of the land issue into the 20th century, because of land hunger's 19th century prominence, has marginalised the First World War. Because of this, the War's significance in undermining the social cohesion and cultural certainties which supported Highland land politics is overlooked. As a consequence, the trajectory of 20th century Highland history, which is a movement away from the themes which defined the 19th, is obscured. The preconceptions about Gaelic culture which cause this are examined.

Considering the post-war trends of Highland history leads to an exploration of the precedents which existed for them in the pre-war Highlands. This involves analysing examples of a nascent urge for the industrialism, commercialism, and modernity which Gaels would increasingly embrace after the First World War, and doing so in a period where traditional Gaelic society was still cohesive and the land hunger at its height. The tension between this tradition and the incipient modernity of Gaels will be considered, with a view towards understanding what the First World War changed within Gaelic society to precipitate the shift in outlook evident among Gaels after 1918.

The impact of the First World War is analysed through a selection of Gaelic poetry which represents the changes the War induced in the identity of servicemen, their wives, and the older generation of Gaels, and what broader social changes may be inferred from these individual developments. Particular emphasis is placed upon the erosion among the servicemen of the traditional panegyric poetry through which they initially viewed the War, as their prolonged, extreme exposure to modern warfare undermined the martial precepts upon which this poetry, and the land politics it articulated, were based.

# Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	4
Introduction	5
- Methodology	9
- Literary Review	14
Chapter One: The First World War and the 20th Century in the Historiography of the Crofting Community	20
Chapter Two: Tradition and Modernity within the Crofting Community, c.1850-1914	35
Chapter Three: Gaelic Songs of the First World War	58
- Poetic Sources for the First World War	58
- The First World War and Gaelic Culture: an initial overview	63
Conclusion	82
Appendix: Gaelic Songs of the First World War	84
Bibliography	116

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39,057 words

## Introduction

This thesis concerns the First World War's place in Scottish Gaelic history. Its aim is to demonstrate that the War was the seminal event in the development of modern Gaelic society and that the years 1914 to 1918 represent a transition from a period still defined by themes that emerged after Culloden to one whose formative forces were those which have come to characterise the 21st century Highlands. This challenges the historiographical convention that it was the political achievements of Gaelic speaking crofting communities in the 1880s which marked "the commencement of a new epoch"<sup>1</sup> in their history, and argues that, from the perspective of the 20th and 21st centuries, these achievements are essentially a continuation of Highland history since 1746, and that the radical departure comes in 1914. It was under the War's strain that social and cultural factors which were consistent in Gaelic Scotland since the 18th century, and whose assertion in the 1880s had made that decade's developments possible, were diminished.

As implied by book titles such as *The Making of the Crofting Community* and *Clanship to Crofters' War*<sup>2</sup>, general histories of the 19th century Highlands have allocated the thrust of their narratives to the emergence of a self-aware crofting class which can provide, at the century's end, a substitute for the clan system with whose demise these volumes begin. While this approach works well for an analysis confined to the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup> or a case study of the 1880s<sup>4</sup>, it becomes problematic when historians try to extend it as a paradigm for understanding the history of the Highlands in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is because the themes which would define the development of Highland history after 1918 were no longer those which had defined it since the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The "land hunger which had dominated the mind of the Highlander since at least 1745"<sup>5</sup>, and the complex of social and cultural grievances for which it provided an expression, started to be superseded by what one contemporary observer described as "an increasing desire for the weekly wage, the varied

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<sup>1</sup> James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, (John Donald: Edinburgh, 2000) p.291

<sup>2</sup> T.M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War*, (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1994)

<sup>3</sup> Eric Richards, *The Highland Clearances*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008)

<sup>4</sup> I.M.M. MacPhail, *The Crofters' War*, (Acair: Stornoway, 1989)

<sup>5</sup> Richards, *Highland Clearances*, p.392

foods, fashions and excitements of the cities of the South."<sup>6</sup> The analytical problem which this poses for the historian is that, due to the tone of 18th and 19th century Highland history, the modernist and capitalist impulses of which this "increasing desire" was representative tend to be present as the externally imposed antagonists of Gaelic society, its land hunger, and the ideals of pre-Culloden pastoral life which are taken to be the authentic manifestations of that society's mores. A consequence of this is that when that society chooses, after the War, to embrace these forces of its own volition, rather than as the voiceless victims of overweening landlordism, historians are incapable of explaining this phenomenon through an analytical framework which emphasises a land hunger with modernity most often pitched as its antithesis. As a result of this, post-war trends which deviate from the trajectory of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are regarded as digressions from the mainstream of Gaelic history. The works which convey that history sequester their narratives in a land issue which is increasingly ceding the centre of Highland history to a variety of other social and economic concerns. The result of this is that the aspects of Highland life which were receiving the greater part of the agency of Gaels are absent from their history.

The argument of this thesis, therefore, is that the complexities of late 19th and early 20th century Highland history can be more ably conveyed by analysing this period within a framework derived from the First World War, placing that conflict at the centre of Gaelic society's modern development. Therefore, rather than reducing the relationship between Gaelic society and modernity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to a conflict between Gaels (inherently traditional) and modernity (inevitably external, anglophone, and accepted only out of necessity), it can be viewed as something which was internal to Gaelic culture - a tension which Gaels tried to reconcile by balancing a sincere and ideologically potent desire for land with an appreciation of the advantages of modern society and its economic opportunities. This also requires that traditional inclinations such as land hunger are not assumed to have a monopoly on the political realisation of Gaelic ideals and that the pursuit of modernity through industrialisation, urbanisation, and commercialism is not by default a rejection of those ideals. The study of Highland social history will therefore be placed within one of the main conceptual models that is used for British and European history during this period.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Alick Morrison, *An Ribheid Chiùil: being the poems of Iain Archie Macaskill, 1898-1933, bard of Berneray, Harris, edited with introduction and notes*, (Learmonth: Stirling, 1961) p.23

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, (Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 1999); Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*,

The importance of the First World War in creating the circumstances necessary for the apparent *volte-face* of Highland history after 1918 must be emphasised. The War considerably reduced the young male population<sup>8</sup>, while disillusioning the men who survived it<sup>9</sup>, and exposed the female population to the increased severity of an already austere crofting system whose burdens had always fallen disproportionately upon them - something which was exacerbated during four years of male absence.<sup>10</sup> Corollary to this was the erosion of the value system which clanship had bestowed upon the post-Culloden Highlands - a value system whose perceived betrayal was the source for much of the Clearances' trauma, and whose collective reassertion in a democratic context was the significant achievement of the 1880s.<sup>11</sup> A comprehensive study of the War is something which is beyond the scope of this thesis and the general study of the First World War and Gaelic Scotland is so underdeveloped that the points being made in this work are consciously tentative. But what this work does provide is an initial effort at connecting the established paradigms of modern Highland history with the vast field of First World War scholarship from which they have been detached, with a view to developing this more substantially in a future PhD. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to demonstrate the change undergone during the War by the themes upon which existing analyses of 19<sup>th</sup> century Highland history are predicated, and the necessity this creates of finding an adjusted historical model for the 20<sup>th</sup> century Highlands. In practice this entails the study of Gaelic verse composed during the First World War to understand the fundamental shift in worldview which is suggested by the works of individual poets, and the

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(W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 1970); J.M. Winter, *The Great War and the British people*, (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2003)

<sup>8</sup> Malcolm MacDonald has calculated that in the Western Isles 1,797 men died from an overall population of 46,732 - see 'The First World War - The Outer Hebrides' in *Island Heroes: the Military History of the Hebrides* (Kerthead: Islands' Book Trust, 2010) pp.91-119. For some other statistics relating to mainland districts see Iain Fraser Grigor, *Highland Resistance: the Radical Tradition in the Scottish North* (Mainstream Publishing: Edinburgh, 2000) pp.174-175, although the author does not provide references for his figures. A comprehensive figure for the subject area of this thesis - the Gaelic speaking crofting regions - has not been obtainable for this work. The method used by Malcolm MacDonald for his article was to record the names inscribed on the war memorials of the Outer Hebrides. To do so for the area on which this thesis is focussing would be beyond the scope of a 12 month thesis. A more telling figure might be the decline in Gaelic speakers between the 1911 and 1921 censuses, which recorded a fall from 184,000 to 151,000 (Charles W.J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland, 1698-1981: The Geographical History of a Language*, (John Donald: Edinburgh, 1984), pp.217-18, pp.229-30).

<sup>9</sup> See 'Introduction' in Morrison, *An Ribheid Chiùil*, pp.19-25

<sup>10</sup> For oral history accounts of women's lives in crofting communities see the chapters 'Mary Crane (1910-2002)' and 'Màiri Chaluim Alas 'ac Uilleim (1896-1984)' in Calum Ferguson, *Lewis in the Passing*, (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 2007) and also Calum Smith, *Around the Peat-fire* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2010). For an academic study see Iain J.M. Robertson 'The role of women in social protest in the Highlands, c.1880-1939' in *Journal of Historical Geography* 23 (1997) pp.187-200

<sup>11</sup> See Hunter, *Crofting Community*, pp.136-142 and pp.215-223; Donald Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna* (Scottish Gaelic Texts Society: Edinburgh, 1995) pp.34-40



wider social implications of this development. This methodology will be discussed at greater length below, and the treatment which the First World War and the 20<sup>th</sup> century have received in the established historiography of the modern Highlands will be considered in the next chapter, thereby demonstrating the remedy which the study of wartime poetry can provide. That chapter discusses the treatment which the First World War has received in the works of crofting history that derive their themes from the events of the late 19th century. It examines the suitability of these themes for conveying the War's impact and the events which dominate north-west Highland society's development after 1918. This will be done by examining the incongruity between the academic narration of Highland history after 1914 and its contemporary perception, arguing that this arises from an unadjusted emphasis on the land issue after the agency of Gaels has been directed towards the War. A subsidiary point to this is the way in which the experience of the War between 1914 and 1918 undermines the tenability of the 19th century paradigm of Highland history. The reason historians continue to emphasise the 19th century's themes in the 20th century will be inferred from the typical analysis provided of the Leverhulme schemes on Lewis and Harris, and the unsatisfactory explanations for the main trends of 20th century Highland history provided by their approach. The preconceptions about Gaels and Gaelic underlying this problem will be considered alongside the other perspectives it is possible to take of the period. These perspectives allow a more nuanced view that can more ably account for the complexity of the land issue and the Gaels' relationship to modernity.

The second chapter considers the formative period between c.1850 and 1914 from which the dominant paradigms of modern Highland history stem. It considers the conventional narration of this period - the formation of a cohesive and assertive crofting society which ends the social and political fragmentation which had occurred since Culloden - and highlights the contrary forces which are evident within that society. These forces are those which would define the 20th century development of the crofting regions - industrialism, urbanism, consumerism - and are sought for the precedent which they provide for the change in outlook which would occur amongst the inhabitants of those regions after the War. This chapter contains two ancillary themes. The first continues from the previous chapter. It asks why the conventional approach to writing Highland history has caused the presence of these forces in the 19th century, and the insights they provide for the region's contemporary history, to be overlooked. The second links to the theme of the third chapter - what did the War change in

crofting society for the traditionalism and cohesion of the 19th century to be superseded by the trends which would define the 20th.

The third chapter studies verse composed between 1914 and 1918. This will examine the transformation of language which is evident in the compositions of servicemen and the departure which this transformation represents from the panegyric tradition which defined Gaelic identity since Culloden. The analysis pursues the alteration of the worldview with which the Gaelic poets collected here almost unanimously understood the War in August 1914. The way this changed among different strata of Gaelic society over the ensuing four years is considered for its suggestion of an ideological change within individual Gaels and the social implications of that. The ramifications for the post-war tenability of the traditional Gaelic worldview, and an academic paradigm predicated upon it, will be considered. At the end of this chapter there is an appendix containing a selection of texts composed by three of the poets studied. These have been selected for their depiction of the general literary developments outlined in this chapter, and for their authors' representations of different demographics of crofting society (gender, age, district, religion) and varieties of wartime experience (the servicemen, the homefront; children, parents, spouses).

## **Methodology**

The First World War is a largely neglected topic in the study of Gaelic Scotland, regardless of discipline. Therefore, the approach adopted here has been to place its analysis within the two fields of modern Gaelic scholarship which have arguably received the most attention: the Highland land issue and the Gaelic poetic tradition. This has the advantage of contrasting the traditionalist paradigms of Highland social history with a period in which Gaelic poetry, a fundamental source for that school of history, was undergoing striking innovation.

Gaelic poetry conveys the highest ideals of the society which is being studied.<sup>12</sup> Analysing it in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and then across the years of the First World War, reveals how that conflict induced a striking change in a literary tradition which was notable for its durability across the previous century and a half of radical social and economic upheaval, and which

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<sup>12</sup> John MacInnes, 'The Panegyric Code in Gaelic Poetry and its Historical Background', in Michael Newton (ed.), *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes*, (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 2006) pp.265-319

extended further back than that linking the 19<sup>th</sup> century Highlands to the pre-Culloden world.<sup>13</sup> When Hunter reaches the chapter in *The Making of the Crofting Community* which marks the beginning of the book's trajectory of late 19th century crofting class formation, it is upon the ideals expressed in the songs of Mairi Mhòr nan Òran and Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn that he predicates his thesis.<sup>14</sup> The poetry which is presented in the following chapters reveals the other worldviews to which these ideals could be adapted at a time when the traditionalist strain in Gaelic culture was particularly active through the rhetoric of the crofters' movement (Chapter Two), and the fundamental change which the worldview of Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn and Mairi Mhòr nan Òran would undergo during the First World War (Chapter Three). It also shows how one of the more esoteric Gaelic sources can be used to rebut the preconceptions about Gaelic society which have influenced the writing of its history.

Another consequence of the undeveloped state of this thesis' topic is that there is no single collection of sources - poetic or otherwise - which can be utilised for its study. Therefore, another significant portion of time was dedicated to overcoming this obstacle. It was decided to limit the thesis to poetry which had already been published - either in books or on *Tobar an Dualchais* - therefore leaving considerable resources such as newspaper and magazine archives, Comainn Eachdraidh, and the off-line resources of the School of Scottish Studies, to be consulted in subsequent research. The method used for finding this poetry was rudimentary - the online catalogues of Glasgow University Library, the Glasgow Libraries, Leabharlann nan Eilean Siar, and WorldCat, as well as Donald John MacLeod's *Twentieth Century Publications in Scottish Gaelic*<sup>15</sup>, Mary Ferguson's *Scottish Gaelic union catalogue*<sup>16</sup> and the footnotes and bibliography in *An Tuil*<sup>17</sup>, were scoured for any volumes of Gaelic verse published since 1914, and all *Tobar an Dualchais* recordings returned in relation to the First World War were bookmarked. The relevant titles found through this method were noted and stored in a Microsoft Access database, and then consulted either by visiting the relevant library or through Glasgow University Library's interlibrary loans service. In the not infrequent instances that the volumes consulted lacked a contents page, contained songs with

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, pp.313-319; John MacInnes, 'Gaelic Poetry in the Nineteenth Century', in Michael Newton (ed.), *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes*, (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 2006) pp.357-379

<sup>14</sup> Hunter, *Crofting Community*, 'The Emergence of the Crofting Community' pp.136-157. For the references to Mairi Mhòr nan Òran and Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn see pp.139-140

<sup>15</sup> Donald John Macleod, *Twentieth Century Publications in Scottish Gaelic*, (Scottish Academic Press: Edinburgh, 1990)

<sup>16</sup> Mary Ferguson, *Scottish Gaelic union catalogue: a list of books published in Scottish Gaelic from 1567-1973*, (National Library of Scotland: Edinburgh, 1984)

<sup>17</sup> Ronald Black, *An Tuil: Anthology of 20<sup>th</sup> century Scottish Gaelic verse*, (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 1999)

generic titles (e.g. 'Òran', 'Cumha'), or both, and therefore gave minimal indication as to the subject matter of a song, many hours were spent scanning texts of a variety of lengths and dialects to verify their relevance to the thesis. All relevant poems were indexed, photocopied, and then placed in another Access database along with relevant ancillary information about their authors, contexts, and sources. This database is something which is to be developed with the aim of making it a publicly available resource, therefore removing one obstacle to the further development of this field by others. Between this, and the fact that many of the songs which are used in this thesis are presented together in their historical context for the first time, it is hoped that the act of collection will be a valuable contribution in itself.

Other than *An Tuil, Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna: òrain is dàin*<sup>18</sup>, and *Luach na Saorsa*<sup>19</sup>, the volumes consulted did not print their war songs together. Instead, the songs were interspersed among the other compositions of their authors or communities, therefore making it difficult to get an idea of the accumulated experience which they represented. However, several volumes are worth mentioning for the number and often quality of songs on the First World War which they contain. These are *Dàin agus Òrain Ghàidhlig*<sup>20</sup> by Angus Morrison, *Clachan Crìche: Taghadh de Bhàrdachd Tholastaidh (1850-2000)*<sup>21</sup> by Comann Eachdraidh Tholastaidh bho Thuath, *Na Baird Thirisdeach*<sup>22</sup> by Hector Cameron, *Òrain Ghàidhlig le Seonaidh Caimbeul*<sup>23</sup> by John Campbell, and *Oiteagan a Tìr nan Òg: òrain agus dàin*<sup>24</sup> by Roderick Mackay. The recent publication by Acair of *Òrain Eachainn MacFhionghain*<sup>25</sup> complements the previous volume of Hector MacKinnon's work, *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor*<sup>26</sup>, to make him the most substantial soldier-poet, in terms of published work, after Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna.

Another point which must be mentioned regards the geographical distribution of the poetry. As the poetry is limited to what was found in formally published volumes, its analysis has

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<sup>18</sup> Fred MacAmhlaidh (ed.), *Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna: òrain is dàin*, (Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath: North Uist, 1995)

<sup>19</sup> Murchadh Moireach, *Luach na Saorsa: leabhar-latha, bàrdachd is ròsg*, (Gairm: Glaschu, 1970)

<sup>20</sup> Angus Morrison, *Dàin is Òrain Ghàidhlig*, (Darien Press: Dun Eideann, 1929)

<sup>21</sup> *Clachan Crìche: Taghadh de Bhàrdachd Tholastaidh bho Thuath (1850-2000)*, (North Tolsta Historical Society: Isle of Lewis, 2005)

<sup>22</sup> Hector Cameron (ed.), *Na Baird Thirisdeach: saothair ar co-luchd-duthcha aig an Tigh 's bho'n tigh*, (Tiree Association: Stirling, 1932)

<sup>23</sup> John Campbell, *Òrain Ghàidhlig le Seonaidh Caimbeul*, (Mackie: Dunfermline, 1938)

<sup>24</sup> Roderick Mackay, *Oiteagan a Tìr nan Òg: òrain agus dàin*, (Alasdair MacIabhrainn: Glaschu, 1938)

<sup>25</sup> Eachainn MacFhionghain, *Orain Eachainn MacFhionghain*, (Acair: Stornoway, 2013)

<sup>26</sup> Eachann MacFhionghain, *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor*, (Stornoway Religious Bookshop: Stornoway, 1990)

been partly determined by the accidents of 20<sup>th</sup> century Gaelic publishing. As a result, there is a significant concentration of poetry from Lewis, Berneray, North and South Uist, and Tiree, while the work of Angus Morrison contained in *Dàin agus Òrain Ghàidhlig* represents both Morrison's hometown of Ullapool and the world of urban and professional Gaels which he inhabited. In contrast to this, Barra only has three songs from *Deoch-slàinte nan Gilleann*<sup>27</sup> and one from *Tobar an Dualchais*<sup>28</sup>, with the biographical details of the author of two of the former songs escaping verification, despite consultation with a researcher of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Barra poets, therefore making them difficult to use for anything beyond ancillary textual references. Skye, despite its pre-War prominence through poets such as Mairi Mhòran Òran and Neil MacLeod, and significance in terms of size and as a centre of land agitation, has provided only one song by a serviceman.<sup>29</sup> Some additional sources were provided for the island through the work of John Nicolson<sup>30</sup> and Calum Nicolson.<sup>31</sup> Other than Angus Morrison's, no wartime songs have been found for the mainland districts between Ardnamurchan and Sutherland.

Although the poetry consulted for this thesis is not comprehensive, it is representative of each of the social, economic, and cultural strata which constituted crofting communities. In John Campbell there is the perspective of a sixty-something monoglot cottar from South Uist. Angus Morrison provides the view of a professional, urban Gael, of west coast extraction, with a personal involvement in Gaelic publishing. In Euphemia MacDonald of Tiree, there is a woman of the pre-War generation whose son was a serviceman. Then, in the work of John Munro and Murdo Murray of Lewis, Hector MacKinnon of Berneray, Roderick MacKay, Dòmhnall Ruadh Choruna, and Peter Morrison of North Uist, and Donald MacIntyre of South Uist, are the servicemen whose experience of the First World War was most vivid. Finally, in Mairead NicLeòid and Christina Macleod of Lewis are the women whose husbands were fighting the War and whose poetry conveys the strain of the conflict upon the communities from which servicemen came.

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<sup>27</sup> Colm Ó Lochlainn, *Deoch-slàinte nan Gilleann: dòrnan óran a Barraigh*, (Baile Átha Cliath: Fo Chomhardha nan Trí Coinnlean, 1948)

<sup>28</sup> ‘S Fheudar Dhomh ‘bhi ‘Togail Orm’, ‘Òran a’ Chogaidh’, and ‘Òran eile mu’n Chogaidh’, *ibid.*, pp.20-24

<sup>29</sup> Neil Beaton, ‘Mo Chridhe Trom ‘s Duilich Leam’, *Tobar an Dualchais*, <<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/fullrecord/79001/1>> [accessed 19 September 2013]

<sup>30</sup> Thomas A. McKean, *Hebridean Song-maker: Iain MacNeacail of the Isle of Skye*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996). In particular, see p.175 where McKean and Nicholson discuss the War as “a crucial time of breakup”.

<sup>31</sup> Calum Nicholson, ‘Òran Eairdsidh’, *Tobar an Dualchais*, <<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/fullrecord/90665/1>> [accessed 19 September 2013]

The merits and ramifications of using poetry as a source for Highland social history leads to the debate over its general use as a source for the First World War. One of the criticisms made of poetry, and the general predominance of literary sources in histories of the War, concerns the impression which analyses based exclusively upon them create of a sudden and clean break with the past occurring between 1914 and 1918, rather than such a perception being something which developed in the following decades. As Richard Holmes states, in reference to Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*<sup>32</sup>, the War was not experienced as a watershed. It was instead a "parenthesis, bracketed into a busy life."<sup>33</sup> Neither was the disillusionment with the language and ideals which preceded the War a sudden and ubiquitous response to the conflict. British soldiers took pride in having won the War but became increasingly embittered in the decades which followed it due to a sense of having "lost the peace".<sup>34</sup> This became particularly clear while researching this thesis in the altered reading which was provided of John Munro's wartime poetry by Murdo Murray's biography of Munro. In an earlier work on the War's impact on Gaels<sup>35</sup>, Munro's poem 'Air sgàth nan sonn'<sup>36</sup>, which was the last he composed before being killed, was contrasted with his two earlier compositions 'Ar Tìr'<sup>37</sup> and 'Ar Gaisgich a Thuit sna Blàir'.<sup>38</sup> The latter two, composed in mid-1916<sup>39</sup>, are confident in tone and use an idealised language to talk enthusiastically of the Highlands and the role of Gaelic soldiers in the War. In 'Air sgàth nan sonn', however, the language becomes less elevated and the tone is one of anger and perplexity at the purpose of the War and its sacrifices. Citing this literary transformation, an argument was made that these poems revealed the way in which an individual soldier went from the idealism of the War's earlier stages to the disillusionment of its final ones. From this, a broader point was made about the experience of Gaelic soldiers during the First World War and its immediate social implications, particularly the tenability of the post-war land agitation. However, this argument was undermined by reading the following passage from Murdo Murray's biography, which reveals the enthusiasm for the War which Munro sustained into its last year, despite the tone of his poetry:

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2000)

<sup>33</sup> Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front 1914-1918*, (Harper Collins: London, 2004) p.xxiv

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Niall Bartlett, 'Tìr is Teanga? The Social and Economic Development of Scottish Gaelic Society c.1918-1939, and its Cultural Corollary', (Unpublished MA Dissertation: University of Glasgow, 2011) pp.26-29

<sup>36</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, pp.218-219

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, pp.214-215

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, pp.214-217

<sup>39</sup> Murchadh Moireach, 'Iain Rothach', in *Gairm*, (Vol.19) pp.262-265; (Vol.20) pp.339-342

An déidh dha a bhith aig an tigh air fòrlagh, sgrìobh e thugam ann am mìos na Màirt, 1918, ag innse mar a chòrd a thurus dhachaidh ris, ach gu robh e toilichte a bhith air ais ann am poill nan trainnsichean agus - ged nach dubhairt e anns na briathran sin e - na h-uiread ri dheanamh: an còrr cha b' urrainn e innse.<sup>40</sup>

With the state of mind revealed by this passage, arguing that the poetic transformation within the texts corresponded neatly to an immediate transformation in outlook exhibited in daily life, rather than foreshadowing a long-term shift, was no longer tenable, and neither was the general social point which had been built on that argument. But what this thesis does argue is that the changes in language evident in the poetry composed across the War by John Munro and his peers do adumbrate a fundamental alteration in the outlook of Gaelic society which would be exacerbated in the following decades due to the influence of a number of factors, such as the fortunes of land settlement, economic depression, and the demographic damage inflicted by the War. That such a striking change in language would occur across a period of four years within a tradition noted for its resilience throughout a century and a half of social and economic upheaval is its own argument for further investigating this phenomenon. Doing so will also provide a useful prelude to an analysis which can "examine rigorously the demographic realities" which underlay this shift in perception.<sup>41</sup>

## Literary Review

The historical context and main points of scholarly engagement for this thesis are provided by the established works of crofting history which are discussed at length in the following chapter. *The Making of the Crofting Community*, in particular, despite being a book with whose overall presentation of Highland history this thesis disagrees, remains the most significant as it is the book which "put Highland history firmly on the intellectual map" and as much of the work which has been written on the Highlands since its publication "has been produced...in direct response to Dr Hunter's approach and his conclusions."<sup>42</sup> The other works

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p.265

<sup>41</sup> Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, p.21

<sup>42</sup> Ewen Cameron, [Review of *The Making of the Crofting Community*] in *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 75 (1996) p.262 (The order of the quotations has been reversed.)

in its category - those of Joni Buchanan<sup>43</sup> and Roger Hutchinson<sup>44</sup>, which follow a similar line of argument to Hunter, as well as those by Ewen Cameron<sup>45</sup>, Iain J.M. Robertson<sup>46</sup>, and Leah Leneman<sup>47</sup> which offer contrasting views - are considered by this author to provide, despite their differences, the same framework for the modern Highlands, albeit with each emphasising different sides of it. This is a framework which places the land issue at the centre of Highland history without making an allowance for its gradual superseding by other factors. One work on the history of crofting legislation which has been of conceptual use both for this thesis and the long-term research on the modern Highlands of which it is to form a part is Allan MacInnes' 'The Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886: A Hundred Year Sentence?'.<sup>48</sup> MacInnes presents the opposite view to Hunter et al. and argues that crofting legislation since 1886 has had a detrimental effect upon the Highlands by preserving a conservative social order which had the consequence of impairing the region's development. A recent article which complements MacInnes' argument, but with greater emphasis upon how historiographically informed perceptions of the Highlands influence the region's economic development, is Andrew Perchard and Niall Mackenzie's, "'Too Much on the Highlands?'" Recasting the Economic History of the Highlands and Islands'.<sup>49</sup> Of particular interest to this thesis is Perchard and Mackenzie's statement that the crofter-driven histories of Hunter et al. can, through "an overwhelming focus...on land clearance by landowners, crofting and land agitation"<sup>50</sup>, augment the view of the Highlands as a depressed or problem area which is found in works these histories are meant to challenge, such as Malcolm Gray's *The Highland Economy, 1750-1850*.<sup>51</sup> The national political and cultural context in which the late 19<sup>th</sup> century land agitation and legislation developed has been derived from Clive Dewey's 'Celtic agrarian Legislation and the Celticist Revival: historicist implications of Gladstone's Irish and Scottish Land Acts, 1870-1886',<sup>52</sup> Ewen Cameron's 'Embracing the past: the Highlands in

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<sup>43</sup> Joni Buchanan, *The Lewis Land Struggle: Na Gaisgich*, (Acair: Stornoway, 1996)

<sup>44</sup> Roger Hutchinson, *The Soap Man: Lewis, Harris and Lord Leverhulme*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2003)

<sup>45</sup> Ewen Cameron, *Land for the People? The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c.1880-1925*, (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1996)

<sup>46</sup> Iain J.M. Robertson, "'Their families had gone back in time hundreds of years at the same place': Attitudes to land and landscape in the Scottish Highlands after 1914", in *Celtic Geographies: old culture, new times*, ed. by David C. Harvey, (Routledge: London, 2002) pp.37-52

<sup>47</sup> Leah Leneman, *Fit for Heroes?*, (Aberdeen University Press: Aberdeen, 1989)

<sup>48</sup> Allan MacInnes, 'The Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886: A Hundred Year Sentence?', in *Radical Scotland* 25 (1987) pp.24-26

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Perchard and Niall Mackenzie, "'Too Much on the Highlands?'" Recasting the Economic History of the Highlands and Islands', in *Northern Scotland* 4, 2013, pp.3-22

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, pp.8-9

<sup>51</sup> Malcolm Gray, *The Highland Economy, 1750-1850*, (Oliver & Boyd: Edinburgh, 1957)

<sup>52</sup> Clive Dewey, 'Celtic agrarian Legislation and the Celticist Revival: historicist implications of Gladstone's Irish and Scottish Land Acts, 1870-1886', *Past and Present* 64 (August 1974), pp.30-70



nineteenth century Scotland'<sup>53</sup>, John Shaw's 'Land, people and nation: historicist voices in the Highland land campaign, c.1850-1883'<sup>54</sup>, and Charles Withers' 'The historical creation of the Scottish Highlands'.<sup>55</sup>

Gaelic and Highland cultural histories are the branch of scholarship which has been most integral to this thesis aftercrofting histories. Of particular interest is the greater prominence the First World War has in these works. The most notable is Ronald Black's *An Tuil*. In his introduction, Black's view of the 20<sup>th</sup> century starts with the War, identifying it as the demarcation between the Highlands of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Highlands of the 20<sup>th</sup>, and from this he traces the multifarious influences of the conflict across the length of the 1900s.<sup>56</sup> Two other books worth mentioning for their demonstration of a similar ability to grasp the significance of the War are Timothy Neat's *The Summer Walkers: Travelling People and Pearl-Fishers in the Highlands of Scotland*<sup>57</sup> and *When I Was Young: Voices from Lost Communities in Scotland: The Islands*.<sup>58</sup> In *When I Was Young*, Neat outlines the different reasons for the 20<sup>th</sup> century decline of the West Highland communities studied in his book. He states that:

If asked, however, to select the single most direct cause of the collapse of the communities profiled, I should choose the First World War. It came at a historical moment when its human and social impact was to prove devastating, not just in terms of the numbers of men killed, *but of the many-sided economic and cultural consequences it set in train.* (italics added)<sup>59</sup>

It is the impact emphasised in this passage - the affect which the First World War had upon aspects of north-west Highland society and culture beyond the land issue, and the

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<sup>53</sup> Ewen Cameron, 'Embracing the past: the Highlands in nineteenth century Scotland', in D.E. Broun, et al, (eds.), *Image and Identity: the making and re-making of Scotland through the Ages*, (Edinburgh, 1998) pp.195-219

<sup>54</sup> John Shaw, 'Land, people and nation: historicist voices in the Highland land campaign, c.1850-1883', in Eugenio F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002) pp.305-324

<sup>55</sup> C.W.J. Withers, 'The historical creation of the Scottish Highlands', in I. Donnachie and C. Whatley, (eds.), *The Manufacture of Scottish History*, (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 1992) pp.143-156

<sup>56</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, pp.xxii-xxiii

<sup>57</sup> Timothy Neat, *The Summer Walkers: Travelling People and the Pearl-Fishers in the Highlands of Scotland*, (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 1996). In particular see pp.224-225

<sup>58</sup> Timothy Neat, *When I Was Young: Voices from Lost Communities in Scotland: The Islands* (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 2000)

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, pp.xv-xvi

significance which this affect had for the latter - that this thesis explores. This is something which Black describes as a "loss of collective confidence throughout Gaelic Scotland" which coincided with the "materialistic attitudes and...first-hand knowledge of English"<sup>60</sup> brought back by those returning from the War. These would undermine the different aspects of Gaelic culture which informed the Highland identity from which the crofters' movement derived its ideology. The success of Black and Neat's books in grasping the impact of the First World War and the complexity of the 20<sup>th</sup> century comes as a result of their focus upon individual Gaels. For Black, they are the poets whose work he has anthologised. For Neat, they are the individuals whose biographies and oral histories form the chapters of his books. This approach enables the individual memories of the century to be presented on their own, rather than being ancillary to an economic or political model. Derick Thomson, in *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*, also identifies the years 1914 to 1918 as being the "effective watershed" between the poetry of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and that of the 20<sup>th</sup>, when "some of the earliest new voices came from the battlefields of France."<sup>61</sup> I.F. Grant and Hugh Cheape's *Periods in Highland History* also deserves to be mentioned as it provides a broad focus of Highland history which manages to detail some of the "many-sided economic and cultural consequences" of the War - in particular its "drastic re-orientation of social life" and the industrialisation of the Highlands which developed between the First and Second World Wars.<sup>62</sup>

The most valuable local histories have been Calum Ferguson's *Lewis in the Passing* and Alick Morrison's introduction to *An Ribheid Chiùil*.<sup>63</sup> Like Black and Neat, Ferguson conveys, through individual memories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from across the Isle of Lewis, the centrality of the First World War to the lives of the various communities on the island, particularly the common perception which gradually developed over individual lives of the conflict as the division between the old world of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the new one of the 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>64</sup> In *An Ribheid Chiùil*, an anthology of the poetry of the First World War veteran Iain Archie MacAskill, Alick Morrison does the same for his and Iain Archie's island of Berneray. It also follows the poet's progress through the 1920s and early 1930s after he had moved to Australia, conveying the themes of migration and economic depression which

<sup>60</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, pp.xxii-xxiii

<sup>61</sup> Derick Thomson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*, (The Camelot Press: London, 1974) p.248

<sup>62</sup> I.F. Grant and Hugh Cheape, *Periods in Highland History*, (Barnes & Noble, 1987) pp.278-282; quotation on p.279

<sup>63</sup> Morrison, *An Ribheid Chiùil*, pp.7-34

<sup>64</sup> See also Calum Ferguson, *Children of the black house*, (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 2003)

would define the 1920s for Gaels and influence their memories of the War.<sup>65</sup> *Island Heroes: The Military History of the Hebrides*, the proceeds of a talk held by The Islands' Books Trust on Lewis in August 2008, contains several relevant articles. Malcolm MacDonald's 'The First World War - The Outer Hebrides' gives useful data on the number of men recruited and killed, the distribution of deaths by village, and the different theatres in which men from the Western Isles served. The article begins by giving an impression of the extent to which armed service was embedded in Hebridean communities through the Royal Naval Reserve and the great depletion of manpower which recruitment to the War inflicted upon the islands - for example, "countless wooden fishing boats [were] left to rot on the shore. Many were later used as fence posts."<sup>66</sup> But the long view taken by the conference – tracing military tradition from 1750 to the present - prevents MacDonald's observations from being applied rigorously to the context of immediate social history.

The general works of Scottish history which have been consulted to provide the national context are Ewen Cameron's *Impaled Upon a Thistle: Scotland since 1880*<sup>67</sup> and Catriona M. M. MacDonald's *Whaur Extremes Meet*<sup>68</sup>, and, for Scotland during the War, Trevor Royle's *Flowers of the Forest*<sup>69</sup> and 'The First World War' in *A Military History of Scotland*.<sup>70</sup> Where MacDonald considers the Highlands and crofting, she provides a less orthodox view on their 20<sup>th</sup> century history, describing the "scars of many academic and literary conventions" which "have succeeded in distorting much of our knowledge regarding the manner in which the Highlands have always interacted with and continue to participate in wider economic changes."<sup>71</sup> In addition to MacInnes, and Perchard and Mackenzie, her perspective is another which has informed the approach of this thesis.

Consultation of the scholarship of the First World War has been restricted to general histories of the conflict - to provide the military and political context for the Gaelic songs presented in Chapter Three - and to the pre-eminent studies of the literary and cultural impact of the War.

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<sup>65</sup> See Iain Archie MacAskill's biography in Black, *An Tuil*, pp.752-753. For the influence of economic depression in the interwar years on veterans' perceptions of the First World War see Holmes, *Tommy*, p.xix

<sup>66</sup> MacDonald, 'The First World War - The Outer Hebrides', pp.91-92

<sup>67</sup> Ewen Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle: Scotland since 1880*, (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2010)

<sup>68</sup> Catriona M. M. MacDonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet: Scotland's Twentieth Century*, (John Donald: Edinburgh, 2010)

<sup>69</sup> Trevor Royle, *The Flowers of the Forest*, (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 2006)

<sup>70</sup> Trevor Royle, 'The First World War', in Edward M. Spiers et al, *A Military History of Scotland*, (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2012) pp.506-535

<sup>71</sup> MacDonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet*, pp.176-177

The general histories which were used are David Stevenson's *1914-1918: The History of the First World War*<sup>72</sup>, Hew Strachan's *The First World War: A New Illustrated History*<sup>73</sup>, John Keegan's *The First World War*<sup>74</sup>, and Richard Holmes' *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front*. For social history, J.M. Winter's *The Great War and the British people* and Arthur Marwick's *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* were consulted. The paradigms for cultural history were derived from Ted Bogacz's "'A Tyranny of Words": Language, Poetry, and Antimodernism in England in the First World War'<sup>75</sup>, Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European cultural history*<sup>76</sup>, George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*<sup>77</sup>, Samuel Hynes, *War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*<sup>78</sup>, Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*<sup>79</sup>, and Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*.

## Disclaimer

Texts presented throughout this work have been reproduced as they were found in their original volumes. Therefore, if the editor of a volume refrained from adding diacritics to poems, like Hector Cameron in *Na Baird Thirisdeach*, then they have not been added here either. The same is true for the transcript from *Trusadh* used in the following chapter, which has been transcribed colloquially.

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<sup>72</sup> David Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War*, (Allen Lane: London, 2004)

<sup>73</sup> Hew Strachan, *The First World War: A New Illustrated History*, (Simon & Schuster: London, 2003)

<sup>74</sup> John Keegan, *The First World War*, (Pimlico: London, 1998)

<sup>75</sup> Ted Bogacz, "'A Tyranny of Words": Language, Poetry, and Antimodernism in England in the First World War', in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 58, No.3, (Sep. 1986), pp.643-668

<sup>76</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European cultural history*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995)

<sup>77</sup> George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1995)

<sup>78</sup> Samuel Hynes, *War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, (Pimlico: London, 1990)

<sup>79</sup> Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990)

## 1. The First World War and the 20th Century in the Historiography of the Crofting Community

In the works of James Hunter, Ewen Cameron, and Leah Leneman, which attempt to use the land issue as a conduit through which to convey the broader history of the crofting community there is a weakness when they persist into the First World War with a paradigm derived from the 1880s themes of which the land issue is a product. The persistence with this paradigm causes these analyses to focus on matters which were peripheral to the main events of the War years, such as the dealings of the Board of Agriculture and the Scottish Land Court, and this is done at the expense of the War experience which was demanding the attention of the population which they are studying. The irony of this is that these works do, by necessity, acknowledge the significance of the War to their narratives - indeed, for Leneman, it provides the whole context of her book - but the War itself is a lacuna within them. No substantial effort is made to study the War as an event in itself and no ancillary work exists on which they can draw - certainly not one written from the crofting community's perspective.

The incongruity between period and narrative which emerges as a result of this approach can be discerned from the passage which contains the first of the two references which the war receives in *The Making of the Crofting Community*:

In the spring of 1914...the Board of Agriculture requested the Scottish Land Court to authorise the establishment of 32 new crofts and 14 enlargements to existing crofts on the North Uist farm of Cheese Bay. Having inspected the farm and heard representations from the various parties involved, the board issued the requisite orders in November 1915 - at which point North Uist's owner, Sir Arthur Campbell Orde, intimating that his claim for compensation would exceed £300, asked the Court of Session to appoint the arbitrator to which the law entitled him. In April 1918, an arbitrator having at last been nominated, Sir Arthur lodged a claim for £16,852. And although he was eventually awarded only £4,770 the Board, as the 1911 Act had stipulated, was found liable for all the expenses of the case. The inordinate amount of time taken to appoint an arbitrator was, in this particular instance, attributable to

wartime circumstances. In other respects, however, the case was not untypical of those in which the Board of Agriculture had become embroiled from its inception.<sup>80</sup>

In this passage, the War years are confined to a dry account of procedure within the Board of Agriculture and the War is only present for its tangential relevance to a solitary legal case. This is not as problematic for a history of the development of land policy, such as Ewen Cameron's *Land for the People?*, but for an analysis which aims to provide a comprehensive view of what was shaping Highland society at this time this is incongruous with what sources from within that society reveal. Thus, the conflict whose opening struck one North Uist man as "...a' bhliadhna/Chuir na ceudan mìle 'n èiginn:/Naoi ceud deug 's a ceithir deug/Bidh cuimhn' oirr' fhad 's bhios grian ag èirigh"<sup>81</sup>, and made another from the adjacent island of Berneray think that "Tha 'n cogadh air sgaoileadh 's a ghlaodh ris gach àit,/San àm chan eil às-colt' ri deireadh an t-saoghail"<sup>82</sup> has been reduced to the background of a land application. The second reference to the War comes on the page adjacent to the above passage:

Like the incipient civil war in Ireland, the suffragette campaign and the endemic labour unrest which together belie the common notion that Edwardian Britain was as socially tranquil as it was prosperous, the growing discontent among north-west Scotland's landless population was submerged in the wider and more awful violence of the European war which broke out in August 1914. And when that war was finally over, attitudes to Highland land, like attitudes to much else, were found to have undergone a number of significant changes. The exigencies of the war itself, it was true, had caused land settlement to be practically suspended. But its suspension had been accompanied by repeated assurances that, once victory had been secured, 'the land question in the Highlands' would, as T.B. Morrison, lord advocate in Lloyd-George's wartime coalition government declared at Inverness in 1917, 'be settled once and for all...Everyone is agreed that the people of the Highlands must be placed in possession of the soil'.<sup>83</sup>

While the language of this paragraph conveys the depth of the War's impact upon the crofting community it does not result in a new approach being taken in the rest of the book to account

<sup>80</sup> Hunter, *Crofting Community*, pp.263-264

<sup>81</sup> 'Oran Dhan Chogadh' in MacAmhlaidh, *Domhnall Ruadh Choruna*, pp.2-9 (v.1)

<sup>82</sup> 'Òran mun Chiad Chogadh' in MacFhionghain, *Orain Eachainn MacFhionghain*, pp.47-49 (v.2)

<sup>83</sup> Hunter, *Crofting Community*, p.265

for the "significant changes" in "attitudes to Highland land" and the ramifications of these for a narrative predicated upon the continuity of those attitudes. As such this paragraph becomes a non-sequitur. This is particularly evident in the treatment of the Leverhulme schemes on Lewis and Harris which appears in the following pages. These are presented as being a continuity of the landlord-crofter clash of worldview which has provided the spine of this book. If they and their wider context are viewed within a different framework, however, they appear considerably more ambiguous than that and provide an opportunity to consider the trends which were newly emerging in crofting society and whose analysis helps explain the development of that society throughout the following decades. This will be further discussed below.

As stated above, the emphasis which Ewen Cameron has placed on official land policy and its evolution makes his focus, during the War years, upon the government bodies in charge of its application less of a hindrance to his narrative. The lack of a substantial presence for the conflict is, however, still a problem. In the chapter of *Land for the People?* which covers the years between the 1911 Small Landholders (Scotland) Act and the 1919 Land Settlement (Scotland) Act the War is described as an absence which resulted in an "abeyance" of land settlement.<sup>84</sup> The point that is missed here is that the cause of this absence - that a substantial part of each crofting community was engaged in wartime service, resulting in a consequent redirection towards the War of the attention of their communities - has crucial ramifications for the development of official policy towards the Highlands in the following decades. And, again, there is no existing analysis of the War and the Highlands on which this study could draw. Cameron and Iain Robertson went some way towards providing such an analysis in "'Fighting and Bleeding for the Land': the Scottish Highlands and the Great War".<sup>85</sup> But, due to their reliance on newspapers, regimental histories, and popular English language accounts of the War, rather than sources generated from within the society concerned, their analysis does not grasp the shift which is transpiring within that society and which reflects the changed attitudes to land acknowledged by Hunter. Hunter's discussion of Cameron's work in the preface to the 2000 edition of *The Making of the Crofting Community* is indicative of the characteristics of each of their approaches and which this thesis aims to correct. Hunter states that:

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<sup>84</sup> Cameron, *Land for the People?*, p.163

<sup>85</sup> Ewen Cameron and Iain J.M. Robertson, "'Fighting and Bleeding for the Land': the Scottish Highlands and the Great War" in Catriona M.M. MacDonald and E.W. McFarland (eds.) *Scotland and the Great War* (Tuckwell Press: East Lothian, 1999) pp.81-102

Ewen Cameron - very much in the manner of those earlier historians whose work *The Making of the Crofting Community* sought to challenge - adopts a perspective on Highland history in which the mass of Highlanders drop largely from view. Cameron mainly concerns himself, in other words, with politicians, with civil servants and with landed proprietors. Having thus taken up a historiographical stance which is the opposite of mine, Cameron concludes...that the people on whom he concentrates, especially the landlords among them, exercised more influence over events both in the 1880s and subsequently than is suggested by *The Making of the Crofting Community*. That is fair enough. Had the region's proprietorial class not retained a good deal of political weight...in the later nineteenth century, we would not be stuck with this class in the Highlands still. But it is wholly unconvincing to suggest, as Ewen Cameron seems occasionally to do, that the landowning influence on Highland policy remained, after the 1880s as before, the decisive one. Had crofters not fought - often literally - for security of tenure, and had they not effectively pressed the case for a proportion of their lost lands to be restored to them, neither the Crofters Act of 1886 nor the land settlement legislation which followed it would have seen the light of day. It is in this very basic sense that the events of the 1880s constitute a shifting of the initiative from landlords to those crofters who, by organising themselves politically under the banner of the Highland Land League, ensured crofting's survival into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>86</sup>

While, as a discussion of crofting and legislation, there is nothing fundamentally flawed with either of the perspectives offered here, they both miss the point that these things, after August 1914, are no longer by default embodiments of the predominant social and political forces in the crofting regions. The war has shifted a great deal of the agency of the inhabitants of those regions elsewhere - first to the events of the conflict itself, and then, after its conclusion, towards dealing with its aftermath. As a result, Hunter's stated aim in *The Making of the Crofting Community*, to put the crofter at the centre of his own history<sup>87</sup> comes awry when he does not follow where history has taken the crofter.

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<sup>86</sup> Hunter, *Crofting Community*, pp.26-27

<sup>87</sup> Hunter, *Crofting Community*, p.36



Leah Leneman's *Fit for Heroes?* is the other significant work on this topic. Although, as stated above, the War provides the context for this book, the years between 1914 and 1918 are at the same time absences within it. The book, beginning with a chapter on the 1911 Act, then jumps forward to the aftermath of the War and an analysis of the 1919 Act. Again there is no direct analysis of the War - it is just alluded to through its impact upon those who claimed land after it had finished - and there is no independent study of the war and its impact upon the communities concerned from which Leneman can draw.

The place of the War in these works raises questions of why it has been presented in this way, why analyses of the crofting community in this period fail to account for the trends which would shape it throughout the 20th century, and what underlying assumptions about modern Gaelic history can be discerned from the approach adopted by historians. The issue here is that the works by Hunter, Cameron, and Leneman cited above, as well as those by Joni Buchanan and Roger Hutchinson, which will be considered below, do not provide a framework which can explain the 20th century trajectory of Highland history, which was a gradual departure from crofting and the Gaelic culture which fostered its ideals. What is needed is a framework which explains how the socially and culturally cohesive communities whose ambitions could be articulated by the Highland Land Law Reform Association's slogan "Tir is Teanga" (Land and Language), and which could achieve the Crofters Act and the legislation which followed it, became, by the end of the 20th century, a society which one Gaelic scholar could summarise as consisting of "A tattered economy, the English language, materialism, the *Daily Record*, social security, television".<sup>88</sup> A cause for this anomaly can be gleaned from the treatment which these works give to the years of the Leverhulme schemes on Lewis and Harris.

Despite the thematic richness of the Leverhulme era, when viewed against the length of the 20th century, works which have aimed to present Gaelic history from the crofters' perspective have generally tried to simplify it. In *The Making of the Crofting Community*, Hunter describes it as being determined by Leverhulme's inability to "understand an attachment to land that transcended the calculations of loss and profit which had ruled his own life".<sup>89</sup> Joni Buchanan in *The Lewis Land Struggle: na Gaisgich* tries to explain away the general

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<sup>88</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.xli This remark was made with specific reference to Lewis, and comes in a discussion of the work of Derick Thomson.

<sup>89</sup> Hunter, *Crofting Community*, p.267

approval which the Lewis population managed to feel for the schemes while still being sympathetic towards the raiders who challenged them as being "the natural ambivalence of a population which desperately needed work".<sup>90</sup> Roger Hutchinson's *The Soapman: Lewis, Harris and Lord Leverhulme* reduces the five years of Leverhulme's proprietorship on Lewis to a "conflict" where "island servicemen returned from the war to discover a new landlord whose aim was to destroy their identity as independent crofter/fishermen and turn them into tenured wage-slaves".<sup>91</sup> <sup>92</sup> What these books have in common is a desire to incorporate this subject within a narrative which is informed by the formative tensions of the 19th century - tensions which Hunter summarised as being the result of "the transformation of clan chiefs from essentially tribal leaders into cash-obsessed owners of commercially organised estates".<sup>93</sup> This obviates the possibility that the crofting community's inhabitants could themselves possess an indigenous instinct for commerce - a sense of the "calculations of loss and profit" alongside their "attachment to land". The awkward delineation which this creates for a complex period of Highland history can be seen by the use which each of these works makes of a passage from the book *Life in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* by the journalist and Scottish Land Court member Colin MacDonald.<sup>94</sup> This passage describes a meeting between Lord Leverhulme and around 1,000 islanders at Gress, in the Back region of Lewis, in March 1919, at which Leverhulme tried to sway the crowd with his schemes.<sup>95</sup> It is worth reproducing in full:

And then there appeared in the next few minutes the most graphic word-picture it is possible to imagine - a great fleet of fishing boats - another great fleet of cargo boats - a large fish-canning factory (already started) - railways - an electric-power station; then one could see the garden city grow - steady work, steady pay, beautiful houses for all - every modern convenience and comfort. The insecurity of their present

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<sup>90</sup> Buchanan, *The Lewis Land Struggle*, p.126

<sup>91</sup> Hutchinson, *The Soapman*, back cover summary

<sup>92</sup> For a contrary argument to the one presented in these books, see Murdo MacLeod, 'Did the people of Lewis refuse Lord Leverhulme's schemes?', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 42 (1953-1959), pp.257-270

<sup>93</sup> Hunter, *Crofting Community*, pp.23-24

<sup>94</sup> Colin MacDonald, *Life in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Aberdeen University Press: Aberdeen, 1991) This book was first published as two separate volumes: *Echoes of the Glen* (1936) and *Highland Journey* (1943). The passage being discussed here was originally found in the former.

<sup>95</sup> The passage is also referenced in the discussions of Leverhulme found in Leneman, *Fit for Heroes?*, pp.118-126; pp.130-131 and Cameron, *Land for the People?*, pp.171-179; 180. It should be noted that Cameron is sceptical about the claim that 1,000 people attended the meeting. Regarding Leneman's views on the viability of Leverhulme's schemes (p.125), it should be noted that this thesis is not concerned with their feasibility but with the indigenous attitude to commerce and industry revealed by the Lewis and Harris people's response to them.

income was referred to; the squalor of their present houses deftly compared with the conditions in the new earthly paradise. Altogether it was a masterpiece; and it produced its effect; little cheers came involuntarily from a few here and there - more cheers! - general cheers!!....

And just then, while the artist was still adding skilful detail, there was a dramatic interruption.

One of the ringleaders<sup>96</sup> managed to rouse himself from the spell, and in an impassioned voice addressed the crowd in Gaelic, and this is what he said:

*"So so, fhiribh! Cha dean so gnothach! Bheireadh am bodach mil-bheulach sin chreidsinn oirnn gu'm bheil dubh geal 's geal dubh! Ciod e dhuinn na bruadairean briagha aige, a thig no nach tig. 'Se am fearann tha sinn ag iarraidh. Agus 'se tha mise a faighneachd [turning to face Lord Leverhulme and pointing dramatically towards him]: an toir thu dhuinn am fearann?"*

Lord Leverhulme looked bewildered at this, to him, torrent of unintelligible sounds, but when the frenzied cheering with which it was greeted died down he spoke.

"I am sorry! It is my great misfortune that I do not understand the Gaelic language. But perhaps my interpreter will translate for me what has been said?"

Said the interpreter: "I am afraid, Lord Leverhulme, that it will be impossible for me to convey to you in English what has been so forcefully said in the older tongue; but I will do my best" - and his best was a masterpiece, not only in words but in tone and gesture and general effect:

"Come, come, men! This will not do! This honey-mouthed man would have us believe that black is white and white is black. *We* are not concerned with his fancy dreams that may or may not come true! What we want is the *land* - and the question I put to him now is: *will you give us the land?*"

The translation evoked a further round of cheering. A voice was heard to say:

"Not so bad for a poor language like the English!"

Lord Leverhulme's picture, so skilfully painted, was spattered in the artist's hand!<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> This ringleader is identified by Buchanan and Hutchinson as Alan Martin, one of the land-raiders who were directly challenging Leverhulme.

<sup>97</sup> Colin MacDonald, *Highlands and Islands*, pp.143-144. The passage is found in Hunter on pp.268-269, in Buchanan on p.99, in Hutchinson on pp.125-126. It is referenced in Cameron on pp.177-178 and in Leneman on p.119. Trevor Royle also uses it in *The Flowers of the Forest*, p.317, although his source is the original Board of Agriculture record of the meeting.

For Hunter the exchange in this passage contains "echoes of everything"<sup>98</sup> *The Making of the Crofting Community* is about. The way in which he and other historians have chosen to interpret it, however, contains implications for the way in which they approach Gaelic history. The dynamic of this passage, by using Gaelic as the medium for *am fearann*, associates Gaelic with tradition, conservatism, and rural life and juxtaposes these with the industry, urbanisation, commercialism and modernity inherent in Leverhulme's schemes - characteristics which are therefore portrayed as being inherently English and antagonistic to Gaelic ("the older tongue"). Making this subliminal association is understandable when it comes from a speaker addressing a crowd and trying to sway its opinion. But historians should be more critical of this and make an allowance for the consciousness with which the protesting crofter would have deployed this rhetorical trick. This reveals a further problem in these works which, despite aspiring to present an uncondescending narrative from the Gael's perspective, can, when emphasising transcendent attachments to land, be occluded by the same romanticism found in the types of history which they oppose.<sup>99</sup> By appropriating the dialectic of the Leverhulme meeting as a model for the history of the post-war Highlands, the progress of that history, where it does not accord with land reform and settlement, is depicted as a departure from the past, a phenomenon which is without roots in this society's history. The distorted view of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which this creates, and the implications which this has for our perception of the contemporary Highlands, was evident in the recent "Strì an Fhearainn (The Land Raiders)"<sup>100</sup> episode of the BBC Alba documentary series *Trusadh*. The programme was presented by Joni Buchanan, with contributions from James Hunter, and focussed on the monuments which have been built in Reef, Bernera, Park, Aignish, and Gress, on the Isle of Lewis, to mark the incidents of land agitation which took place in each of these communities. Its theme was the legacy of these agitations across the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. At the end of the programme, a representative from each of the communities summarised what they thought this legacy was, and the answer of the Bernera representative reveals what is excluded from the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of Gaels if the land issue is assigned the same importance which it had in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

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<sup>98</sup> Hunter, *Crofting Community*, p.269

<sup>99</sup> Notice, for example, the similarity between Hunter's statement about the crofters' "attachment to land that transcended the calculations of profit and loss" and another historian's description of the Victorian establishment's "civilised detachment from the single minded pursuit of production and profit." This quote is from Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004) p.20

<sup>100</sup> 'Strì an Fhearainn (The Land Raiders)', *Trusadh*, (2012), Episode 3, BBC Alba, 3rd Dec. 2100 hrs. Thanks to Lorraine Macritchie and Michelle Morrison of MG Alba for supplying a copy of this programme.

'S math gun sheas iad an àrd ann an seo, ann am Beàrnaraigh. Mar nach biodh bhiodh an àite bàn. Bhiodh an àite falamh an diugh. Bhiodh e na aon tac mhòr aig na h-uachdaran. Bhiodh na bailtean gu leir bàn agus bhiodh na daoine air sgapadh air feadh an t-saoghail, agus cha bhiodh Gàidhlig ann an seo no càil idir, mar nach biodh son na daoine ud ann am Beàrnaraigh a sheas an àirde.<sup>101</sup>

By looking exclusively at the immediate practical legacy of the land agitation, and extending this into the present to serve as a general narrative for the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of a Highland community, the major events which intruded upon that history in the interim have been obscured. The nature of this distortion - the exaggeration of the general significance of the land agitation's achievements - has one particular consequence, and this is that it is difficult to read the counterfactuals posited in the above passage without thinking that it is they, in fact, which represent the course which Gaelic society actually did take in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Stating that, were it not for the political achievements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, "cha bhiodh Gàidhlig ann an seo no càil idir", is contradicted by the real decline of Gaelic speakers and the language's increasing replacement by English as the daily tongue.<sup>102</sup> To argue that the land agitation prevented Gaels in crofting communities from being "air [an] sgapadh air feadh an t-saoghail" is an omission of the 1920s where the exodus of, predominantly young, Gaels from the north-west Highlands<sup>103</sup> contributed to what Ewen Cameron has described as "the decade of emigration" where "for the first time in an inter-censal period...emigration [exceeded] the natural increase of the population."<sup>104</sup> And the suggestion that, in the long term, the land agitation prevented crofting townships from becoming "bàn" sits uneasily with a conflict which was described as having bled them "white".<sup>105</sup>

This is indicative of an inability to think of aspects of Gaelic history and culture outside of the categories which have defined them. The result of this is that, when this history and

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<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> For a study of the census figures for Gaelic speakers between 1881 and 1981 see Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland*. For one Gaelic poet's evocation of the state of the language in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century see Derick Thomson, *Sùil air Faire: dain ùra*, (Acair: Steòrnabhagh, 2007) 'Dà-chànanas' p.16; 'Àros nan Sean?' pp.18-21; and *passim*.

<sup>103</sup> See Marjory Harper, *Emigration from Scotland Between the Wars: opportunity or exile?* (Profile: London, 2003) p.98 ; Jim Wilkie, *Metagama: A Journey from Lewis to the New World*, (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 2001); Brian Wilson, 'Life's an open book for Edinburgh Gael', *West Highland Free Press*, 22 January 2008, p.5; 'Bàs Baile' in Black, *An Tuil*, pp.412-417

<sup>104</sup> Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p.50

<sup>105</sup> Fraser Grigor, *Highland Resistance*, p.178

culture start transpiring beyond the confines of these categories and our perspective is not adjusted accordingly, these categories instead become stereotypes which inhibit our understanding of Gaelic society. Therefore, just as Ronald Black describes the under-appreciation of secular poets from Lewis because their communities struggle to conceive of a Gaelic literature which is not religiously inclined<sup>106</sup>, or the modern writing of Iain Crichton Smith can, by benefit of being Gaelic, find itself on bookshop shelves being sold next to kitsch books on folklore and mythology<sup>107</sup>, so there appears to be a difficulty to think of a social and economic history of Gaels which is not encapsulated by the land issue. For social historians there is the practical point that without the land issue there ceases to be an organising principle for the study of Gaelic society and politics - there is no cohesive crofting community which can provide an example of unified Gaelic nationhood. But, as one of the First World War's consequences was that, within a generation of the conflict, "there was no such thing as Gaelic society"<sup>108</sup>, this fragmentation, and the accumulation of individual Gaelic experiences found within it, becomes the story of Gaels in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Therefore, when these points are refined for the particular themes followed in this thesis, what has to be considered is the possibility that a nascent urge existed within Gaelic society for the various things which can generically be described as modern. These are the industrialisation, urbanisation, and consumerism which Colin MacDonald's passage portrays as being essentially alien to Gaels - and that this nascent urge competed with the traditionalist ideals of land, a pastoral life, the repudiation of capitalist values, which defined both the 19<sup>th</sup> century self-image of Gaels and the stereotype of them held in the rest of the country.<sup>109</sup> This would require a shift of perspective which could explain the "real beginning of the twentieth century"<sup>110</sup> in the Highlands and Islands as being more than just an unprecedented consequence of the First World War's upheaval or the result of inadequate government policies. An example of such an approach to Gaelic history is available from the revisionist studies which have been done on Highland migrants to Canada.

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<sup>106</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.xli

<sup>107</sup> Malcolm Chapman, *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture* (Biddles: Guildford, 1978) p.131

<sup>108</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.xxiii

<sup>109</sup> For an early 19th century Gaelic articulation of this identity see 'Òran do na Ciobairibh Gallda' in Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna*, pp.47-53; pp.186-91 (English translation). See also Calum Lister Matheson, *Ruinous Pride: The Construction of the Scottish Military Identity, 1745-1918* (MA Thesis: University of North Texas, 2011) pp.44-67. For an interesting exploration of 19<sup>th</sup> century efforts to convey modern industrial concepts through Gaelic, see Donald Meek, "Sitirich an Eich Iaruinn' ('The Neighing of the Iron Horse'): Gaelic Perspectives on Railways, Steam Power, and Ship-building in the Nineteenth Century", in Wilson McLeod (ed.), *Bile ós chrannaibh : a festschrift for William Gillies*, (Clann Tuirc: Perthshire, 2010) pp.271-292

<sup>110</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.xxii

In Mike Kennedy's "'Lochaber no more': A Critical Examination of Highland Emigration Mythology"<sup>111</sup> the author reveals the contrasting views of migration found in the poetry composed by Highland settlers in Nova Scotia. His argument considers both the way in which this poetry, and its resulting narrative, has been distorted by historians to present a lachrymose vision of Highland migration, and what has caused them to do this. He begins with a poem by a Lochaber migrant called Iain Sealgair who migrated to Mabou Ridge, Cape Breton in 1835. Iain Sealgair's poem presents a hackneyed view of migration that laments leaving "Tir nam fuar bheann àrd" and abandoning "dùthaich" and "dùthchas" and presents a romantic portrayal of the Highlands. But as Kennedy then explains, Iain Sealgair's poem was challenged by another poet called Ailean an Rids - a cousin of Iain's who had preceded him in travelling from Lochaber to Mabou Ridge 20 years beforehand. Ailean an Rids uses his song to correct Iain Sealgair's memories of the Highlands and emphasises the liberty and prosperity they have in Canada:

'S i 'n tìr a dh' fhàg thu 'n tìr gun chàirdeas,  
 Tìr gun bhàidh ri tuath;  
 Ach gu tùrsach iad 'ga fàgail  
 'S ànradh thar a chuan.  
 Daoine bochda, sìol nan coiteir,  
 Bha gun stochd gun bhuar;  
 'S mairg a chàin i, tìr an àigh,  
 'S an dràs d iad 'nan daoine uaisl'.<sup>112</sup>

With this Kennedy demonstrates the tension which existed within Gaelic culture between the embrace of new opportunities and prosperity and the relinquishing of the old, albeit with specific reference to migration. Kennedy also makes the point that, in the stereotypical accounts of Gaelic migrants, Gaelic sources have been ignored for the sake of emphasising English ones which provide the desired sentimental view. He makes this last point by focusing on 'The Canadian Boat Song' – a song which is "arguably...the single most popular

<sup>111</sup> Mike Kennedy, "'Lochaber no more': A Critical Examination of Highland Emigration Mythology' in Marjory Harper and Michael E. Vance (eds.) *Myth, Migration and the Making of Memory: Scotia and Nova Scotia c.1700-1990* (John Donald: Edinburgh, 1999) pp.267-297. Another work which takes a similar perspective on an earlier period is Marianne McLean, *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745-1820* (McGill-Queen's University Press: London, 1991).

<sup>112</sup> Kennedy, "'Lochaber no more'", pp.268-269

commentary on the Highland immigrant experience" but of which "there can be absolutely no doubt that [it was] a work of the imagination" and one composed by a non-Gael.<sup>113</sup> Both of these points – the indigenous tension between adherence to tradition and embrace of the new, and the overemphasis of English sources which confirm preconceived notions of Gaelic history at the expense of Gaelic sources which may undermine them – apply to the writing of north-west Highland history in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Gaelic sources - particularly the poetry - for this period in the Highlands suggest that the debate between Iain Sealgair and Ailean an Rids existed within Gaelic society in Scotland. And the accounts which crofting histories provide of attitudes to modern life in the post-war Highlands rely on English sources which perpetuate Highland stereotypes at the expense of Gaelic ones which do not. The problem is that, unlike the 'The Canadian Boat Song', the English sources for the 20th century Highlands have often been produced by Gaels.

This problem is evident in Trevor Royle's *The Flowers of the Forest*. In his analysis of the First World War's aftermath in the crofting counties<sup>114</sup>, Royle uses the same approach as Hunter et al., and also follows them in assigning most of his attention to the Leverhulme schemes. For Royle, just like the analyses considered above, Leverhulme's wish that "the people [of Lewis and Harris] would be able to give up their old crofting way of life and embrace the modern world", while no doubt being sincere, was "hopelessly out of touch with the times and with the situation on Lewis." Again, Leverhulme "failed to understand the islanders' attachment to the land and the importance they placed on the crofting way of life" and "Even when the significance of that connection was put to him in graphic terms he failed to comprehend that the islanders were not interested in 'fancy dreams that may or may not come true'."<sup>115</sup> To emphasise this point, and reinforce the disinclination for the modern world intrinsic to the crofters of Lewis, the following quotation from a crofter called John Smith is used:

You have spoken of steady work and steady pay in terms of veneration - and I have no doubt that in your view and in the view of those unfortunate people who are compelled to live in smoky towns, steady work and steady pay are very desirable things. But in Lewis we have never been accustomed to either - and strange though it

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<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> This account is found in Royle, *Flowers of the Forest*, pp.315-320

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, pp.316-317



might seem to you, we do not greatly desire them. We attend to our crofts in seed-time and harvest, and we follow the fishing in its season - and when neither requires our attention we are free to rest and contemplate. You have referred to our houses as hovels? But they are our homes, and I will venture to say, my Lord, that, poor though these homes may be, you will find more real happiness in them than you will find in your castles throughout the land.<sup>116</sup>

Just like Colin MacDonald's account of the March 1919 meeting between the islanders and Leverhulme, this quotation is an example of a conscious effort by a crofter who is speaking in a political context to exaggerate a certain image of Gaels for an external audience. The supposed vitality of crofting life is depicted by comparing it to a specific example of the worst aspects of industrial society (the unfortunates of "smoky towns"), and its apparently inherent virtue and authenticity are emphasised through analogy with the other extreme of this modern Britain (the "castles throughout the land") against which crofting, Gaels, and the Highlands have inevitably been pitted in the contemporary and historiographical perception of them. But, once more like the March 1919 meeting, the use which has been made of this quotation is an insufficiently sceptical acceptance of a highly ideological vision of the Highlands, one which is contrary to the direction in which the agency of Gaels was causing their society to develop, and one which serves to reinforce the stereotypes which impair the historical analysis of that development. Several aspects of John Smith's statement can be parsed to highlight the contrast between the vision he provides of life in an unindustrial crofting community and the perspective of that which is found in Gaelic sources. His description of the time which Gaels had to be "free to rest and contemplate" becomes, in Derick Thomson's 'Na Cailleachan'<sup>117</sup>, an impoverished listlessness which consists of "Dad ach a' bruidhinn air crodh 's air daoine/'s a' cur fàd mun an teine". Poignantly, in *Bàrdachd Leodhais*, the volume's editor Iain Macleoid complained about the opportunities for Gaelic education which were lost with "gach oidhche fhada gheamhraidh".<sup>118</sup> It is significant that, while the idealised view of crofting after the War is found in English sources aimed at government bodies and journalists, the negative depictions are found in the more internalised medium of Gaelic poetry. The extent to which this medium could gain the attention of these external agents is evident in the following passage which the economist and Board of

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<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, pp.319-320

<sup>117</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, pp.450-451

<sup>118</sup> Iain N. Macleoid, *Bàrdachd Leodhais*, (Alasdair Maclabhruinn: Glaschu, 1916), p.1

Agriculture official W.R. Scott wrote in his introduction to *Rural Scotland During the War*<sup>119</sup>:

No doubt, if the Highland population maintains its customs, many incidents of the war will find their place in those endless Gaelic songs which last from a winter sunset to midnight or longer. But in such folksongs everything will be transfigured by the poetic touch, and the subjects will be the heroic rather than the common-place. Yet it is the latter which one requires to picture in order to see how the rural population lived and how the war affected it.<sup>120</sup>

Contrary to the preconceptions of this passage, however, it is the "endless Gaelic songs" which, for this period, provide the less affected vision of daily life in the Highlands, while the prosaic English accounts perform poetic transfigurations. This is a point which will recur throughout this thesis.

If we adapt Mike Kennedy's perspective an improved interpretation of Highland history presents itself - one which more adequately explains the Highlands' 20<sup>th</sup> century transformation. The nascent urge for modernity becomes a prominent theme and one which is in tension with the more pronounced urge to settle land, correct the Clearances and return to traditional values. This has parallels with the wider phenomenon of anti-industrialism and anti-modernism which is to be found in British culture in this period.<sup>121</sup> The Napier Report, and the consensus which shaped the legislation which followed it in the next five decades, is certainly an example of this phenomenon<sup>122</sup>, and analysing the crofting community within this framework can explain why official land policies were only ever half suited to that community's aspirations.

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<sup>119</sup> David T. Jones, CBE, et al, *Rural Scotland During the War*, (Oxford University Press: London,1926). This was part of a series of reports into the First World War's impact which was commissioned by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>120</sup> Jones et al, *Rural Scotland*, p.16. For another example of that author's prejudices about the Highland population and their bearing upon official policy in the Highlands see below, p.55

<sup>121</sup> See Wiener, *English Culture*, pp.5-7 and *passim*. For an analysis of this theme specific to the context of the First World War see Bogacz, "A Tyranny of Words", *passim*.

<sup>122</sup> See Napier's comments on the purposes for crofting legislation in *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Island of Scotland*, (1884), pp.108-111. See also Shaw, 'Land, people and nation', *passim*; Cameron, 'The historical creation of the Scottish Highlands', *passim*; Dewey, 'Celtic Agrarian Legislation and the Celticist Revival', *passim*.

Assuming this perspective, the question to be asked is this: what did the First World War have to break within Gaelic society for the modernist urge within it to supersede the traditionalist one, therefore accelerating trends which would shape the 20th century Highlands and removing the basis which the existing consensus on public policy had within the region. What changes in Highland life across the 1920s and 30s did the War precipitate, resulting in the 1938 Hilleary Report's declaration that "we need...a new approach to the Highlands. We must clear our minds of all sentiment and cant. They should be regarded as part of the country which has the same right to develop as other parts"?<sup>123</sup>

Therefore, with specific reference to crofting histories and their ability to convey the general currents of Gaelic history in the 20th century, the aim of this thesis is to balance Hunter's statement that the 1880s saw "the commencement of a new epoch" in the history of the crofting community with one Lewiswoman's memory:

Ach thàinig caochladh air t-saoghal a bh' againn nuair a thòisich an Cogadh Mòr.  
Dh'fhalbh an saoghal a bh' ann...Dh'fhalbh siud nuair a thòisich an Cogadh agus a thòisich daoine a' leigeil dhiubh nan lotaichean.<sup>124</sup>

Concerning the wider entity of Gaelic Scotland, the aim is to understand the shift from the optimism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the "loss of collective confidence" identified by Black after the War - what happened to take us from the period in the 1870s and 1880s described by Mairi Mhòr nan Òran as a "earrach nuadh"<sup>125</sup> to one at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which Murchadh MacPhàrlain remembered as being "Mar bheul oichdh' rinn tràth-nòin".<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> James Hunter, *The Claim of Crofting* (Mainstream Publishing: Edinburgh, 1999) p.44

<sup>124</sup> Ferguson, *Lewis in the Passing*, p.165

<sup>125</sup> 'Eilean a' Cheò' in Donald Meek, *Mairi Mhòr nan Òran*, (Comann Litreachas Gàidhlig na h-Alba: Glasgow, 1998) pp. 106-12 (v. 17)

<sup>126</sup> 'Naoi Ceud Deug 's a Ceithir Deug' in Ian Stephen (ed.), *Siud an t-Eilean: There Goes the Island*, (Acair: Stornoway, 1993) pp.18-20 (v.7)

## 2. Tradition and Modernity within the Crofting Community, c.1850-1914

The aim of this chapter is to offer an alternative perspective of crofting society in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century - a perspective which can suggest the roots of the pattern which Highland history would take after 1918 once the First World War had deracinated the social and cultural basis of the land politics which defines the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This will be done by focussing on a range of sources which reveal points of contact between inhabitants of crofting communities and the commercial, industrial, and urban instincts to which they would increasingly turn in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It will be considered how these instincts were rationalised in the context of land agitation, class assertion, and heightened sense of historical purpose which shaped the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and with which these instincts were at times in conflict. Through this, an impression will be gained of how pronounced these modernising inclinations were in crofting society before the War - a society which was becoming increasingly self-aware and was doing so by defining itself against modernity and through the themes which have become representative of this period: land hunger, the reassertion of Gaelic tradition, evangelical religion, and the inherited social ideals for which each of these provided one form of expression. Next to these points will be a consideration of whether the realisation of those inherited social ideals was confined to these 19<sup>th</sup> century characteristics or if their realisation was something which could also be achieved through the various forms of modernity which Gaels would pursue in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The analysis presented in this chapter is plotted against the same narrative deployed by mainstream analyses of crofting society's late 19<sup>th</sup> century formation. These works find their crux in the late 1850s with the final breakdown of old Highland society during the potato famine. Therefore, they focus on that society's reformation through the following agencies: the development of evangelical Protestantism in most of the crofting regions and the institutional connection this created between those regions and the lowlands, as well as the organisational precedent evangelicalism provided for the secular politics of crofters in the

1880s<sup>127</sup>; the external rehabilitation of Gaelic culture which came from the broader Celtic revival movement and the restorative influence which this had upon the self-esteem of Gaelic society<sup>128</sup>; the increasing integration of the north-west Highland economy with that of the south which was made necessary by the famine, and the rise in material prosperity and expansion of individual experience which, through temporary migration, this made possible for previously impoverished and isolated communities.<sup>129</sup> These developments contribute to the creation of a self-aware and confident generation of Gaels which can progress from a "reactive" to a "proactive"<sup>130</sup> deployment of the social grievances of the post-Culloden Highlands. This chapter will follow the conventional narrative but will do so with an eye upon the factors which would come to prominence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and therefore present a modified reading of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century - a reading which can make an allowance for the changes which would be catalysed by the First World War. Of particular interest, therefore, is crofting society's economic integration with the rest of Britain and the new commercialism which this introduced to it. The conventional interpretation of this presents it as something which is ancillary to the trajectory of crofting class formation, land settlement, and the fulfilment of Gaelic ideals. Because of this, the real increase of capitalism in the Highlands is subservient to the pervasive anti-capitalist tone of Gaelic political poetry<sup>131</sup> and it is presented as something which is merely a contributory factor to the traditional inclinations of Gaels as it provides them with a minimal level of material prosperity. This then facilitates a land

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<sup>127</sup> For discussions of religion see Hunter, *Crofting Community*, pp.142-157; MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, pp.1-3; Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War*, pp.100-109; MacInnes, 'Gaelic Poetry in the Nineteenth Century'; Donald Meek, "'The Land Question answered from the Bible': The Land Issue and the Development of a Highland Theology of Liberation', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine* 103, No.2 (1987), pp.84-89

<sup>128</sup> Regarding the role of Highland societies see MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, pp.7-10 and pp.88-92. For a comparative look at the academic rehabilitation of Welsh, Irish, and Gaelic, and the connection of this to the political advancement of their main social bases, see V.E. Durkacz, *The Decline of the Celtic Languages* (John Donald: Edinburgh, 1983) pp.189-213 and particularly pp.201-203 and pp.207-208. For an example of the general cultural confidence which this academic rehabilitation bestowed upon Gaels see 'Òran do'n Ollamh Blackie' by the land reform activist Calum Campbell MacPhail, in *Am Filidh Latharnach*, (Angus Mackay: Stirling, 1947) pp.25-27

<sup>129</sup> For the rise in living standards and its social affects see MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, pp.3-5; Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War*, pp.192-208; T.M. Devine, 'Temporary Migration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century', *Economic History Review* 54 (1979); T.M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century*, (John Donald: Edinburgh, 2004) pp.284-288 and pp.294-296; Hunter, *Crofting Community*, pp.158-186

<sup>130</sup> This distinction between the Gaels' reactive and proactive use of their historical grievances is T.M. Devine's and has been used by him in his various discussions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Highlands. See, for example, 'The Highlands and Crofting Society' in T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000* (Penguin Books: London, 2000) pp.413-447, with the distinction quoted above being found on p.428.

<sup>131</sup> Something which must also be noted here is the formative influence of Marxism upon the most influential analyses which have been presented from the perspective of the crofting community. See Sorley MacLean, 'The Poetry of the Clearances' in William Gillies (ed.), *Ris a' Bhruthaich: The Criticism and Prose Writings of Sorley MacLean* (Acair: Stornoway, 1997) p.49 and *passim* and Hunter, *Crofting Community*, pp.27-29, pp.136-142, and *passim*.

agitation ostensibly aimed at mitigating capitalism and restoring the perceived life of the old Highlands. But this approach misses the possibility - made likely bycrofting society's post-War development - that the new commercialism of the Highlands could be a force in its own right and one which could be adapted by Gaels to complement or supersede land settlement as a means by which they could both realise their political aspirations and satisfy the cultural heritage which informed them.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to consider more fully the "revolution in heart and mind"<sup>133</sup> which T.M. Devine identifies in the north-west Highlands after the famine.

The structure of this chapter will run chronologically from the years immediately after the famine in the late 1850s and the 1860s, through to the main period of land agitation in the 1870s and 1880s. It will then conclude in the three decades which followed the passage of the Crofters Act and which contain the initiatives and debates which stemmed from that legislation, as well as the introduction of state welfare with the 1909 budget and the National Insurance Act of 1911. The aim throughout this is to identify alternative attitudes to Highland progress from within crofting communities, which can help explain developments within the Highlands after 1918. These alternative attitudes will be considered alongside those which were predominant within crofting communities before the War. This will give an idea of what tension existed between both sets of attitudes and what the War changed within crofting society for the dominant outlook of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to yield to that of the 20<sup>th</sup>.

In crofter driven histories such as *The Making of the Crofting Community* and I.M.M. MacPhail's *The Crofters' War*, when they reach the seminal years of the 1850s and 1860s outlined above and are therefore ready to start the trajectory of class formation which they follow, the grievances that crofters are addressing and the ideals they are asserting are explicated with reference to songs composed in the 1860s and 1870s. The songs they choose are explicitly anti-capitalist and use the same language as had been used by Gaelic poets to address the post-Culloden transformation of the Highlands since this transformation began.

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<sup>132</sup> The most explicit suggestion that the agitation of the 1880s could have been equally motivated by that decade's economic depression as by the social and cultural foundations of landholding, and that the impulse of the Crofters' War was therefore a protest against the recession of commercial opportunity for crofters, is in Devine, 'Temporary Migration', p.358. For a recent analysis of the economic history of the Highlands and Islands, which considers the indigenous history of industry in the region, and ties this in with a discussion of past and present policy, historiography, and the preconceptions which these create about the region, see Perchard and Mackenzie, "'Too Much on the Highlands?'"

<sup>133</sup> Devine, *Great Highland Famine*, p.276

By using those songs as a basis, therefore, these works pursue a narrative of modern Highland history which is in its essence a continuation of the previous century but in which the essential characteristics have been adapted to a modern and increasingly democratic context. Representative of the songs which are cited is 'Spiorad a' Charthannais' by the Lewis poet Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn (1848-1881)<sup>134</sup>. In *The Making of the Crofting Community*, Hunter uses the following verses from this song as an example of "the beginnings of an effective anti-landlordism among crofters"<sup>135</sup>:

They handed over to the snipe  
 the land of happy folk,  
 they dealt without humanity  
 with people who were kind.  
 Because they might not drown them  
 they dispersed them overseas;  
 a thralldom worse than Babylon's  
 was the plight they were in.

They reckoned as but brittle threads  
 the tight and loving cords  
 that bound these freemen's noble hearts  
 to the high land of the hills.  
 The grief they suffered brought them death  
 although they suffered long,  
 tormented by the cold world  
 which had no warmth for them.

Does anyone remember  
 in this age the bitter day  
 of that horrific battle,  
 Waterloo with its red plains?  
 The Gaels won doughty victory  
 when they marshalled under arms;

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<sup>134</sup> Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna*, p.314

<sup>135</sup> Hunter, *Crofting Community*, p.139

when faced with strong men's ardour  
our fierce foes had to yield.

What solace had the fathers  
of the heroes who won fame?  
Their houses, warm with kindness,  
were in ruins round their ears;  
their sons were on the battlefield  
saving a rueless land,  
their mothers' state was piteous  
with their houses burnt like coal.

While Britain was rejoicing,  
they spent their time in grief.  
In the country that had reared them,  
no shelter from the wind;  
the grey strands of their hair were tossed  
by the cold breeze of the glen,  
there were tears upon their cheeks  
and cold dew on their heads.<sup>136</sup>

Mac a' Ghobhainn as a poet has been commended for being one of the few examples from the 19<sup>th</sup> century of a Gaelic voice which was critical of imperialism rather than viewing it solely as a stage in which Gaelic soldiers could achieve glory<sup>137</sup>, but in the verses quoted here he does not deviate from the conventions of his time. In them we are presented with the same view offered by Gaelic poets for generations - the old Highlands whose values contemporary Gaels still seek to maintain were destroyed by the social and economic forces they are currently opposing, and political intervention on behalf of Gaels is to be done in order to correct this historical injustice and as a form of belated gratitude for the military service by

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<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*, pp.139-140. Hunter uses Derick Thomson's translation of the song from *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*, pp.242-245. Other editions which have been consulted for this thesis are Donald Meek's in *Tuath is Tighearna*, pp.90-97 (Gaelic) and pp.213-220 (English) and Donald Meek, *Caran an t-Saoghail*, (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 2003) pp.352-367.

<sup>137</sup> On this aspect of Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn's work, with particular reference to his song 'Òran Luchd an Spòrs', see MacInnes, 'Gaelic Poetry in the Nineteenth Century', p.374; MacLean, 'Poetry of the Clearances', p.61; Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna*, pp.26-27; Thomson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*, pp.239-240.



which this injustice was compounded. Gaels are therefore still a people deracinated and any political action they pursue is to be towards the restoration of "the land of happy folk". There is little sense of the contemporary agency of Gaels in developing Highland society, particularly through the new commercialism which was emerging within it and from which they were increasingly benefiting. The possibility that an alternative view was developing within crofting society in this period - one which was distilling the traditional Gaelic complaint into a form compatible with the opportunities offered by the new structure of crofting society - is suggested by a relatively unknown song from the West Side of Lewis. This song will be analysed next to a well known example of protest verse which has been used by historians to support the conventional narrative, and which is close to it in terms of date, context, and authorship. From this an example of the different outlooks found within late 19<sup>th</sup> century crofting society will be made clear.

The song from the West Side of Lewis does not have a title so it shall be referred to from here by its first line, 'B' e siud bliadhna na h-èiginn'.<sup>138</sup> It was composed for the Galson clearance of 1863 and its author was John Graham (1824-1876) who, along with his wife and children, was a victim of that clearance and subsequently emigrated to Milan in the Eastern Townships of Quebec.<sup>139</sup> The song with which it is to be contrasted is 'Fàsachadh na Dùthcha' by Murdo Macleod (1837-1914), a native of the Lochs district of Lewis, who was a proponent of crofters' rights and active on the Glasgow cèilidh circuit.<sup>140</sup> 'Fàsachadh na Dùthcha' was composed in the mid-1860s and was performed in the same period by Macleod at the "Annual Gathering of the natives of Ross-shire" - a performance which was said to have stunned its audience, for whom such an overt attack upon landlordism was unprecedented.<sup>141</sup> The Reverend Donald MacCallum said of Murdo Macleod that "in imparting courage to the sufferers and in strengthening the hands of their deliverers in the time of the crofters' agitation, no one did more than [him]".<sup>142</sup> It is the tone and worldview presented by 'Fàsachadh na Dùthcha', and the many other songs of the land agitation which share these, that have informed the writings of historians on this period and which, while being valuable

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<sup>138</sup> The song was preserved orally in the Eastern Townships and was received by Comann Eachdraidh Bharabhais agus Bhrù in 1998. See *Comann Eachdraidh Bharabhais agus Bhrù: Fios a' Bhaile*, Cuairtear 16, An Giblean 1999, pp.4-6

<sup>139</sup> *Fios a' Bhaile*, p.4; *Croft History Isle of Lewis Volume 13: Galson, High Borve, Mid Borve, Melbost Borve* (Bill Lawson Publications, 2007) p.99

<sup>140</sup> Murdo MacLeod, *Bàrdachd Mhurchaidh a' Cheisdeir: laoidhean agus òrain* (Darren Press: Edinburgh, 1962) p.1; p.17; MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, p.9

<sup>141</sup> MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, p.9

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

for the insight they provide into the attitude with which land reform was approached, is less useful in revealing what else was motivating individuals within crofting communities. But this additional insight is something which is provided by 'B' e siud bliadhna na h-èiginn'. That song raises the possibility that Gaels were beginning to seek solutions for their grievances in the changed circumstances of the contemporary Highlands - recognising the opportunities presented by these in addition to the iniquities. They were therefore adapting the traditional Gaelic worldview to provide a more practical vision for dealing with the systemic problems of crofting communities rather than looking back to the lost world of the previous century. Like 'Fàsachadh na Dùthcha', 'B' e siud bliadhna na h-èiginn' was controversial<sup>143</sup>, and John Graham has in common with Murdo Macleod the criticising of landlords and their administrators. But rather than forwarding the staid argument that denuding the land of its tenants will deprive Britain of its best military resource, and therefore justifying his argument by invoking the military achievements of a previous generation of Gaels, John Graham places his argument in the future, as will be seen below.

In 'Fàsachadh na Dùthcha', despite its radical intent, Murdo Macleod presents a conservative vision of the Highlands, which is the same as that found in John MacCodrum's 'Òran do na Fògarraich'<sup>144</sup>, composed in the 1770s, and Allan MacDougall's 'Òran do na Cìobairibh Gallda', composed in the early 1800s. Along with this continuity are the other characteristics of the poetry of the land agitation. The first verse emphasises the military virtues of the Gaels:

'S beag an t-ionghnadh mi bhi tùrsach,  
 'Faicinn fàsachadh mo dhùthcha;  
 Tìr nan àrmunn 's nam fear fiùghail,  
 'Sheasadh cliù na rioghachd dhuinn.

And they are then contrasted with the materialist and soulless shepherds who have replaced them:

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<sup>143</sup> The song led to John Graham being "summoned to court in Montreal" where "he said he would plead guilty if anybody could point out lies in his poem. Nobody could, but he was warned that they would never get the country settled if he gave it such a bad name." (*Comann Eachdraidh Bharabhais agus Bhrù*, p.4)

<sup>144</sup> William Matheson (ed.) *The Songs of John MacCodrum*, (Scottish Gaelic Texts Society: Edinburgh, 1938) pp.196-203 and p.314; Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna*, pp.47-53. These similarities are noted on pp.7-8 of the introduction to *Bàrdachd Mhurchaidh a' Cheisdeir*.

Bailtean a bha caidreach, coibhneil,  
 Gu cairtealan thoirt do dh'aoidhean,  
 'N diugh cha'n fhaigh fear fasnadh oidhch' annt',  
 Cha'n 'eil annt' ach ciobairean.

And the fifth verse reiterates the demeaning influence of capitalism:

Theid an crodh 's an caoraich àireamh,  
 'Reir na suim tha iad a' pàigheadh,  
 Cha teid fiù nan cearcan fhàgail  
 Nach bi càin aig Ceasar dhuibh.

With his opening verses, Murdo Macleod therefore expresses again the profound division between Gaelic society and its values and the capitalism which has uprooted them, with no suggestion that a rapprochement between the two was possible. As the final line in the fifth verse suggests this view is also informed by the author's evangelical religion. He then concludes the song with the following lines:

Ach ma thòisicheas an cogadh  
 Nì ri 'm bheil na cùisean coltach;  
 Thig an dùthaich-sa gu bochdainn,  
 'S cha dean stoc a liobhraigeadh.

Ciobair ann an taobh gach beinne,  
 ...  
 Cha seas sud ri faobhar dhaibh.

Cha dean cù, ge luath air beinn e,  
 ...  
 Naimhdean thoirt fo chis dhaibh.

Féidh is éildean le laoigh bhreaca,  
 Cha ghlac daingneach lath batail;  
 Cearcan-fraoich, is naosgan, 's gearran,

Cha chùm bratach rioghail suas.

In these verses the plight of the Gaels becomes, through its denuding of a people presumed to be an intrinsically martial resource, a matter which is elevated to one of national importance, which poses an existential danger for Britain. There are profound differences between this and 'B' e siud bliadhna na h-èiginn'. Where Macleod's tone is portentous, John Graham's is quotidian, and several aspects of the song make the reader wonder how significant it is that Graham's verses were composed by the immediate victim of a clearance, rather than someone who was catering to an audience of urban Gaels. For example, there are no grand invocations of the Gaels' history or the national imperilment which will result from their displacement. Instead, there is a sober description of the iniquities faced within a crofting community, as seen in the first two verses:

B' e siud bliadhna na h-èiginn  
 Shil na speuran nam frasan  
 Bha an crodh air na steillean  
 Ri dol eug leis an acras.

...

Dhiùlt an Siamarlan sìol dhuinn  
 Airson biadh no sìol-cura  
 'S rinn na ceannaichean cùmhnant  
 Gun làn an dùirn thoirt do dhuine  
 Mur a pàigheadh sinn sìos e  
 Leis an iasg bhon an dubhan  
 No le crùna na rìoghachd  
 Cha deidheadh sgrìobag air duine.

In these lines the poet alludes to the systemic weaknesses of crofting society - particularly the lack of economic diversity and dearth of capital which are highlighted in times of crisis. In the third, fourth and fifth verses, which describe the process of emigration, there is a particularly striking contrast in the language he uses to describe exiled Gaels compared to Murdo Macleod and the wider tradition which the latter represents. Where Macleod speaks of

'Na fir bha uasal, suairce, càirdeil,/Cruaidh-chuiseach thoirt buaidh air  
nàmhaid;/Dh'fhuadaicheadh thar cuan na tràigh iad,/'Mach á àit an sinnsearaibh', this is how  
Graham describes his group of emigrants:

'S ann bho Loch an Dùnain a sheòl sinn  
Air ar fògradh à Alba

...

Far na sgap sinne uile  
mar bhucas chuileagan dheidheadh fhuasgladh.

...

Ach leamsa bu shòlasach  
a bhith seòladh gu Quebec  
ann am bàta gun cheanna-bheairt,  
làn de gharbh chlachan muille.

The tone used here is despondent and unable to express that despondency through the memory of past glory. But it is in the third-last and final verses that the contrast with the conventional type of protest poetry is most clear and where the implications for our reading of late 19<sup>th</sup> century crofting agitation are to be found. The third last verse presents, as is found in 'Fàsachadh na Dùthcha', a religiously informed criticism of capitalism:

Tha dà cheannaiche làmh rium  
anns a' cheàrnaidh seo den talamh  
Fear an Lingwick tàmh dhiubh  
's fear a' fàs ann an Winslow  
'S cuimhnich ma thig thu  
bidh thu aca nan ìnean  
Mar gu spìonadh tu chearc  
's gu leigeadh tu i san Fhasilleach [Fhaoilleach?]  
Chan eil rian agad dhol às bhuapa

Gun a bhith air d'fhad anns an "Legion."

But this conventional Gaelic criticism of an unrestrained capitalism is followed in the final verse by an approval of the commercialism which was emerging in the north-west Highlands the poet had just left:

'S e Eilean Leodhais an t-eilean  
 's a bheil gach goireas tha feumail,  
 Pailteas airgid an tasgadh  
 am banca Ghlaschu is Dhun Eideann  
 'S trì bancannan eile  
 chùl air an sin ag èirigh  
 Stiomaran snasail,  
 tarraing bho fhèillearan.

With this verse, the poet, having failed to derive consolation through rote allusions to the past achievements and happiness of Gaels, finds his inspiration through contemporary reference to the facilities which exist in Scotland and with which Gaels could improve their lot. "Pailteas airgid an tasgadh/am banca Ghlaschu is Dhun Eideann/'S trì bancannan eile/chùl air an sin ag èirigh" reveals frustration at the lack of capital invested in Lewis to develop its native resources, and the arresting image of "Stiomaran snasail/tarraing bho fhèillearan" with which the poet closes suggests a comfort with the post-famine integration of the north-west Highlands with the markets of the south and an appreciation of the benefits which this brought.

What makes this more striking is John Graham's year of birth. He was born in 1824 and therefore would have attained adulthood before the beginning of the potato famine. This means that he was raised entirely in the old crofting society which was ended by the famine's deprivations and the "revolution in heart and mind" caused by those. The acceptance of new and progressive ideas is something which historians have attributed to the generation raised after the famine, for which the pre-famine Highlands were unknown, and this is contrasted with the social conservatism and political timidity of the older generation.<sup>145</sup> But John

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<sup>145</sup> Hunter, *Crofting Community*, pp.184-186

Graham's example suggests that an assertive adaptation to the post-famine Highlands was possible for members of the older generation as well.

This leads to the next set of sources. These are ones which were produced by members of the post-famine generation which was the most active in the land agitation. These sources reveal two things. First, the conflicted attitudes felt by crofters towards the traditions whose reassertion have been taken to define this period, and then the alternatives which they saw for their own advancement and the development of crofting society beyond the restoration of an idealised pre-industrial world. The first source is a song called 'Am Feamnadh'<sup>146</sup> by the South Uist poet John Campbell (1859-1947).<sup>147</sup> This song, whose internal evidence suggests it would have been composed between the 1870s and 1890s<sup>148</sup>, has as its subject the collection of seaweed - a topic which recurs in Gaelic poetry as an example of the difficulties inherent in crofting life.<sup>149</sup> The way in which John Campbell pursues this theme, when considered against the political context in which it was composed, contains implications for both our interpretation of how appropriate government legislation in the crofting regions from the 1880s onwards was and of the period as a whole. In his article 'Celtic agrarian legislation and the Celtic revival', Clive Dewey outlines the development of official attitudes towards traditional Irish and Highland society and the impact this had upon government legislation towards them. He states that the political consensus which produced the Irish and Scottish Land Acts in 1881 and 1886 was one which had shifted from the "*laissez faire* axioms" on which mid-19<sup>th</sup> century government ideas had been based towards policies which would remove the "agrarian system" in each of these societies from "the operations of the market" and legislate for them according to their "Customary laws" which were based on "faithful adherence to past practice".<sup>150</sup> The traditional view presented by Gaelic poetry, which is discussed above, as well as the English language sources for crofters discussed in the previous chapter, suggest that this approach would correspond to an undisputed consensus within Gaelic society. However, a different view is presented by John Campbell in 'Am Feamnadh'. This is the first verse and a half:

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<sup>146</sup> Campbell, *Òrain Ghàidhlig*, p.39

<sup>147</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.717

<sup>148</sup> Within the song, in verses which are quoted below, Campbell speaks of joining the army in the present tense, therefore implying that he was still young enough to do so.

<sup>149</sup> See Angus Robertson's 'An Dà Latha' and 'Maorach is Feamnadh'; Sorley MacLean's 'Ban-Ghàidheal'; Donald John MacDonald's 'Òran an Fheamnaidh' all in Black, *An Tuil*, pp.48-51 and 50-51; pp.306-307; pp.418-421

<sup>150</sup> Dewey, 'Celtic agrarian Legislation and the Celticist Revival'. The first three quotations are on p.31 and the last two are on p.41.

O, 's mise tha gu brònach o'n thòisich am feamadh,  
 'S iomadh car gòrach bhios mo sheorsa-sa leanmhuinn;  
 'S chìtear air deireadh cho beag 's a bhios do shealbh  
 Air tarraing a' chlàibh, ged as fheudar bhith falbh leis.

'S fhuair sinn mar fhasan o'r seanair 's o'r seanmhair  
 Nuair thig an t-earrach bhith teannadh ri feamadh;

Where official policy was beginning to recognise "Customary laws" based on "faithful adherence to past practice", here a member of the community which was to benefit from this is seen questioning the worldview which would justify it. In the lines "'S iomadh car gòrach bhios mo sheorsa-sa leanmhuinn;/'S fhuair sinn mar fhasan o'r seanair 's o'r seanmhair" there is a strong sense of the absurd expressed at following a particular way of life simply because it was the life pursued by a person's forebears. This is then augmented by the lack of material return which might compensate for the drudgery inherent in it, and in the line quoted below this is contrasted with the easier and more rewarding opportunities which are increasingly available to crofting communities - in this case, specifically the army:

'S tha mise ag ràdh gum b'fhearr bhith 'san arm,  
 'S gu faigh do phàigheadh o'n Bhanrighinn le airgiod.

Ged tha sin cunnartach ma bhios na blàir ann  
 Nuair théid iad seachad, am fear a bhios sàbhailt,  
 Cha bhi dad aige ach togail a phàigheadh,  
 'S bidh e cho glan, 's cha bhi *taxes* no màl air.

This complaint - the negligible material reward gained from crofting, the exasperating and insalubrious work it demands, and the little incentive beyond tradition not to opt for another life - is something which is to be found within crofting communities throughout the period of this chapter and into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Consider again John Campbell's views on the army in the above verses along with the image of the crofter which forms the second half of his song:



Cha n-ionnan idir e 's fear bhios a' feamadh,  
 Bidh e fliuch salach a-mach ri droch-aimsir,  
 Todhar 'sa chladach 's bidh aige ri falbh leis,  
 'S mu'n dig Dì-Sathuirne gabhaidh e searbhblas.

Ged bhiodh an fheamain sin ullamh a màireach,  
 Feumaidh tu an uair sin bhith ruamhar 's a' ràcadh;  
 'S théid thu dha'n t-sitig 's cha mhiosail an t-àit' i,  
 'S bidh tu na's miosa na isein a' cheaird ann.

Ged bhios am fear sin a' fuireach 'sa *chuarraidh*,  
 Falbhaidh e aiste 's gabhaidh e cuairtean  
 Sìos do no h-Earradh, 's do Bharraidh an uair sin,  
 'S tusa fliuch salach, 's cha charaich 's cha ghluais thu.

Then compare this with the following passage from Calum Ferguson's *Suileabhan* - a biography of John Macleod (1889-1956)<sup>151</sup> from Point, Lewis - in which Macleod remembers his life on Lewis in the years immediately before the First World War:

...bha farmad mo chridhe agam ris na gillean a bh'anns a' Mhailisidh. Bha iad cho glan 's cho fearail air an comhdach anns an fhèileadh 's gu robh miann agus cìocras agam air an t-saighdearachd...aon latha...'sann a thachair mi ri Murchadh Dhòmhnail Thormoid, 's e 'na Chaiptean Airm, air a thighinn dhachaigh air fòrladh. Bha esan a' coimhead cho glan spaideil ri rud a cheannaicheadh tu ùr-nodha à bùth Sheumais. Agus bha mise 'nam gheansaidh, 'nam bhriogais iasgair agus 'nam bhòtannan, air mo lanaigeadh ann an lannan agus roilean an èisg, coltach ri rud a chuireadh muir a thìr!<sup>152</sup>

In 'Am Feamadh' and the passage above, the ideals of crofting - the pastoral and martial imagery, its virtues defined against the perceived soullessness of industrial or commercial life - are absent and present instead are its realities - insalubrious work, lack of remuneration, and isolation. To highlight the longevity of this perception within a crofting community, there are

<sup>151</sup> Calum Ferguson, *Suileabhan* (Glaschu: Gairm, 1983) p.10

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, p.37

the following verses from 'Òran an Fheamnaidh' by Donald John MacDonald (1919-1986) of South Uist, who, as a young man, was acquainted with John Campbell<sup>153</sup>:

Se mhadainn choirb-fhuair le gaoith 's le stoirm  
 A bhith triall a dh'fheamnadh thug searbh-bhlas dhòmhs' air;  
 'S gum b' fheàrr dhomh falbh às 's mi phòsadh banacheaird,  
 'S bhiodh saoghal soirbh agam 's airgead pòca.

Nach cruaidh an càs dhomh 's do shluagh an àite  
 Bhith fuar is pàiteach an sàs am beòshlaint',  
 S na nì mi dh'àiteach gus 'n cinn am bàrr ann,  
 Cha phàigh e 'm màl dhomh ged s ànrach dhòmhs' e.

...

Nam biodh ri fhaotainn an déidh mo shaothrach  
 Na phàigheadh m' aodach, air ghaol mo chòmhdach,  
 Cha bhiodh mo shaorsa cho cruaidh 's cho daor dhomh,  
 'S cha bhiodh mo shaoghal cho lughdaicht' òg dhomh.

This song was composed at a time when the young inhabitants of crofting communities had increasingly elected to relinquish the demands of crofting and the ideals which justified them.<sup>154</sup> But what John Campbell's voice in 'Am Fheamnadh' suggests is that sufficient tension existed between the inhabitants of crofting communities and the traditions which defined them, at a time when these traditions were most elevated and the society which cultivated them cohesive, that something need only damage that cohesion for these traditions to be abandoned. The argument pursued in this thesis is that the event which did this was the First World War and the next chapter demonstrates the erosion between 1914 and 1918 of the elevated worldview - seen in Murdo Macleod and Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn - which provided consolation for the uncommercial reality of 19th century crofting. While this idealised view

<sup>153</sup> For the text of the song see Bill Innes (ed.), *Chì mi: The Gaelic Poetry of Donald John MacDonald*, (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 1998) pp.82-85. For biographical details see *ibid.*, pp.vii-xii. For his relationship with John Campbell see his song 'Taigh a' Bhàird' in *ibid.*, pp.260-263

<sup>154</sup> Hunter, *Claim of Crofting*, pp.37-39; pp.79-93

of landholding was weakened, the verses of Campbell and MacDonald produced above reveal that the "searbhblas" of crofting's material reality was not accordingly mitigated.

The next sources are three songs composed by Malcolm Mackay (b.1866), from Bragar, Lewis.<sup>155</sup> In these songs the poet, like John Graham, shows that it was possible to feel the traditional grievances of the Highlander and espouse the cultural ideals of Gaelic society without this negating a desire for industrialisation and a greater integration of crofting society with the rest of the country. Mackay, in his songs 'Òran nan Coiteirean'<sup>156</sup> and 'Companaich M'Oige'<sup>157</sup> uses the traditional rhetoric of Gaelic protest poetry. The military ability of Gaels and its justification for their possession of the land is evident in verses such as these, from 'Òran nan Coiteirean':

Cha'n fhaigh iad fois no sìth gu bràth,  
 Gu'n tàrr iad thar a' chuain sinn,  
 A null do'n dùthaich 'dh' fhàg mór-thùrs'  
 Air iomadh fiùran buadhach.

Gu'n cuir iad sinn a null thar sàil,  
 Bho thìr na màthar uasail;  
 An tìr a dh' àraich na fir threun,  
 Nach géilleadh anns a' chruadal.

And the hypocrisy of the treatment which Gaels receive despite their military service, and the weakness the erosion of Gaelic society is presumed to create for Britain by depriving the country of its best soldiers, is considered in these verses from 'Companaich M'Oige', which refer to Lewismen serving in the Boer War:

Gur tric 'bhios mo smaointinn.  
 'N uair bhios mi a' m' aonar,  
 A' leantuinn nan laoch ud,  
 Ri aodann a' bhlàir,

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<sup>155</sup> Macleoid, *Bàrdachd Leòdhais*, p.1

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, pp.2-3

<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*, pp.4-6

A' seasamh gu dìleas,  
 A' dìonadh na rioghachd,  
 'S a dh' aindeoin na nì iad,  
 'S e caoraich as fearr.

'S e féidh air na beanntan,  
 As fhearr leis a' mhuinntir,  
 A dh' òrdaich na suinn ud,  
 A null ri uchd bàis.

Both songs conclude with assertive but vague ideas for the actions which Gaels should take to correct these iniquities. This is from 'Oran nan Coiteirean':

Ar tìr a dh' àraich sinn 'n an déidh,  
 An tréig sinn i cho suarach?  
 'Us ged do thigeadh arm an rìgh,  
 Cha strìochd sinn am fuil fhuar dhoibh.

And this is from 'Companaich M'Oige':

Mi'n dòchas nach fhada,  
 Gu'm faicear an làtha,  
 Gun fhéidh anns na beannaibh,  
 'S na srathan fo bhàrr.  
 'S na h-uile fear againn,  
 'N a thuathanach fearainn,  
 'S gun uibhir 'g a cheannach,  
 Leinn thairis air sàl.

However, it is in Malcolm Mackay's third song that the more interesting and substantial aspiration for crofting society is to be found. To understand how this aspiration was only half in accordance with the official policies which were being developed for the crofting regions during the period in which Malcolm Mackay was composing it is worth referring once more to Dewey. In his description of the intellectual trends which influenced established thinking

in the 1870s, Dewey describes the impact which the work of W.F. Skene had, via the Celtic revival, upon the development of official attitudes to the Highlands. Dewey, with particular reference to the idea of preserving the traditional Highland township, says that:

Celtic revivalists seized on Skene's reconstruction as a social system worthy of preservation; a system in many ways preferable to contemporary lowland society. The price of progress...had been too high. The social costs of industrialisation assumed peculiarly dramatic forms in Scotland: the depopulation of the highlands was more vivid even than the dark Satanic mills.<sup>158</sup>

But where policy makers in Malcolm Mackay's time thought the erosion of his society was analogous to William Blake's dark Satanic mills, Mackay presented his ideas for that society's preservation in 'Oran na Muille'<sup>159</sup>. In this song, Mackay refers to a disused mill in the village adjacent to him, Arnol. He considers the possibility of renovating the mill for the use of the community, and the benefits which this could bring. Throughout the song an idea is given of the desire that existed for native industry in the islands. Industry which would utilise their resources - both material and human - and the revitalising effect this would have upon the inhabitants of the islands. The first verses of the song reveal the latent talent which Mackay thought existed within his community to achieve this, and the impetus such a task would provide for putting those talents to use:

A' mhuillean a dh' fhàgadh 'n a tàmh bho chionn fhada,  
'S ann 'chithear gu h-aithghearr 'bhi tarruing a' ghràin thuic'.  
Cha téid muinntir Arnoil gu bràth gu na Chaisil.  
'S gu 'm faicear na cairtean bho'n chachalair bhàn aic'.

Toiseach na bliadhna gu'm faighear fir-iasgaich,  
A' cruinneach' na dh' iarras i 'dh' iarunn do'n cheardaich,  
Bi' mise le m' chliabh a' toirt thuice na criadhach,  
'S mu'n sguir iad de liachdradh cha'n iarradh tu sgàthan.

'N uair 'théid an roth ùr innt' gu mil i có-dhiù dhuinn,

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<sup>158</sup> Dewey, 'Celtic agrarian Legislation and the Celticist Revival', p.54

<sup>159</sup> Macleoid, *Bàrdachd Leodhais*, pp.3-4

Le sailean 'us cùb a réir tùr na fir cheairrde,  
 Tha té air gach taobh dhith a théid gu'n a' bhùbaidh,  
 Mur bi iad cho siùbhlach gu smùideadh na càthaidh.

Mur freagair an dàm aic' gu'n cuir sinn roth-gaoith innt',  
 Sin pàtaran grinn far na Gàlltachd a thainig.  
 Cha'n fhada gu'n seall sinn nach 'eil sinn cho mìllte  
 An eachuinn bhur cinn 's a tha muinntir ag ràitinn.

In these lines the project of repairing the mill will catalyse the different trades which are to be found within a crofting community - "fir-iasgaich,/A' cruinneach' na dh' iarras i dh' iarunn do'n cheardaich" - and if they encounter a difficulty they are capable of thinking beyond the traditional method to overcome this - "Mur freagair an dàm aic' gu'n cuir sinn roth-gaoith innt'". And the last three lines are particularly telling. They recognise the benefits of interacting with the lowlands, wish to take advantage of their economic integration with that society, and also see industry as being something which can revivify their own communities and repudiate stereotypes held of them. The explicit reference in the last line to the common prejudice of crofter or Celtic indolence and the antipathy this creates towards the industrial development of the Highlands is particularly salient when considered next to this extract from a report to the Board of Agriculture in 1914:

With reference to the prospect of industries in the Highlands, it is necessary to speak with a certain amount of circumspection...For some reason, which may be either racial or geographical, or perhaps both, it is necessary to discount largely from hopeful anticipations of industrial progress in the Highlands.<sup>160</sup>

'Oran na Muille' suggests that there was a native urge in the Highlands for economic and political developments which complemented land politics but did not follow the anti-industrial ideals through which the latter was often articulated. Furthermore, the inhabitants of the crofting regions recognised the advantages of their integration with lowland society and the benefits which certain aspects of that society would bring to theirs. Rather than wanting their "agrarian system" to be removed from "the operations of the market", the

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<sup>160</sup> Perchard and Mackenzie, "'Too Much on the Highlands'", p.7

following verses reveal the general social and cultural invigoration which it was hoped would arise from a closer integration, albeit one in which the inhabitants of crofting communities were themselves equal participants:

Cha chreid mi nach tòisich na tuathanaich mhóra,  
 'Tha thall air a' Mhór-thìr ag òrduchadh gràin thuic',  
 Sinne bhios dòigheil bi' airgiod 'n ar pòcaid,  
 A' reic na min eòrna 's bi móran air dàil dhith.

Cha bhi sinn ro dhaor leis a' mholltair air daoine,  
 Bi' peile beag caol ann an taod a ni cearrd dhith,  
 Os cionn na sail aotromaich crochar e daonnan,  
 'S gach poc 'théid a thaomadh thig peile no dhà ás.

Bi' muileann a' bhualaidh 's na h-àthannan cruadhaich,  
 'Us obair a' bhualtean cho luath 's a ni làmh e.  
 Chithear 's gach baile 'bhi lomadh le spaidean,  
 An tubanan daraich le cabhag nach b' àbhaist.

The poet concludes with a final allusion to the self-sufficiency and self-esteem this local industry would bring to his community. But this is followed by a resigned admission that it is unlikely to happen and he expresses this in the conventional language of protest poetry:

Gu'n tarruing i 'bhiadh na ni 'chùis do'n Taobh-siar dhuinn,  
 A Canada Iochdrach cha'n iarr sinne gràinne.  
 Ged 'tha 'chuid as briagha de'n Eilean bheag riabhach,  
 Fo fhrìth agus fiadh 's bi' e'm bliadhna gun àiteach'.

The songs of John Campbell and Malcolm Mackay, along with the passages studied next to them, suggest that, beneath the politicised idealisation of crofting and its ideological potency as a rebuke to the trauma of the 18th and 19th centuries, there was an awareness of its material poverty. This was something which was more vivid when contrasted with the economic opportunities which were becoming more apparent with the increasing integration of the north-west Highlands with the rest of Scotland. Several developments stem from this.

There was a wish to take advantage of the industrialism and commercialism to which Gaels were increasingly exposed and to do so for the development of crofting society. These were forces which were seen as being conducive to the health of Gaelic communities as well being congruous with their values, and not just an ancillary means of advancing land reform. What is most important, for considering the shift from crofting which occurred after the First World War, is the tension that evidently existed between Gaels and the way of life which they esteemed for its profound cultural significance but found harder to rationalise when set against the more prosperous and less laborious opportunities which were available to them elsewhere. The question which this raises is what was needed to make the Gaels' cultural attachment to crofting be nullified by its practical demands and economic limitations. The importance of the First World War in eroding the social and cultural cohesion which sustained the attachment to crofting is something which will be explored in the following chapter. But first, a look at the reaction to state welfare in the years before the War, with the introduction of the old age pension, reveals the other aspects of modern politics through which the cohesive pre-war Gaelic society of the land agitation was able to realise its ideals.

It is fortunate that one of the earliest reactions to welfare was composed by Murdo Macleod. This provides the opportunity to consider his political development across 40 years and to understand the way in which the worldview that produced a seminal articulation of late 19<sup>th</sup> century anti-landlordism would discuss state welfare - a quintessential 20<sup>th</sup> century topic. His song is titled 'Oran a' Bhudget'<sup>161</sup> and refers to both David Lloyd George's 1909 budget and the reform of the House of Lords which followed it in 1910.<sup>162</sup> What is most intriguing about this song is its language. 'Oran a' Bhudget' is written in the same panegyric style as 'Fàsachadh na Dùthcha' and that song's genre of protest poetry - including the praise of the British Empire. Here are the first and fourth verses:

Ard mholadh do na suinn,  
A thug dhuinn am Budget mòr;

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<sup>161</sup> Macleod, *Bàrdachd Mhurchaidh a' Cheisdeir*, p.39

<sup>162</sup> The 1909 budget, passed in 1910, guaranteed the first provisions for social insurance, including the old age pension. Particularly significant from a Highland perspective was the fact that these innovations were funded through a variety of taxes on landowners, including a "capital levy on unused land...and a tax payable when leases expired and the land reverted to the landlord." The House of Lords rejected the budget resulting in a "major constitutional battle between Lords and Commons" which was resolved by the Parliament Act of 1911, which mitigated the powers of the House of Lords. See Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the Welfare State: A History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution*, (Macmillan Education Ltd.: Basingstoke, 1989) pp.155-169 (quotes on p.156 and p.158).



Biodh cuimhne feadh na dùthch' orra,  
 'S an cliù dh'a sheinn le ceòl:  
 Bidh aoibhneas anns na glìnn,  
 Fhad 's bhios an linn so beò;  
 Bidh aran agus fearann saor,  
 'S bidh daoine mar is còir.

...

Bheir neart ar n-armachd dùbhlán,  
 Do gach dùthaich 's an Roinn-Eòrp;  
 Bidh Ghearmailt agus Ruisia,  
 Mar luchan fo ar spòig:  
 Cumaidh sinn fo chuing iad,  
 Le maoidheadh dhe ar dòrn;  
 'S bidh riaghlairean gach impireachd,  
 An sith ri Breituinn mhòir.

The politicians who passed the 1909 budget are comfortably accommodated by the panegyric tradition in which the poetry of the land hunger was composed, and the provisions of the budget provide their own palliative for Highland discontent. The restoration of the 'Spirit of Kindliness' is being realised by other means. This suggests that there were avenues of modern democratic politics which could satisfy the grievances of Gaelic society beyond land reform - and, based on the consistency between the language of 'Oran a' Bhudget' and 'Fàsachadh na Dùthcha', this was something which still accorded to the inherited ideals of Gaelic society. While Murdo Macleod and his contemporaries spoke of their era's politics in the same language as previous generations of poets such as John MacCodrum and Allan MacDougall, it is important not to interpret this too literally. While MacCodrum and MacDougall sang of a pre-Clearance Highland society which had existed within their lifetimes, poets of the mid-to-late 19th century only possess its language and tradition, and used this to respond to the social conditions in which they themselves lived. Historians, therefore, should focus on the empirical reality to which these poets were responding, as well as the tradition which they are asserting.

Two other texts on the impact of state welfare in the crofting regions are John Campbell's 'Òran a' Pheinsean'<sup>163</sup>, and 'Nuair a thàinig am Buroo do Dhùthaich nam Beann' by Donald MacIntyre (1889-1964) of Snishival, South Uist.<sup>164</sup> These songs are both post-war compositions and develop the themes pursued throughout this thesis. Like Murdo Macleod in 'Oran a' Bhudget', John Campbell praises the pension, as well as the dole, in traditional panegyric language, which bears some comparison with pre-Culloden panegyrics to chieftains.<sup>165</sup> He specifically emphasises the material security which welfare bestowed upon many Gaels for the first time, and the commercial confidence they gained from this. Crucially, he describes how this has made the realities of the 19th century Highlands intangible for younger Gaels. That is also the theme of MacIntyre's 'Nuair a thàinig am Buroo do Dhùthaich nam Beann'. This song emphasises the bathos with which the acceptance of welfare, and the integration with modern British society this represents, has imbued the elevated martial, pastoral self-image of the Highlanders. For example, note the juxtaposition of the panegyric motif Dùthaich nam Beann with the frivolous "Buroo". MacIntyre also highlights welfare's amelioration of the perilous economic realities from which this self-image came, and the implications of this amelioration for the 20th century tenability of the Gaels' traditional identity. The way in which that identity had already been undermined by the experiences of Gaelic soldiers in the First World War is discussed in the next chapter.

The sources which have been analysed in this chapter show that alternative perspectives are available on the aspirations of late 19th century Gaelic crofting society. This suggests that viewing the re-assertion of Gaelic ideals in the land agitation as being solely an effort to restore the perceived conditions of the pre-Clearance Highlands obviates the desire which existed for the modern social and economic opportunities which had emerged in the 19th century. Recognising this desire partly provides an explanation for the contrary course which north-west Highland history takes after the First World War, as well as the possibility that the abandonment of land settlement was not by default a rejection of the Gaelic ideals which had driven the land hunger.

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<sup>163</sup> Campbell, *Òrain Ghàidhlig*, pp.75-79

<sup>164</sup> Somerled Macmillan, *Sporan Dhòmhnail: Gaelic Poems and Songs by the late Donald MacIntyre, The Paisley Bard*, (Scottish Gaelic Texts Society: Edinburgh, 1968), pp.211-215; Black, *An Tuil*, p.742

<sup>165</sup> See, for example, Eachann Bacach's 'A' Chnò Shamhna' in Colm Ó Baoill (ed.), *Bàrdachd Chloinn Ghill-Eathainn: Eachann Bacach and other MacLean Poets*, (Scottish Gaelic Texts Society: Edinburgh, 1979) pp.14-25

### 3. Gaelic Songs of the First World War

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the development of Gaelic poetry between 1914 and 1918 by concentrating on the way in which the dominant Gaelic worldview of the 19th century changes in response to the First World War. This entails focussing on a particular section of the poetry collected in the course of researching this thesis. These poems are by authors who, at the beginning of the War, compose songs exhibiting the language and ideals of the 19th century but whose work gradually departs from these as the conflict progresses. The range of songs which were collected for this thesis encompassed several different genres - some are sentimental<sup>166</sup>, others convey the War through humour.<sup>167</sup> But the songs which have been focussed on here are ones which have a more elevated tone, and whose authors placed the War within the framework of 19th century protest poetry and therefore initially tried to understand it through the political debates of the 19th century and the longer panegyric tradition from which they came.

#### Poetic Sources for the First World War

For the opening phase of the War, from Britain's entry on 4 August 1914 to the end of December that year, there are seven songs. Two are 'Soraidh chon nan Gàidheal'<sup>168</sup> and 'Oran Gillean na Navy'<sup>169</sup> by John Campbell of South Uist, who appeared in the previous chapter. Their dates are not given but the internal evidence suggests they were composed at a very early stage. There is one song by Hector MacKinnon (1886-1954) of Borve, Berneray, who served with the Navy in the Dardanelles and Salonika.<sup>170</sup> It is called 'Òran mun Chiad Chogadh'<sup>171</sup> and was likely composed in immediate response to Britain's war declaration. There are two songs by Roderick Mackay (1872-1949) of Paible, North Uist, who was in the

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<sup>166</sup> See 'Isean bhòidhich (Smuaintean Saighdeir an deidh Blàr Mhons)', by Donald MacPhail (1892-1916), of Gravir, Lewis, in *Eilean Fraoich: Lewis Gaelic Songs and Melodies*, (Comunn Gàidhealach Leòdhais: Isle of Lewis, 1982) pp.189-190

<sup>167</sup> See 'S Fheudar Dhomh 'bhi 'Togail Orm' by Calum Mac Fhionghuinn of Barra, in *Deoch-sláinte nan Gillean*, pp.20-21

<sup>168</sup> See Appendix pp.85-87

<sup>169</sup> See Appendix pp.88-91

<sup>170</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.738

<sup>171</sup> See Appendix pp.92-94

Cameron Highlanders until he was discharged because of an asthmatic condition.<sup>172</sup> These are called 'Òran aig Toiseach Cogadh Mór na h-Eòrpa'<sup>173</sup> and 'Fagail Tir Mo Dhuthcha aig Am a' Chogaidh Mhoir'.<sup>174</sup> There is one song by Donald MacDonald (1858-1919), originally of Caolas, Tiree, but living as an architect in Ottawa by the War.<sup>175</sup> This is called 'Gillean an Fheilidh', and is signed as being composed in 1914. A reference in its sixth verse to "Turcaich" as enemies of Britain and France places its composition no earlier than the Ottoman Empire's entry on 31 October.<sup>176</sup> The final song for 1914 is 'Oran air a' Chogadh: 1914-1918'<sup>177</sup>, which was composed by Màiread NicLeòid (b.1867) of North Tolsta, Lewis, whose husband was serving in the Navy, and who also had a brother and two brothers-in-law serving in France.<sup>178</sup> This song was composed after the Battle of the Falkland Islands, which occurred on 8 December 1914<sup>179</sup>, and in which her husband was a participant.

Nine songs have been assigned to 1915. Five of these can be dated with various degrees of certainty. The first is 'Luach na Saorsa'<sup>180</sup> by Murdo Murray (1890-1964) of Back, Lewis, a graduate of Aberdeen University who served in France with the 4th Seaforth Highlanders.<sup>181</sup> This poem is signed as having been composed on "A' cheud latha 'san trainnse" which Murray's diary of the War, published in the same volume as the poem, records as 2 March 1915.<sup>182</sup> 'Oran dhan Chogadh'<sup>183</sup> and 'Gu Mo Mhathair'<sup>184</sup>, by Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna (1887-1967) of Claddach Baleshare, North Uist<sup>185</sup>, were presumably composed around the time his battalion, the 7th Cameron Highlanders, departed for France in July 1915.<sup>186</sup> 'Òran don Chogadh' by Peter Morrison (1889-1978) of Grimsay, North Uist, who served in the Lovat Scouts<sup>187</sup>, was composed during the Suvla Bay landings in the Dardanelles campaign

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<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*, p.724

<sup>173</sup> Mackay, *Oiteagan a Tir nan Òg*, pp.42-44. This is also found in Black, *An Tuil*, pp.52-55.

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*, pp.84-85

<sup>175</sup> Cameron, *Na Baird Thirisdeach*, pp.289-292.

<sup>176</sup> Keegan, *The First World War*, p.207

<sup>177</sup> See Appendix pp.95-97

<sup>178</sup> *Clachan Criche*, pp.87-88

<sup>179</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918*, pp.83-84

<sup>180</sup> Moireach, *Luach na Saorsa*, pp.73-74; Black, *An Tuil*, pp.220-221

<sup>181</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.749

<sup>182</sup> Moireach, *Luach na Saorsa*, p.13

<sup>183</sup> MacAmhlaidh, *Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna*, pp.2-9

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*, pp.10-11. That more of Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna's songs from the War, despite their prominence, are not furnished with dates in the various anthologies in which they are found is a hindrance.

<sup>185</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.739

<sup>186</sup> *Historical Records of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, Vol. IV*, (Blackwood: Edinburgh, 1931)

pp.278-279

<sup>187</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.747

between the 6 and 9 of August 1915.<sup>188</sup> Finally, 'Òran a' Chèasar', by Angus Morrison (1865-1942) of Ullapool<sup>189</sup>, is signed by the author as having been composed in December 1915 and was published in 1916 to raise funds for the Red Cross.<sup>190</sup> Of the other four songs for this year, one, 'Do na Laoich, 1915' by Christina MacLeod (1880-1954), of Bayble, Lewis, who lived in Fortrose and whose husband was serving with the 4th Seaforth Highlanders, provides no clue beyond its title for the date of its composition.<sup>191</sup> The other three are by Hector MacKinnon and have been dated by their internal evidence. They are 'Òran a' Chèasair'<sup>192</sup>, 'Gilleán Bheàrnaraigh'<sup>193</sup>, and 'Òran Fòrlaidh às a' Ghrèig'.<sup>194</sup> Another poem by MacKinnon - 'Laoidh dhan Chogadh Mhòr, 1914-1918' - was inspired by his experience at Gallipoli and both Ronald Black, in *An Tuil*, and the Reverend Angus MacFarlane, in his introduction to MacKinnon's anthology, *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor*, claim it was composed after MacKinnon's ship, the *Ermine*, was sunk at the Dardanelles.<sup>195</sup> But, while the poem may have been influenced by MacKinnon's experience at the Dardanelles, Black and MacFarlane have gotten the date of the *Ermine's* sinking wrong, which the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission reveal to have been 2 August 1917.<sup>196</sup>

For 1916 and 1917, including 'Laoidh dhan Chogadh Mhòr, 1914-1918', there are 13 texts which have been dated. The best verified for 1916 are 'An 'Leave' Mu Dheireadh' by Màiread NicLeòid<sup>197</sup> and 'Ar Tìr' and 'Ar Gaisgich a Thuit sna Blàir' by John Munro (1889-1918) of Swordale, Lewis, another Aberdeen University graduate who served in France with the 4th Seaforth Highlanders.<sup>198</sup> 'An 'Leave' Mu Dheireadh' was composed by Màiread NicLeòid after the Battle of Jutland, which was fought by the British and German navies between 31

<sup>188</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.748; Martin Gilbert, *The First World War*, (Harper Collins: London, 1995) pp.183-184

<sup>189</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.718

<sup>190</sup> Angus Morrison, *Òran a' Cheasar: Song on the Kaiser*, (Alexander Maclaren & Sons: Glasgow, 1916)

<sup>191</sup> Christina D. MacLeod, *An Sireadh*, (Angus Mackay: Stirling, 1952) p.1; Black, *An Tuil*, p.732; C. M. Dunn, 'The Poems of Christina MacLeod (Lewis and Fortrose)', in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* Vol. 49 (1974-1976), pp.97-134 (pp.109-110)

<sup>192</sup> *Òrain Eachainn MacFhionghainn*, pp.58-60

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*, pp.27-29

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*, pp.54-57

<sup>195</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.738; MacFhionghainn, *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor*, p.ix

<sup>196</sup> See Appendix pp.104-108

<sup>197</sup> See Appendix pp.98-99

<sup>198</sup> For John Munro's biography and texts of the poems see Moireach, 'Iain Rothach', and Black, *An Tuil*, p.748. In Moireach they are presented together as part of single text, but Black has presented them separately and that is the method used here as well. The poems are also found in James Thomson, *An Dileab*, (*An Comunn Gàidhealach*: Glasgow, 1934), p.12; pp.35-36; Derick Thomson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*, pp.252-254 and Trevor Royle, *In Flanders Fields: Scottish Poetry and Prose of the First World War*, (Mainstream: Edinburgh, 1990) pp.90-93.

May and 2 June 1916.<sup>199</sup> Her husband participated in that battle, serving aboard the *H.M.S. Invincible*, and was drowned when the ship was sunk. The poem is an elegy to him.<sup>200</sup> John Munro is described by Murdo Murray in the second part of his biography as having composed 'Ar Tìr' and 'Ar Gaisgich a Thuit sna Blàir' "anns an trèine gu Caol Loch Aillse, 's e dol dhachaidh air fòrladh an déidh e bhith còrr is bliadhna anns an Fhraing."<sup>201</sup> In the first part of the biography, Murray states that Munro, after leaving for France in October 1914, did not return home to Britain until June 1916, making that the likeliest date for their composition.<sup>202</sup> One poem by Hector MacKinnon exists for 1916. It is 'Marbhrann do dh'Alasdair MacLeoid (Alasdair Dhòmhnail Oig)'.<sup>203</sup> This has been tentatively assigned to the Somme campaign, between 1 July and 19 November 1916.<sup>204</sup> Due to a near total dearth of information about the Alexander MacLeod who was its subject a more specific date is not possible. Most of Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna's compositions from 1916 onwards also lack specific dates. 'Air an Somme'<sup>205</sup> and 'Oran Arras'<sup>206</sup> divulge their subject matter through their titles, while 'Dh'fhalbh na Gilleann Grinn'<sup>207</sup> and 'Nam bithinn mar Eun'<sup>208</sup> have their dates and inspiration verified by their author elsewhere.<sup>209</sup> However, the contexts for the rest of the songs he composed<sup>210</sup> on the War have not been found in any sources consulted for this thesis and they are therefore analysed thematically, for their comparison with the verified songs and the development which they collectively evince of the initial view of the War Dòmhnall Ruadh provided in 'Oran dhan Chogadh'. The last source for a serviceman in 1917 is Murdo Murray's 'Na Mairbh 'San Raoin (Gearr-Luinneag)' which the author signed as being composed in that year<sup>211</sup>, but, again, a more specific date is not provided.

<sup>199</sup> Strachan, *The First World War*, pp.206-207

<sup>200</sup> *Clachan Criche*, p.87

<sup>201</sup> Moireach, 'Iain Rothach', p.339

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*, p.265

<sup>203</sup> See Appendix pp.100-103

<sup>204</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918*, p.168

<sup>205</sup> MacAmhlaidh, *Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna*, pp.30-31

<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*, pp.28-29

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*, pp.36-39

<sup>208</sup> *ibid.*, pp.50-53

<sup>209</sup> Donald MacDonald, 'Dh'fhalbh na Gilleann Grinn', *Tobar an Dualchais*,

<<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/fullrecord/65308/1>> [accessed 17 September 2013]; Donald MacDonald, 'Nam bithinn mar eun air sgiathaibh', *Tobar an Dualchais*,

<<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/fullrecord/48114/1>> [accessed 17 September 2013]

<sup>210</sup> 'Cha b' e Gunna Mo Namhaid', in MacAmhlaidh, *Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna*, pp.12-17; 'Tha Mi Duilich, Cianail, Duilich', *ibid.*, pp.24-27; 'Oran a' Phuinnsein', *ibid.*, pp.40-41; 'Aisling an t-Saighdeir', *ibid.*, pp.42-43; 'Na Camshronaich san Fhraing', *ibid.*, pp.46-49; 'An Eala Bhan', *ibid.*, pp.58-63

<sup>211</sup> Moireach, *Luach na Saorsa*, p.76

The final three sources for 1917 are John Campbell's 'Marbhrann do Dhòmhnall Iain'<sup>212</sup> and 'Oran a' Chogaidh Mhóir'<sup>213</sup>, and 'Cumha' by Euphemia MacDonald (1842-1936) of Caolas, Tìree, which she composed for her son Iain, killed in France in 1917.<sup>214</sup> No record of Iain was found through the Commonwealth War Graves Commission therefore it has not been possible to narrow down the period of composition.

Another source which should be mentioned for these years is the *Cogadh Mór na h-Eòrpa*<sup>215</sup> series which was published by the Joint Committee of the Churches, with the first volume appearing in 1916. Each of the books in this series was a collection of Gaelic spiritual verse published specifically for the use of servicemen. The texts selected for inclusion in it, along with the ancillary contributions by the editors, reveal the disposition of the Presbyterian churches towards the War, and the role they saw for Gaelic soldiers in the conflict. Therefore it affords one example of the institutional view from within Gaeldom.

Only two sources have been dated to 1918. One is 'Piobairean Camshronach anns an Ruaig Mhór (1918)' by Donald MacIntyre.<sup>216</sup> This is described as having been composed "during the great push in France in 1918"<sup>217</sup> which presumably refers to the Allies' final offensive between 18 July and 11 November.<sup>218</sup> Like Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna's dated compositions, this song, because of the themes which can be derived from it, allows several other undated texts to be invoked for their display of similar characteristics. The final source for 1918 is Hector MacKinnon's 'Marbhrann dhan Urr. Iain Moireasdan (Seonaidh a' Mhinisteir)' which is an elegy to a soldier from Berneray who was killed on 24 September.<sup>219</sup>

The question which now needs to be addressed is what narrative for the years 1914 to 1918 is permitted by these sources. The reaction to the opening of the War is well represented, with the seven songs composed between August and December 1914 providing voices from South Uist, Berneray, North Uist, Tìree/Ottawa, and Lewis, and their authors are representative of

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<sup>212</sup> See Appendix pp.107-109

<sup>213</sup> See Appendix pp.110-116

<sup>214</sup> Cameron, *Na Baird Thirisdeach*, pp.304-305; Dorothy McMillan and Michel Byrne (eds.), *Modern Scottish Women Poets*, (Canongate: Edinburgh, 2003) p.270

<sup>215</sup> Joint Committee of the Churches, *Cogadh Mór na h-Eòrpa*, (Oliver & Boyd: Edinburgh, 1916-1919)

<sup>216</sup> For the text of the song see Macmillan, *Sporan Dhòmhnail*, pp.40-42. For Donald MacIntyre's biographical details see *Sporan Dhòmhnail*, pp.xviii-xix and Black, *An Tuil*, pp.742-746.

<sup>217</sup> Macmillan, *Sporan Dhòmhnail*, p.347

<sup>218</sup> For a concise summary see Norman Stone, *World War One: A Short History*, (Penguin: London, 2008) pp.170-181

<sup>219</sup> MacFhionghain, *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor*, pp.85-87

different genders, generations, and occupations. The War's gradual intrusion across 1915 of the initial perception of it found in 1914 is also covered, but there is a weakness with specifics. For example, while the landings of Suvla Bay (Peter Morrison) and the deployment of the New Armies (Murdo Murray and Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna) are here, the Battle of Neuve Chapelle (10 March), the Second Battle of Ypres (22 April - 25 May), and the Battle of Loos (25 September - 18 October), are absent.<sup>220</sup> Then, after Angus Morrison's composition of 'Òran a' Chèasar' in December 1915, there is a gap until Màiread NicLeòid and John Munro's poems for June 1916. But, as the Battle of the Somme and the Battle of Arras are well provided for by the poetry of Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna, the two most important points in the War are present: the initial confidence of 1914 and the disillusionment of 1916 and 1917. This makes an initial analysis of the War's impact feasible. Between Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna's songs on the Somme and Arras and Donald MacIntyre's 'Piobairean Camshronach...' in the final months of the War, there are no sources which refer to specific campaigns. This means that the Battle of Messines Ridge (7 - 14 June 1917)<sup>221</sup>, the Third Battle of Ypres (31 July - 10 November 1917)<sup>222</sup>, and the Battle of Cambrai (20 November - 30 December 1917)<sup>223</sup>, as well as the German Army's Ludendorff Offensive (21 March - 15 July 1918)<sup>224</sup>, are absent. The Middle Eastern campaigns are entirely absent. The poems composed by John Campbell within the period between Arras and the end of the War do reveal the endurance of pre-war language in an elder Gael and therefore gives an impression of the divide which the conflict may have created within Gaelic culture.

### **The First World War and Gaelic Culture: an initial overview**

The argument which this section proposes is that the opening of the War witnesses a catalysing of conventional 19th century protest poetry and the tradition which produced it. This phenomenon is evident between generations, therefore maintaining the long continuity of this tradition discussed in the previous chapter. As the War progresses, however, a divergence emerges within the poetry. The radically different experience of the War which is undergone by the younger generation of men fighting it causes the panegyric language of

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<sup>220</sup> For these battles see Keegan, *The First World War*, pp.208-219

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.*, pp.382-383

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*, pp.381-395

<sup>223</sup> *ibid.*, pp.395-397

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, pp.426-439



their earlier compositions to gradually wither away as the reality of modern warfare undermines the traditional martial precepts which this language has supported. In particular, the language of heroes which extols the Gaels' military superiority is weakened. This is a development which is of considerable significance to the land issue as it was through such precepts, and their definition of Gaels against modernity, that the land issue was articulated. What this suggests is that the "recurrent plea"<sup>225</sup> of 19th century Gaelic poetry was being fundamentally compromised by the experience of the First World War. The implication of this is that a tradition which endured the century and a half of social and economic upheaval since Culloden, and which proved resilient enough to be asserted against the consequences of that upheaval during the land agitation, became deracinated in just four years. In the only substantial work by a female poet - that of Màiread NicLeòid - there is a similar sense of initial confidence in 1914 becoming overwhelmed by the personal and communal exhaustion of the conflict. In the work of male poets who were of the generation before the servicemen, however, there is no radical change evident comparable to that in the poetry of the latter. They persist throughout the War with the same language and tone as they had deployed at its beginning. This suggests that the Gaelic experience of the First World War corresponds to Robert Hughes' statement that "In the Somme Valley the back of language broke. It could no longer carry its former meanings...[The War] opened a vast gap of experience between the ones who had fought...and their civilian elders."<sup>226</sup> This would contribute to the fragmentation of Gaelic society which Ronald Black and Timothy Neat describe in the wake of the War.<sup>227</sup> These themes are pursued here through the poetry of John Campbell, Hector MacKinnon, Màiread NicLeòid, and Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna, with reference to the compositions of the other poets identified above where necessary. Concentrating on Campbell, MacKinnon, NicLeòid, and Dòmhnall Ruadh, enables the narrative to convey the perspective of a later middle aged cottar from South Uist, a sailor from Berneray who served in the Mediterranean campaigns, a war widow from Lewis, and a soldier from North Uist serving in the trenches of the Western Front. A selection of Campbell, MacKinnon, and NicLeòid's texts which best convey the developments outlined here are found in the appendix.

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<sup>225</sup> MacInnes, 'Gaelic Poetry in the Nineteenth Century', p.374

<sup>226</sup> Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 1991) pp.57-59

<sup>227</sup> See above, pp.14-16 and Black, *An Tuil*, pp.xxii-xxiii and Neat, *When I Was Young*, pp.xv-xvi

John Campbell and Hector MacKinnon's songs from the first months of the War reveal that they placed it within the panegyric tradition which had formed Gaelic identity since Culloden. Therefore, the language they use is elevated, relies on an idealised image of the Highland soldier, and espouses a rote invocation of the past military triumphs of Gaels. A consequence of this is that the imagery used to convey warfare is staid and not a reflection of warfare in 1914. For John Campbell, in 'Soraidh chon nan Gàidheal', Gaels constitute a society of latent military ability:

An uair a chualas an glaoth,  
 `S a chaidh an naidheachd mu sgaoil,  
 Chruinnich muinntir an fhraoich  
 As gach taobh an robh iad sgapte.

Dh'fhàg iad a's an déidh gach nì  
 A dhianadh feum air muir 's air tìr;  
 Nuair a fhuair iad cuireadh an Rìgh,  
 Dh'éirich an inntinn gu batal.

Then, in 'Oran Gillean na Navy', he recapitulates the Gaels' history of military service:

Anns gach blàr is cogadh  
 Bhiodh iadsan air thoiseach  
 O linn Dhiarmaid is Oscair,  
 'S Oisein, ged dh'fhalbh e.

Faodaidh mi bhith 'g ràdha  
 'S cha dian duine m'àicheadh  
 O thuras Phrionns' Tearlach  
 Bha na Gàidheil ainmeil.

These verses are intriguing as they go beyond the imperial wars of the post-Culloden era which are normally referenced in 19th century poetry<sup>228</sup> to incorporate the '45 within their ideological framework. In "'Fighting and Bleeding for the Land'", Cameron and Robertson mention the "eccentric line taken by Macdonald of Clanranald" when, in an effort to recruit Highlanders for the War, he drew a parallel between the German army and its treatment of Belgium and the Hanoverian Duke of Cumberland's treatment of Highlanders after Culloden.<sup>229</sup> John Campbell's ability to place a Jacobite reference within a song which also contains the lines "Bratach bhuadhmhòr Bhreatainn,/Théid i suas gun teagamh;/S gach aon leis am beag i/Teichidh e air falbh as" suggests the imperial British identity of Gaelic poets, and their ideological affinity with the native Highland landlords, remained as dexterous as it had been throughout the previous century. The same cohesive British identity and belief in an atavistic Highland military instinct is found in MacKinnon:

Tha na Breatannaich uasal a sheasadh ri cruadal  
 A-nis air an gluasad gu tuasaid thar sail,  
 A sheasamh na rìoghachd 's na fùrain tha innt'  
 Na saighdearan dìleas nach dìobair gu bàs.

'S iad saighdearan Alba tha foghainteach, calma  
 Lem fèilidhean ball-bhreac tha meanmnach sna blàir;  
 Is measail 's gach rìoghachd air muir is air tìr 'ad  
 Len armailtean millteach bheir cìs dhen an nàmh.

And this belief is not undermined by the explicit political inclination of MacKinnon's poetry which is a continuation of the longstanding complaint of Highlanders:

Ach na fèidh tha san aonach cha sheas iad air raointean  
 An àite nan daoine ri aodann a' bhlàir,  
 Nuair chluinneas 'ad an luaidhe gun teich iad don chruaich  
 A-mach feadh nam fuar-bheann cho luath ris a' gheàrr.

<sup>228</sup> See 'Spiorad a' Charthannais', in Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna*, pp.90-97; 'Manitoba', in Cameron, *Na Baird Thirisdeach*, pp.164-165

<sup>229</sup> Cameron and Robertson, "'Fighting and Bleeding for the Land'", p.84

Even in Roderick Mackay's 'Òran aig Toiseach Cogadh Mór na h-Eòrpa', which is particularly severe in its criticism of the relationship between Highland military service and the Highland land issue, the ideal of Gaels as a people with a native military ability is accepted *a priori* and is integral to his articulation of Gaelic identity and politics.

MacKinnon's reference in the above verse to "[seasamh] air raointean" is something which is obviously incongruous with the historical memory of the First World War - which is defined by trenches and the repudiation of open ground. The staidness of the language which panegyric poetry used to convey warfare becomes one of the primary sources of tension within the poetry, as the poets are increasingly made aware of the inability of the tradition within which they are working, and the cultural precepts which it articulates, to convey the reality of the War which they are experiencing. This will be further explored below in reference to Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna's development during the War, but first Màiread NicLeòid's 'Oran air a' Chogadh: 1914-1918' will be considered.

In this song the War's reality pervades the poet's perspective and makes her question the preconceptions which she and her community held before the conflict:

O nach cianail ri aithris 's an latha 's am bheil sinne beò,  
 Cha chualas a-riamh air an talamh a leithid de chogadh cho mòr,  
 'S a leithid de innealan sgriosail nach cualas idir an seòrs'  
 Ach is coltach gur iomadach bliadhna bho bha 's 'g an dèanamh bho chleòc'.

This verse makes it clear that the particularly awful scale of the First World War is now evident, and the reference in the last two lines to "innealan sgriosail" which must have been devised "bho chleòc" is a vivid illustration, several months later, of the distance there was between the poetic worldview of August 1914 and the reality of the War to which it was applied. What Màiread NicLeòid best conveys, however, is the strain which the conflict was already having upon the families and communities of servicemen. This song was composed in December, and by that stage the British Expeditionary Force had suffered 89,969 casualties, with one-third of the British soldiers who had left in August 1914 already dead.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918*, p.92

NicLeòid admits to not having lost anyone in the War, but she expresses the conflict's pervasion of her community and the sense of dread this induces:

Is tric mi le smaoin air a' bhantraich a tha ri caoidh leatha fhèin,  
 Gun mhàthair, gun chuideachd ach gann aic', b' adhbhar dhi ionndrainn sin fhèin.  
 Cha b' iongantach a cridhe bhith fann nuair a leugh i a sgeul-creiche féin  
 B' ainneamh a chitheadh air sràid ag coiseachd cho àlainn ri cheum.

However, the justification for the War remains - "O cha b' fhair' orm Kaisear a thuir air a' bhéisd mar ainm,/...Cha chreid mi nach cuir sibh e am prìosan às nach fhaigh e ri shaoghal air falbh." A contrast with Màiread NicLeòid is found in Christina MacLeod's 'Do na Laoich, 1915', where the poet, whose husband was also a serviceman, composed a poem more akin to the songs of Hector MacKinnon and John Campbell, as the following verses demonstrate:

Deanamh cogaidh ris a' nàmhaid  
 Gus am bi ar rìoghachd sàbhailt'  
 Is gach leanabh agus màthair  
 Saor bho eagal bàis no call'.

Gàidhealaich a sheasadh cruadal  
 'S a bhiodh fearail mar bu dual dhaibh;

...

'S mór gum b' annsa leo am bàs  
 Na strìochdadh òirleach bhàrr an raoin.

This same certainty is expressed by a serviceman, Murdo Murray, on his deployment to the Western Front. The first three verses of 'Luach na Saorsa' are a rumination on death in war and its value, and this concludes in the final verse with the answer, "Troimh'n Bhàs thig Buaidh." In contrast to this, however, is Peter Morrison's 'Òran don Chogadh', where Morrison questions the traditional imagery of war in the following lines:

Nuair thòisicheas buaireas thig stoirm mu ar cluasan,

Tha 'n talamh mun cuairt dhinn air ghluasad fo'r bonn,

...

Bidh peileirean snaidhte mun cuairt oirnn am pailteas,

Am fuaim a' dol seachad neo-thlachdmhor an srann;

Bidh gillean bha tapaidh a' tuiteam gun fhacal

'S iad crioslaicht' an acfhainn gu batal nan lann.

In these verses from August 1915 the ideal of the Highland soldier, which still existed unimpaired at the beginning of the War in MacKinnon and Campbell, is becoming undermined by its exposure to warfare based on the "innealan sgriosail" identified by Màiread NicLeòid in December 1914.

But in Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna's 'Oran dhan Chogadh', likely composed a month before Morrison composed 'Òran don Chogadh', the panegyric view of the War finds a particularly grandiloquent expression. Like Campbell and MacKinnon, Dòmhnall Ruadh's view is articulated with reference to the necessity of opposing Germany, the vitality of Gaels in achieving this because of their unique role as the martial element within British society, the invocation of their past military achievements on behalf of Britain and the Empire, and the way in which that contrasts iniquitously with the domestic treatment of Gaels. The following lines are particularly evocative of this tradition as seen in the songs of John MacCodrum, Allan MacDougall, Murdo Macleod, and Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn, which were considered on pages 36 to 47:

'S e na Camshronaich gan spòltadh,  
Sifoirt 's Gòrdanaich gu h-àraidh,  
Chum do chrùn an-diugh, a Sheòrais,  
Bho Uilleam 's bho chòir a làmhan.

Ach bha sinne ann ar n-èiginn  
A' cur feum air luchd na Gàidhlig,  
Na diùnlaidh 's na fiùrain threuna,  
'S gun ach glè bheag dhiubh san àireamh.  
Chaidh am fuadach às an dùthaich

Mar dhaoine gun diù thar sàile,  
 Dhèanadh cuideachadh san uair leinn  
 Anns na làithean truagha thàinig.

Cha dèan cearcan-fraoich no naoisg e  
 Tha nan laighe 'n aodann fàsaich;  
 ...  
 Cuiribh iadsan fon cuid fhaobhar,  
 Leigibh iad gu aodann nàmhaid,  
 Feuch an toir iad buaidh sa Ghearmailt,  
 Feuch an dearbh iad an làmh-làidir.

...  
 Ged bha achd na rìoghachd cruaidh oirnn,  
 Cha leig sinn a' bhuaidh le càch oirr',  
 ...

Tha roinn fhathast de luchd Gàidhlig  
 Dol dhan bhlàr, 's bidh bhlàth ri innse:  
 ...  
 Innsidh sealladh-sùl nan àrmann  
 Cò thug bainne blàth na cìch dhaibh -  
 'S ann an Gàidhealtachd nan àrd-bheann  
 A tha màthraichean fo mhìghean.

Sguiridh mise nis dhe m' bhàrdachd;  
 Chan eil stàth dhomh bhi ga innse:  
 Tha fios agaib' fhèin mu thràth air  
 Eachdraidh gach blàir tha sgrìobhte;  
 Cò iadsan thug buaidh aig Alma  
 'S aig geataichean àrd nan Innsean;  
 'S g' eil fhathast beò de fhreumh nan àrmann

Na phàigheas a chàin do Chìosar!

In these lines it is evident that the martial self-belief of Gaelic society, the political outlook that it supported, and the pastoral image of the Highlands which accompanied these, have endured the first year of the War. Despite references in the song to the elements of mechanised warfare which were undermining this worldview - "Bha na mìltean ann leibh còmhlà/Len gunnathan mòr gur smàladh" - the poet can still place these next to lines like this - "Nuair a ràinig luchd na Gàidhlig,/Cha robh fàbhar ann no sìth dhuibh/...Nuair a fhuair iad ann an seàirrd s ribh,/S cothrom air an làmh a shìneadh,/Gu robh fuaim na cruaidh rir cnàmhan,/Is iad gur casgairt nur mìltean" - without a sense of the incongruity between the latter lines' cultural ideal and the reality conveyed in the former. This is also characteristic of Angus Morrison's 'Òran a' Chèasar', composed December 1915, and an especially charged description of the Highland soldier, written by Dr Kennedy of Thurso, is included at the end of each volume of *Cogadh Mòr na h-Eòrpa*, first published the following year by the Joint Committee of the Churches. The final example among the sources of this ideal being unequivocally expressed by a serviceman is John Munro's 'Ar Tìr' and 'Ar Gaisgich a Thuit sna Blàir' from June 1916. Murdo Murray states that these songs were inspired after Munro saw the Highlands for the first time since he had left for the front at the beginning of the War. Specifically, the sight of the Highlands provided Munro with an antidote to the drudgery of the trench, where he was trapped "gun tigh slàn fhaicinn, no dad eile ach òpar is làraichean briste agus craobhan spealgte".<sup>231</sup> The Highlands - which Munro described as "Tìr nam Beann, nan Gaisgeach, 's nan Gleann" - are still present as the martial and pastoral panacea for the upheaval of industrialised society, in this case the latter's extreme manifestation in the mechanised warfare of the Western Front. At this point it is worthwhile to consider how the poetry studied so far compares to the mainstream reactions of British and European society.

The cultural studies of the War which have been consulted for this thesis<sup>232</sup> describe the response to the conflict by the populations of the belligerent countries as consisting of a high diction<sup>233</sup>, which reflects "a static world, where the values appeared stable and where the meanings of abstractions seemed permanent and reliable."<sup>234</sup> The War was perceived as

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<sup>231</sup> Moireach, 'Iain Rothach', p.339.

<sup>232</sup> See above, p.20

<sup>233</sup> Bogacz, "'A Tyranny of Words'", pp.645-646; Fussell, *The Great War*, pp.23-25

<sup>234</sup> Fussell, *The Great War*, p.21



taking part in a continuous, meaningful history<sup>235</sup>, and participation in it was a rejection of the industrialism and modernity which were felt to be undermining the vitality of these nations.<sup>236</sup> However, the Gaelic poetic tradition which extends from the mid-18th to early 20th century Highlands, and the political identity which Gaels derived from it, portrays Gaels as the pastoral, martial antidote to the Lowland shepherds and English sportsmen who represent the industrialised decadence of modern life. Therefore, in the self-perception of Gaels at least, there was no "antithesis of war and social life"<sup>237</sup> which the War would reconcile. As the songs of John MacCodrum, Allan MacDougall, and land agitation poets which have been referenced throughout the previous chapters reveal, the pre-industrial martial ethos had never been excised from the centre of Gaelic culture, even if it did not correspond to how most Gaels lived. Then, as seen in the songs of Campbell, MacKinnon, and Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna, which are quoted above, the outbreak of the War exaggerated this identity. The War then exposed the Gaels who espoused this worldview to mechanised warfare. This was an extreme and sustained example of the industrialisation against which they defined themselves and one which directly undermined the warrior tenets that supported this identity. The tension resulting from this contrast is evident in the songs of servicemen from 1915 - and in Màiread NicLeòid from the end of 1914. But by June 1916, in the poems of John Munro, the traditional identity of Gaels and the Highlands has endured. This is significant when considered against the changes which occur from mid-1916 in the songs of Màiread NicLeòid, Hector MacKinnon, and Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna, beginning with the Battles of Jutland and the Somme. The changes evident in NicLeòid, and what they convey about the War's effect upon her community, suggest a spiritual exhaustion. In MacKinnon and Dòmhnall Ruadh, the high diction of their earlier compositions withers away. With this there is a sense of an erosion of the panegyric code which that language constituted. The implication of this for the worldview which that code supported, the social and political aspirations stemming from it, the collective adherence to the ideals of crofting, and the mitigation of the modernity which Gaels would accept after the War, is the question which this thesis wishes to place at the centre of early 20th century Highland history.

In the following verse from Màiread NicLeòid's 'An 'Leave' Mu Dheireadh' she is now suffering the personal torment recognised in her neighbours in 'Oran air a' Chogadh: 1914-

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<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> For discussions of this see Leed, *No Man's Land*, pp.39-72; Hynes, *A War Imagined*, pp.12-19; Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, pp.15-33; Bogacz, "'A Tyranny of Words'", *passim*

<sup>237</sup> Leed, *No Man's Land*, p.51

1918'. This suffering is worsened by the loss of her husband's body at sea. With this point a central tenet of Gaelic culture's value system and the particular consequences of the First World War intersect. The recovery of a dead person's body was of great importance in Gaelic culture (John MacInnes still recognised this characteristic in 1978), and the chaotic, mass death of the First World War made that a mores which suffered repeated, exaggerated offense within a concentrated period.<sup>238</sup>

Nuair a bhios càch 'n an cadal cha bhi mise na mo thàmh  
 D' uaigh is i cho fada bhuam 's nach stad mi ann an àit  
 Nam faighinn do an ùir thu is ciste dhùinte ort a ghràidh  
 Gun tugadh sin dhomh saorsa gun mo shùil bhith air an tràigh.

The way in which the War has both "burned its way up and down the generations with heedless ferocity"<sup>239</sup> and made NicLeòid's individual loss something which has been multiplied to pervade whole communities is described in the next verses:

Is iomadh gasan àlainn chaidh a chàradh anns an Fhraing  
 Bha mùirneach aig am pàrantan a dh' àraich iad 'n an cloinn  
 Ach is ann chaidh thusa fhàgail measg an àireamh chaidh do'n ghrund  
 Is chan fhaigh mi-fhèin gu bràth leac an àirde ri do cheann.

Tha cridh' an diugh do phàrantan a-nis air fàs cho fann  
 Tha 'n cridhe lag air fàilneachadh is na h-àrmainn air an call  
 Tha thu fhèin air d' fhàgail measg an àireamh anns na tuinn  
 Is tha dìthis de do bhràithrean air an càradh anns an Fhraing.

And the emerging sense of youth having been sacrificed in the War is found in this verse:

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<sup>238</sup> For the importance in Gaelic culture of recovering the dead see MacInnes, 'The Panegyric Code in Gaelic Poetry', pp.283-284. For the massive difficulty of returning corpses home after the War, and the cultural consequences of this throughout Europe, see Winter, *Sites of Memory*, pp.15-28. For an impression of how few of the bodies of servicemen from the Outer Hebrides were returned consult the transcriptions of local war memorials provided on *Faces from the Lewis War Memorial*, < <http://facesmemorial.blogspot.co.uk/> > [accessed 19 September 2013] and *Berneray to Vatersay Tribute: Tributes for the Fallen from the First and Second World War*, < <http://uist-tribute.blogspot.co.uk/> > [accessed 19 September 2013]

<sup>239</sup> Michael Burleigh, "'Distress of Nations and Perplexity': Europe after the Great War' in *Sacred Causes: Religion and Politics from the European Dictators to al Qaeda*, (Harper Perennial: London, 2007) p.1

Nuair a bhios mi stigh leam fhìn bidh mi smaoinichadh a ghràidh  
 Cho òg 's a chaidh ar dealachadh ann an toileachas ar là  
 An cupan chaidh a lìonadh dhuinn air iarraidh a bhith tràight'  
 Is gun dh'òl mi deoch bha searbh dheth 's cha chaill mi bhlas gu bràth.

'Marbhrann do dh'Alasdair MacLeoid (Alasdair Dhòmhnail Oig)', Hector MacKinnon's elegy to his cousin Alexander MacLeod, likely killed at the Somme, provides a voice similar to Màiread NicLeòid's. MacKinnon composed the poem from the perspective of MacLeod's mother, and the success with which he did this can be seen if the elegy is compared to both of Màiread NicLeòid's compositions. Like NicLeòid, MacKinnon evokes the distress felt in Gaelic communities at being unable to see the bodies of the fallen soldiers:

Gur e mise tha gad chaidh  
 Gach là is oidhche leam fhìn,  
 Is chan annasach sin leibh -  
 Gu bheil falt mo chinn air gealadh.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

...

Tha do leabaidh fada bhuainn  
 Far a bheil thu sìnte fuar;  
 Gur e dìthean gorm is uain'  
 Tha ri còmhdach d'uaigh san talamh.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

Gur e mhiannaichinn às ùr  
 Bhith nam sheasamh os a cionn,  
 Gus am faicinn le mo shùil  
 Far 'n do chuir iad thu air d'aineol.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

Then - and again like NicLeòid - MacKinnon gives an impression of the way in which the young are being lost to the War, and the number of people affected by this bereavement. The

image with which he encapsulates this thought is a striking transformation of the outlook which he and other Gaelic poets possessed at the beginning of the War.

'S lionmhor màthair tha ri caoidh,  
 'S tha ri ionndrain rùn a crìdh'  
 Rinn i àrach air a cìch,  
 Tha na shìneadh 'n diugh gun anail.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

'S lionmhor maighdeann feadh gach àit'  
 Bhios gun leannan gaoil gu bràth  
 Bhon a thuit e anns a' bhlàr  
 Leis an nàmhaid tha ro charach.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

'S tric mi cuimhneachadh leam fhìn  
 Air an fhiùran a bha grinn;  
 'S bhon a sheòl e às an tìr,  
 Gu bheil m'inntinn-sa fo smalan.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

The first verse quoted reveals that the soldiers who are remembered in the third verse departing for the war as "[fiùran] a bha grinn" are starting to be memorialised as children, not slain heroes. The first verse makes a transition from the image of a babe sucking at the breast to someone recumbent on a battlefield no longer drawing breath, and with that the fruitless loss of youth is conveyed.<sup>240</sup>

The themes explored in NicLeòid and MacKinnon's poetry are all evident in the later songs of Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna, and in his work they are accompanied by a notable decline in the panegyric language of 'Oran dhan Chogadh'. In 'Air an Somme' the longstanding image of Gaelic soldiers falling upon their enemies "Gu robh fuaim na cruaidh rir cnàmhan,/Is iad gur

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<sup>240</sup> The trajectory seen in Hector MacKinnon's compositions between 'Òran mun Chiad Chogadh' in August 1914 and 'Marbhrann...' in summer-autumn 1916 is intriguingly similar to Murchadh MacPhàrlain's memorialisation of the conflict in 'Naoi Ceud Deug 's a Ceithir Deug'.

casgairt nur mìltean" has been overtaken by the reality of warfare on the Western Front. Instead of the ideal of "Gàidheil nam beann fuara,/...'M fuil a' goil aig meud an uabhair/Nuair a chual' iad gu robh strì ann" there is the tedium of the trenches:

An oidhche mus deach sinn a-null,  
 Bha i drùidhteach a' sileadh;  
 Bha mi fhèin nam laighe 'n cùil,  
 'S thug mi sùil feadh nan gillean.

Ochan ì, ochan ì,  
 Tha sinn sgìth anns an ionad.  
 Ochan ì, ochan ì.

Cuid nan suidhe 's cuid nan suain,  
 Cuid a' bruadar 's a' bruidhinn,  
 Gu robh mhadainn gu bhith cruaidh -  
 "Saoil am buannaich sinn tilleadh?"

The poet's awareness of the irrelevance of the individual martial qualities which are extolled in 'Oran dhan Chogadh' when faced with industrialised warfare is then evident:

"Cha dèan biùgailear le bheul  
 Ar pareudadh-ne tuilleadh;  
 Thèid ar dealachadh bho chèil,"  
 Thuirt mi fhèin far mo bhilean.

Agus mar a thubhairt b' fhìor:  
 Chaidh na ceudan a mhilleadh,  
 Chaidh an talamh às a rian  
 'S chaidh an iarmailt gu mireag.

Dhubh an àird an ear 's an iar,  
 Is an sliabh gu robh crith ann,  
 Is chan fhaighinn m' anail sìos -

Aileadh cianail an tine.

Is cha chluinninn guth san àm  
Aig comanndair gar leigeil;  
Bha na balaich 's iad cho trang  
Cumail thall na bha tighinn.

Bha gach fear a' caogadh sùl,  
'S e air cùlaibh a chruinneig,  
A' cur peileir glas a-null  
Le uile dhùrachd a chridhe.

There is no indication in these verses of a resilient martial identity which could absorb this experience and be invigorated by it. From here, there is a gradual denuding of panegyric language in Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna's work.<sup>241</sup> In 'Dh'fhalbh na Gillean Grinn' - also composed about the Somme - the stock image of "na gillean grinn" is used to describe soldiers going over the top and being methodically killed *en masse* by "innleachd na Gearmailt." This song also describes the horror of no man's land and redundancy of individual will in that context:

'S gu robh fir mo rùin-sa  
Tuiteam air gach taobh dhìom,  
'S bha mo chridhe caoineadh  
Ged bha 'n caoch nam eanchainn.

Cuid dhiubh laighe sàmhach,  
Roinn feadh shloc a' cràladh,  
'S mòran ann an spàirn dhiubh,

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<sup>241</sup> It does not disappear completely - see 'Na Camshronaich san Fhraing' and the post-war composition 'Oran na Seilge' in MacAmhlaidh, *Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna*, pp.54-57. But certain changes are evident in the panegyric form of these songs compared to 'Oran dhan Chogadh' or similar songs of the 19th century. This is especially true of 'Oran na Seilge' where Dòmhnall Ruadh modifies the traditional complaint about the Gaels' defence of Lowlanders and the English from Britain's enemies to suggest that the Gaels may take up arms against "nan Gall" (see verses six to eight). The altered sense of the Gaels' relation to their fellow countrymen seen in these verses suggests the "ideal synthesis" which John MacInnes describes as occurring after Culloden did not survive the First World War (see MacInnes, 'The Panegyric Code in Gaelic Poetry', pp.272-273).

'G iarraidh àite teanacsa.

'Dh'fhalbh na Gillean Grinn', along with 'Oran a' Phuinnsein', 'Cha b' e Gunna Mo Namhaid', and 'Oran Arras', provide a Gaelic equivalent to Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce Et Decorum Est'<sup>242</sup>, although Dòmhnall Ruadh does not provide Owen's explicit questioning of the pre-war ideals which are being undermined by the War he is portraying. This is something which the reader infers from the absence of the language found in 'Oran dhan Chogadh' or the juxtaposition of a stock image like "na gillean grinn" with a realistic description of the conflict. In 'Tha Mi Duilich, Cianail, Duilich', the maternal, pastoral vitality of the Highlands described in these lines from 'Oran dhan Chogadh': "Innsidh sealladh-sùl nan àrmann,/Cò thug bainne blàth na cìch dhaibh -/S ann an Gàidhealtachd nan àrd-bheann/A tha màthraichean fo mhìghean" - has become obsolete, and is replaced by the imagery in these verses:

Ach nuair thèid an t-sìth a dhùnadh,

...

Facal dhiubh gur anns an uair ud

Thèid an t-saighead chruaidh sa mhàthair,

Anns an athair, anns a' ghruagaich

Dh'fhàgadh san uair seo gun bhràthair.

Siud nuair bhios an cridhe cianail,

Siud nuair thèid an sgian a shàth'dh ann,

Siud nuair ghealaicheas an ciabhag -

'S ann le deuchainnean a' bhlàir seo.

The transformation of the Highland warriors from the poetry of the beginning of the War comes in the following verses from 'Nam bithinn mar Eun':

Nam bithinn mar eun air sgiathan ealamh

A dhèanadh cabhagach leum,

Shiùbhlainn an iar 's cha dèanainn fantail

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<sup>242</sup> Wilfred Owen, 'Dulce Et Decorum Est', *Emory University Department of English*, <<http://www.english.emory.edu/LostPoets/Dulce.html>> [Accessed 19 September 2013]

San t-sliabh na b' fhaide le cèinnt.  
 Nuair ruiginn an cuan gu fuarainn Sasainn -  
 Bu shuarach agam i fhèin -  
 'S cha tiginn gu làr gu bràth gu anail  
 Gu 'n tàrann fearann na geug.

...

Chan fheumadh mo chluas bhith shuas a' caithris  
 Ri fuaim a' chanain san àm  
 No idir mo shùil bhith dlùth ag amharc  
 Far chùl a' pharapaid ann  
 Mus tigeadh gas bàis a thàrradh m' anail -  
 A ghnàth am flanainn mu m' cheann,  
 'S an rubair mu m' bheul mar chòch aig leanabh  
 'S mi dian a' tarrainn tro bann.

With the closing image, "Gàidheil nam beann fuara" have been reduced, by their exposure to industrialised warfare, to feeling as helpless and absurd as infants sucking at the breast. The reduction of the Highland soldier to the status of a helpless child in Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna's work echoes Hector MacKinnon's similar rhetorical shift in 'Marbhrann do dh'Alasdair MacLeoid' and this is a striking change in motif from two war poets.

The common themes from the poems of NicLeòid, MacKinnon, and Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna - the sense of personal and communal exhaustion, the developing idea of youth needlessly sacrificed, the futility of traditional ideals of combat in an age of industrial war, and the consequent undermining of the language through which these ideals were expressed along with the worldview they supported - ask the question of what implications the ideological transformation evident in their poetry had for Gaelic society. The possible generational divide which was occurring because of the undermining of traditional language in the compositions of the servicemen and its endurance in those of the pre-war generation can be considered if Dòmhnall Ruadh and Hector MacKinnon's compositions are compared to John Campbell's from the same period. Campbell, despite displaying, in 'Marbhrann do Dhomhnall Iain' (Appendix, pp.107-109), an ability similar to Hector MacKinnon, Màiread



NicLeòid, and Dòmhnall Ruadh, in conveying the War's affect upon his community, presents, in 'Oran a' Chogaidh Mhoir' (Appendix, pp.110-116), a voice and worldview which is the same as that found in his compositions from the beginning of the War. This song would have been composed after Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna had experienced the Somme and Arras. But, while Campbell discusses "[Na] Tha do dh'innleachd anns a' Cheusar/...A ch-uile gin gu daoine mharbhadh" he does not find his belief in "na Gàidheil chalma" undermined by them and the ideal of the Gaelic soldier has the same unquestioned place in his worldview as it did in 1914. Regarding the typical historiographical treatment of the War as discussed in Chapter One, the following point may be made. Ewen Cameron and Iain Robertson in "Fighting and Bleeding for the Land" focus upon the 1916 AGM of the Inverness Liberal Association, where the 1911 Land Settlement Act was condemned in the following statement:

Highlanders at home and abroad had shown themselves to be loyal citizens of the Empire and had answered the call. The bitterest opponent of land reform could now see the injury done to the country by denuding it of its peasantry.<sup>243</sup>

The authors acknowledge the way in which this statement "is an interesting echo of nineteenth century arguments that Highland depopulation was compromising national strength". They then jump to the declaration in October 1917, by the Solicitor General, T.B. Morrison, that Highlanders "were entitled to expect that the land question...would be settled once and for all" in which Morrison also argued that land settlement was crucial to "national safety."<sup>244</sup> The problem with excluding Gaelic sources from their analysis is that the poetry analysed above suggests that, in the interim between these meetings, the cultural certainties with which Gaels articulated their importance to national security had been critically undermined. These were the same set of beliefs through which Highland land politics in its classical form was expressed, and therefore it should not be immediately assumed that that politics continued in its pre-War form while the culture that produced it was changing. If the Highland attitude to land suffered a similar loss of confidence to that seen in the texts above then this would certainly have implications for an official policy of land settlement that derived its justification from the continuity of the pre-War self-perception of Gaels - this is also true for a branch of academic history that predicated its arguments upon such a

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<sup>243</sup> Cameron and Robertson, "Fighting and Bleeding for the Land", p.89

<sup>244</sup> *ibid.*; T.B. Morrison's statement is also referenced by Hunter in *Crofting Community*, p.265

continuity and sees it as a theme through which to convey the predominant trends of 20th century Highland history.

## Conclusion

The treatment of the First World War in existing studies of the modern Highlands is unsatisfactory because, through their failure to account for the War's radical re-orientation of the daily agency of Gaelic society, they miss the drastic transformation the conflict inflicts upon that society's outlook. The unprecedented change undergone between 1914 and 1918 by traditions which Gaels had maintained for centuries - traditions through which crofter or Gael-driven histories understand all aspects of the post-Culloden era - argues that the First World War must, in the long view, be treated as a transformative period in the history of the modern Highlands. The fundamentally different composition which 21st century Highland society possesses compared to the 19th century forebear from which it inherited its land legislation cannot be understood without considering the consequences of the War for the multiple aspects of Gaelic culture which had defined the older society. Neither can the significantly different nature of the 21st century land issue from the almost literal land hunger of 19th century Gaels. This thesis has demonstrated the War's impact on Gaelic literature and the tradition which produced it. But the conflict's parallel erosion of the many elements of 19th century Gaelic identity which are no longer palpable to 21st century Gaels<sup>245</sup>, not to mention a comprehensive analysis of its demographic and economic impact, are yet to be considered.

The changes examined within the language of Gaelic poets in this thesis are a striking departure from that language's consistency across the previous century and a half. The implications of this for the social conservatism it supported, and the political radicalism it articulated, cannot be dismissed. General histories of the 20th century Highlands, or analyses of the Highland land issue, cannot be written without recognising the significant impact of the War upon the communities of which these things are comprised. The role of the War in mitigating the Gaels' blunt identification of themselves as a people apart from the lowland shepherds or English sportsmen, with the mores of both of the latter being antithetical to them, and the Gaels' increasing embrace of ways of life they had previously repudiated, is crucial to grasping the 20th century trajectory of Highland history.

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<sup>245</sup> As outlined by Black, *An Tuil*, pp.xxii-xxiii and Neat, *When I was Young*, pp.xv-xvi

Unlike the conflicts of the 18th and 19th centuries which augmented the imperial identity of Gaels after Culloden, and which inspired the reaction against the 19th century social and economic upheaval of the Highlands, the First World War has not been remembered in panegyric poetry. Neither has it inspired a lasting tradition of Gaelic social and cultural assertion. The Gaels who fought the First World War were praised during it as *gaisgich*, *laoich*, *suinn*, *diùlnaich*, *gilleann an fhèilidh*, or *Gàidheil nam beann fuara*, and the Highlands were still *Tir nam Beann nan Gleann 's nan Gaisgich*. But in subsequent generations, the soldiers who fought in the War did not join the canon of Gaelic military achievement. In ‘*Naoi Ceud Deug ’s a Ceithir Deug*’ by Murchadh MacPhàrlain (born 1901)<sup>246</sup> they are “*òganaich cruinn*” measuring themselves to see whether they are big enough to join the militia. In ‘*Festubert 16/17-5-1915*’<sup>247</sup>, by Sorley MacLean (born 1911)<sup>248</sup>, they are “*Bràithrean no athraichean marbh*” whose deaths only achieved “*fàrdaichean a’ bhrìste-chridhe*.” In ‘*Bàs Baile*’ by Reverend John MacLeod (born 1918) of Arnol, Lewis, they are described as “*balaich*” who had not reached “*aois fiasaig/no aois smaoineachaidh*” and whose deaths were “*murt...laghail*.”<sup>249</sup> This suggests that the erosion of panegyric language demonstrated in the last chapter through the poetry of Hector MacKinnon and Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna was something which adumbrated a development of long term significance for Gaelic culture in the 20th century. It implies that the worldview of 19th century Gaels, which panegyric language expressed, and the land hunger which that language articulated, were weakened with it. This is something which is of fundamental implication for the study of the Highland land issue in the 20th century and for the study of the wider society and culture from which it comes.

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<sup>246</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.753

<sup>247</sup> Tom Scott, Somhairle MacGill-Eain, and Hamish Henderson, *Pervigilium Scotiae*, (Etruscan Books: South Devonshire, 1997) pp.82-85

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.*, p.764

<sup>249</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, pp.412-417

## Gaelic Songs of the First World War

John Campbell (1859-1947)

Lochboisdale, South Uist

### Soraidh chon nan Gàidheal

Is anns a' bhliadhna naoi ciad diag,  
 'S a deich 's a ceathair gu triall,  
 Fhuair sinn naidheachd fad o'r miann  
 Nach do dhìochainnich sinn fhathast. 4

Bhrist an Gearmailteach an t-sìth  
 Bha ann an Alba `s anns gach tìr  
 A déidh a ceagal le cinnt  
 Anns na linntean a chaidh seachad. 8

An uair a chualas an glaodh,  
 `S a chaidh an naidheachd mu sgaoil,  
 Chruinnich muinntir an fhraoich  
 As gach taobh an robh iad sgapte. 12

Dh'fhàg iad a's an déidh gach nì  
 A dhianadh feum air muir 's air tìr;  
 Nuair a fhuair iad cuireadh an Rìgh,  
 Dh'éirich an inntinn gu batal. 16

`S bha iad aotrom feadh nam beann  
 A' cur nam peileirean `nan deann,  
 Cha bhiodh an teineachan gann  
 Eadar na bheil ann 's nach maireann. 20

Bha iad ro-mhath air a' chuan  
 'S feadh na tìre leis a' chruaidh,  
 A' cur air an nàmhaid ruaig  
 Fhad 's a mhaireadh luaidhe ghlas dhaibh. 24

Ged a chosgadh iad a luaidh  
 Cumail nan nàmhaid air ruaig,  
 Bheir iad a' bheaglaid a truail  
 'S iad nach doireadh suas le gealltachd. 28

Ged tha na Gearmailtich treun  
 'S iad cho cealgach anns gach ceum,  
 Nuair a théid fir Alba air ghleus  
 Bidh an Ceusar air a mhealladh. 32

Ged a bha e ann an dùil,  
 Is e cumail a mach bho thùs,  
 Gun cuir e Paris 'na smùid,  
 Gus bhith mu bhliadhna ùir an Sasunn. 36

Thuirt e mu Shasunn gu leor –  
 An rud nach fhaic e ri bheo –  
 Gu faigheadh e a cur fo spòig  
 A' cur anndòchas anns na bh' aige. 40

Thuirt e mu Alba mar thà  
 An rud sin nach fhaic e gu bràch,  
 Nuair a gheobh e a cur an sàs  
 Gum bi càch aige fo chasan. 44

'S iomadh giògan a tha ann  
 Ged a bhiodh e treis an toll  
 'S ann a rìomhachadh o'n bhonn  
 Gus an cuir e cheann ro'n talamh. 48

Tha e sìobhalta gu leor,  
 Ma dh'fhanar gun dol 'na chòir;  
 Ach tha innean air a mheoir,  
 'S air ordagan a chasan. 52

Sin mar a bha Alba fhéin,  
 'S thug i dearbhadh air 'na dhéidh,  
 Nuair a fhuair i dhol air ghleus  
 Chual' an Ceusar a cuid chanan. 56

Theireadh Ceusar iomadh uair  
 Gu faigh e air Breatainn buaidh –  
 B'fhearr dha fuireach aig a' bhuaibh,  
 'S an rud sin thoirt suas mar mhearachd. 60

**Source:** Campbell, *Òrain Ghàidhlig*, pp.103-105

**Tune:** Soraidh bhuam a null dha'n Fhraing

A dh'ionnsaigh muinntir Tìr nam Beann;  
 Fhuair iad cuireadh gu dol ann,  
 Is cha robh maill' unnta no fadal.

**Date and Context:** The lack of reference in this song to specific events of the First World War - compared with, for example, John Campbell's later composition 'Oran a' Chogaidh Mhóir' (see below) - suggests it was composed at an early stage of the conflict. This is reinforced by the lack of emphasis on particular German offenses - beyond vague attacks on the Kaiser - and the absence of any sense of loss. From late 1914 onwards almost all of the songs make specific mention of what the poets' perceive to be devious German tactics - trench warfare, poison gas, submarines - but these are absent here, other than the reference in line 30 to Germans being "cealgach anns gach ceum". See Màiread NicLeòid's 'Oran air a' Chogadh: 1914-1918' (below), as well as Hector MacKinnon's 'Òran a' Chèasair', Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna's 'Oran dhan Chogadh', and Angus Morrison's 'Òran a' Cheasar'.

John Campbell (1859-1947)

Lochboisdale, South Uist

### **Oran Gillean na Navy**

Nuair bhios mi 'nam aonar,  
 Bidh mi tric a' smaointinn  
 Air gillean mo ghaoil,  
 A ch-uile h-aon a dh' fhalbh dhiubh. 4

Dh' fhalbh na gillean tapaidh  
 A dh' ionnsaigh a' bhatail,  
 Gun chùram gun taise  
 Gun ghaiseadh gun chearbaich' 8

Cha robh dad do sgòd orr'  
 Bho 'm mullach gu 'm brògan;  
 Bha iad air an comhdach  
 Eadar òr is airgiod. 12

Dh' fhalbh iad as gach sgìreachd.  
 Gillean calma dìleas;  
 'S ann a tha 'n toil-inntinn  
 Aig an Rìgh, o'n dh' fhalbh iad. 16

Tha e cinnteach asda  
 'S iad gun fhiamh gun taise  
 Dìreach mar tha bheachd, gu  
 Làidir, reachdmhor, meanmnach. 20

Nach b' e siod na leugain  
 A' coinneachadh a chéile,  
 Muinntir Gàidhlig is Beurla  
 A' toirt sgeula dha'n Ghearmailt. 24



Nuair a bhios iad comhla  
 An déidh an cur an ordan,  
 ‘S minig thigeadh ‘nan comhdhail  
 Bhiodh deonach air argmainn. 28

Gàidheil nam beann fuara  
 Daonnan mar bu dual dhaibh,  
 Cho ciuin ris na h-uain, gu’n  
 Déid an gluasad, `s borb iad. 32

Is miosail anns gach àit’ iad  
 Ann an iomadh cànil,  
 ‘S aig a ch-uile làrach  
 Tha am blàth air a dhearbhadh. 36

Anns gach blàr is cogadh  
 Bhiodh iadsan air thoiseach  
 O linn Dhiarmaid is Oscair,  
 ‘S Oisein, ged dh’ fhalbh e. 40

Faodaidh mi bhith ‘g ràdha  
 ‘S cha dian duine m’ àicheadh  
 O thuras Phrionn’s Tearlach  
 Bha na Gàidheil ainmeil. 44

Nuair dh’ éireas na gillean  
 Le ‘m beuglaidean biorach,  
 Tha Ceusar air chrith,  
 ‘S e mionnachadh gu garbh dhaibh. 48

Tha iad biorach faobhrach,  
 ‘S iad nimheil aontach,  
 ‘S gun duine air an t-saoghal

- Bheir a thaobh air falbh iad. 52
- Sheasadh iad cho dìleas,  
A' gléidheadh na Rìgheachd,  
'S chailleadh iad na cinn mu  
Lig iad mìr air falbh dheth. 56
- Tha an Ceusar cho diombach  
O'n chuireadh a null iad,  
'S bidh e air a ghlùinean,  
'S cha n-eil sùgh 'na sheanchas. 60
- Chuala sinn bho thùs gu  
Bheil e math gu urnaigh;  
'S b'fhearr dha cus an umhlachd,  
'S cha robh chùis cho cearbach. 64
- Bidh e umhail fhathast,  
'S chì e cùis nach fhac' e,  
'S théid a sgiùrsadh dhachaidh  
Ged a bhiodh e anmoch. 68
- Bho nach robh e coibhneil,  
Gu faigh Breatann groim air,  
'S théid a bhratach aoibhneach  
A shoillseachadh 'san Ghearmailt. 72
- Bratach bhuadmhor Bhreatainn,  
Théid i suas gun teagamh;  
'S gach aon leis am beag i  
Teichidh e air falbh as. 76
- Gheobh gach duine saoirsne  
Am fianuis an t-saoghail,

`S thig feodhainn nach saoil sibh  
As gach taobh dha'n d'fhalbh iad.

80

Bidh athraichean is màthraichean,  
`S bidh peathraichean is bràithrean,  
'S mnathan agus pàisdean  
Air gu bràch a' seanchas.

84

**Source:** Campbell, *Òrain Ghàidhlig*, pp.105-108

**Tune:** Dh'fhalbh na gillean grinn fo 'n cuid armaibh  
'S ann liom fhìn bu deonach an comhdail a bhith sealbhach  
Dh'fhalbh na gillean grinn fo 'n cuid armaibh.

**Date and Context:** Like 'Soraidh chon nan Gàidheal', the lack of specific references to battles, German methods of warfare, or an explicit sense of loss, suggests this song was composed shortly after Britain's declaration of War on 4 August 1914.

Hector Mackinnon (1886-1954)

Borve, Berneray

### Òran mun Chiad Chogadh

Chorus:

Gur muldach mise 's mi seo gun duin' idir  
 A leughas no thuigeas no sheinneas mo dhàn,  
 Le dùrachd mo chridhe soraidh slàn leis na gillean  
 'S i ùrnaigh gach fine iad a thilleadh gu slàn.

Tha aimhreit air èirigh an dùthchannan cèine,  
 'S ann eadar an Cèasar 's gach tè th' ann an sàs;  
 Tha armailt na mara air an togail le cabhaig  
 'S tha Padraig mo charaid ga tharraing gu blàr. 4

Tha gach rìoghachd gu h-aontach a' cruinneachadh dhaoine,  
 Tha 'n cogadh air sgaoileadh 's a ghlaodh ris gach àit,  
 San àm chan eil às-colt' ri deireadh an t-saoghail,  
 Tha 'n aimsir air caochladh 's chan iongnadh mar tha. 8

Tha na Breatannaich uasal a sheasadh ri cruadal  
 A-nis air an gluasad gu tuasaid thar sàil,  
 A sheasamh na rìoghachd 's na fiùrain tha innt'  
 Na saighdearan dìleas nach dìobair gu bàs. 12

'S iad saighdearan Alba tha foghainteach, calma  
 Lem fèilidhean ball-bhreac tha meanmnach sna blàir;  
 Is measail 's gach rìoghachd air muir is air tìr 'ad  
 Len armailtean millteach bheir cìs dhen an nàmh. 16

Chan urrainn dhomh innse no chumail air chuimhne  
 No eachdraidh nan suinn ud a sgrìobhadh air clàr,  
 Le tomhais is cunntais air tapachd nan diùlnach

Gun eagal, gun chùram toirt dùbhlán do chàch. 20

Tha Kitchener deònach gun cruinnich e mòran  
 'S e saoil sinn gur còir dhuinn gu bhòt sinn gun dàil,  
 Ach càit' bheil na laoiach ud a sgiùrsadh mar chaoraich  
 À dùthaich an gaoil sam bu chaomh leoth' bhith tàmh? 24

O, càit' bheil na h-uaislean, na h-eileanaich bhuadhach?  
 Bu mhath anns an uair iad gu ruagadh an nàmh;  
 Chaidh 'm fògradh thar chuantan do dhùthchannan fuadain  
 Is fearann an dualchais fo chluaran 's e fàs. 28

Ach na fèidh tha san aonach cha sheas iad air raointean  
 An àite nan daoine ri aodann a' bhlàir,  
 Nuair chluinneas 'ad an luaidhe gun teich iad don chruaich  
 A-mach feadh nam fuar-bheann cho luath ris a' gheàrr. 32

Air choltas gu feum sinn bhith tarraing gu lèir ann  
 Tha 'n t-àm a' cur feum a bhith 'g èirigh gun dàil,  
 A thilleadh a' Chèasair tha feuchainn le threudan  
 Gach caladh fon ghrèin a bhith gèilleadh fo làmh. 36

Bidh iomadach laochan na shìneadh air raona'  
 Is fhuil a bha craobhach a' sraonadh gu làr  
 Aig peileirean siùbhlach gam preasadh le fùdar  
 À gunna nach diùltadh 's e smùideadh gun tàmh. 40

Mo shoraidh le dùrachd a dh'ionnsaidh nam fiùran,  
 'S am Freasdal le chùmhnannt gan stiùireadh 's gach càs,  
 Gan dìon is gan seòladh gun till iad gu 'n eòlas  
 A dh'ionnsaidh na còisir tha brònach an tràth-s'. 44

**Source:** MacFhionghain, *Òrain Eachainn MhicFhionghain*, pp.47-49;

**Tune:** 'Gur muladach mise'

**Date and Context:** The first two verses of this song were reproduced by Alick Morrison in his introduction to *An Ribheid Chiùil*<sup>250</sup>, and he claims that it was composed immediately in response to Britain's entry into the War. The poet's description in the first verse of the raising of the Royal Naval Reserve in the present tense and his mention in the sixth verse of Lord Kitchener's recruitment plans<sup>251</sup> as something which was yet to happen support Morrison's dating.

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<sup>250</sup> Morrison, *An Ribheid Chiùil*, pp.19-20

<sup>251</sup> See Holmes, *Tommy*, pp.138-139

Màiread NicLeòid (b.1867)

North Tolsta, Lewis

### Oran air a' Chogadh: 1914-1918

O nach mise tha sgìth ag èirigh 's a' laighe leam fhìn,  
'S nach urrainn dhomh gun a bhith 'g ionndrainn-  
Gu h-àraid mo chompanach fhìn.

O nach cianail ri aithris 's an latha 's am bheil sinne beò,  
Cha chualas a-riamh air an talamh a leithid de chogadh cho mòr,  
'S a leithid de innealan sgriosail nach cualas idir an seòrs'  
Ach is coltach gur iomadach bliadhna bho bha 's 'g an dèanamh bho chleòc'. 4

Is tric a chuala mi m' athair ag radh nuair a bha e beò  
Gur h-iongantach mu'n tigeadh an latha 's am biodh na h-uile fo dhaors'  
Ach chaidh e fhèin a thoirt dhachaigh mus tàinig an là gu crìch,  
'S tha e nise sàbhailt aig cala, 's cha chluinn e claidheamh no strì. 8

Is ann air feasgair na Sàbaid a chualas an naidheachd le foirm,  
Gun robhar 'g ar togail 's gach ceàrnaidh gu seasamh bhur n'-àit' anns an arm.  
Ach is ann am portan an iasgaich bha 'n sealladh bu chianail gu dearbh,  
An àm do na trèinichean gluasad 's a bhathas 'g ar fuadach air falbh. 12

Sibhse tha sgapte feadh an t-saoghail, anns an Olaind, 's an Sìnaidh tha thall,  
Tha cuid dhiùbh aig ann am prìosan, glaiste mar chaoraich am faing.  
Feuch an gabh sibh bhur tìd' anns an rìoghachd ri strì aig an àm.  
Ach, O biodh bhur suil ris an Rìgh aig am bheil iuchair na sìth 'n a làimh. 16

O, ged dh' fhàg mi mo bhràthair, chan e nach cuimhnich mi e,  
Oir tha e muigh anns gach gàbhadh, is cunnart, A ghràidh, as do dhèidh,  
Ach is ann air a' mhuir 'tha mo chrìdhse is èiginn dhomh innse sin dhuibh,  
O gu'n tilleadh iad sàbhailt le beannachd nan gràs air an cinn. 20

Thug sinn ùine bha fada mus d' fhuair sinn facal às àit'  
 Gun fhios an robh thu beò air do chasan no idir an robh thu 'n ad shlàint'.  
 Ach is anns na pàipearan naidheachd a chuala sinn fios mar a bha,  
 Gur ann aig na h-Eileanan Falkland a bha sibh fo chuing ann am blàr. 24

O cha b' fhair' orm Kaisear a thuir air a' bhéisd mar ainm,  
 Is iomadh cridh' rinn e 'reubadh a bha glè threubhant a' falbh.  
 Ma 's e gum faigh sibh gu Bherlin 's ar brataichean féin chur air seilbh,  
 Cha chreid mi nach cuir sibh e am prìosan às nach fhaigh e ri shaoghal air falbh. 28

Is tric mi le smaoin air a' bhantraich a tha ri caoidh leatha fhèin,  
 Gun mhàthair, gun chuideachd ach gann aic', b' adhbhar dhi ionndrainn sin fhèin.  
 Cha b' iongantach a cridhe bhith fann nuair a leugh i a sgeul-creiche féin  
 B' ainneamh a chitheadh air sràid ag coiseachd cho àlainn ri cheum. 32

Nuair a chaidh sibh gu "action", is cianail an sealladh a bh' ann,  
 Bha sibhse air ur sgapadh bho chèile mus biodh sibh fhèin air ur call  
 Nuair fhuair sibh òrdugh air losgadh is na naimhdean agaibh cho cruinn,  
 Is ann 'sheas gach fear dhiùbh cho duineil, is e Admiral Sturdee 'bha leibh. 36

O chàirdean, nach sibh a tha suaimhneach 'n ur laigh' air a' chluasaig troi'n oidhch',  
 An uair a tha balaich ur dùthcha a-muigh fo 'n bhùirn anns an trainns'  
 Tha cuid de mo nàbaidhean fhìn ann is cuid de mo dhìlsean 's mo dhaimh,  
 Is, O, gu'n tilleadh iad sàbhailt a-mach às gach gàbhadh is teinn. 40

'S an uair bhios mi fhèin anns an leabaidh a' smaointinn an fhir a tha bhuainn  
 'N a laighe gun chluasaig gun phlaide, 's nach fhaigh e an cadal ach gann,  
 Ach is tric a chuala sinn iomradh air fear glè ghluasaid air chainnt,  
 Is a dh' aindheoin gach strì agus buaireas cha tòir iad a' bhuaidh oirnn a-chaoidh. 44

Is truagh nach tigeadh an latha às am bitheadh gach bail' ann an sìth  
 Is gu'n cluicheadh an leòghann 's an leanabh aig toll na nathrach 's an raon,  
 Is gu'n itheadh a' bho 's am math-ghamhainn sìol às an amar mar aon,  
 Is gu'n sguireadh gach rìoghachd a' chòmstri, is iomradh air cogadh nach bì. 48



Ged a dh' fheuch mi ri òran, cha b'e gum bu chòir dhomh 'san àm  
 Oir cha bu Bhàrd mo bho m' òige. Is chan urrainn mi mòran chur cruinn,  
 Cha dh' fhuair mi sgil air a dhèanamh 's chan eil mi glè gheur na mo chainnt  
 Is gun fhios bheil mi ceart 'na mo chòmhradh chan urrainn mi an corr thoirt dhuibh. 52

**Source:** *Clachan Criche*, pp.87-88

**Date and Context:** As line 24 states, this song was composed after the Battle of the Falkland Islands, which occurred on 8 December 1914. This battle followed the Battle of Coronel on 1 November, which was fought between British and German fleets off the Chilean coast. There, the Royal Navy lost its first naval engagement in over a century, causing an emergency over Britain's security in the South Atlantic and concern over how much of her naval resources would have to be redirected there. This was resolved, however, when the German fleet which had won at Coronel appeared at the Falkland Islands on 8 December to attack the wireless stations and coal stocks at Port Stanley. They encountered a superior British force which pursued them, sinking all of the German vessels.<sup>252</sup>

36: **Admiral Sturdee** - Vice-Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee, who, in the wake of Coronel, was sent by the Admiralty with two battlecruisers to the South Atlantic, and commanded the British force at the Battle of the Falkland Islands.

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<sup>252</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918*, pp.82-83

Màiread NicLeòid (b.1867)

North Tolsta, Lewis

### **An 'Leave' Mu Dheireadh**

B' iongantach mar a dh' òrdaich thu, 's gun deònaicheadh dhuit e  
Is tu sealltainn air do charaid, s' tu aig an taigh air 'leave'  
Is e thuirt thu nuair a dh' fhàg thu e gum b' fheàrr gun robh thu fhèin  
Còmhla ris a' bàsachadh nam biodh d' àit air Nèamh. 4

Is ann mar sin a thachair, chaidh a choimhlionadh dhuit fèin  
Bha e rèir nam briathran mar a dh' iarr thu às do bheul  
Cha robh ach beagan uairean anns a' cheum bha sibh bho chèil'  
Gus an robh sibh anns an t-sìorraidheachd, 's gun iadh oirbh an t-eug. 8

Nuair a bhios càch 'n an cadal cha bhi mise na mo thàmh  
D' uaigh is i cho fada bhuam 's nach stad mi ann an àit  
Nam faighinn do an ùir thu is ciste dhùinte ort a ghràidh  
Gun tugadh sin dhomh saorsa gun mo shùil bhith air an tràigh. 12

Is iomadh gasan àlainn chaidh a chàradh anns an Fhraing  
Bha mùirneach aig am pàrantan a dh' àraich iad 'n an cloinn  
Ach is ann chaidh thusa fhàgail measg an àireamh chaidh do'n ghrunnd  
Is chan fhaigh mi-fhèin gu bràth leac an àirde ri do cheann. 16

Tha cridh' an diugh do phàrantan a-nis air fàs cho fann  
Tha 'n cridhe lag air fàilneachadh is na h-àrmainn air an call  
Tha thu fèin air d' fhàgail measg an àireamh anns na tuinn  
Is tha dithis de do bhràithrean air an càradh anns an Fhraing. 20

Nuair a bhios mi stigh leam fhìn bidh mi smaoinichadh a ghràidh  
Cho òg 's a chaidh ar dealachadh ann an toileachas ar là  
An cupan chaidh a lìonadh dhuinn air iarraidh a bhith tràight'  
Is gun dh' òl mi deoch bha searbh dheth 's cha chaill mi bhlas gu bràth. 24

O tha mis' an dòchas nach robh do lòchran gann  
 Is gun d' fhuair thu measg na òighean steach còmhl' ri fear na bainns'  
 Is ma fhuair thu 'n aiseag shòlasach a thug do Ghlòir thu null  
 Cha chaidh thu gun do dh' fhàg thu an saoghal ànradhach seo tha ann.

28

**Source:** *Clachan Criche*, pp.88-89

**Date and Context:** This elegy was composed for the poet's husband, Donald John MacLeod, who served on *H.M.S. Invincible* and was killed when the ship was sunk at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Strachan, *The First World War*, pp.203-207; Keegan, *The First World War*, pp.290-296

Hector MacKinnon (1886-1954)

Borve, Berneray

**Marbhrann do dh'Alasdair MacLeoid (Alasdair Dhòmhnail Oig)**

Gur e mise tha gad chaidh  
 Gach là is oidhche leam fhìn,  
 Is chan annasach sin leibh -  
 Gu bheil falt mo chinn air gealadh.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall. 5

Mi air gealadh mar a chaor',  
 Mar an sneachd' air feadh an raoin,  
 No mar cheò a chì thu sgaoilt'  
 Air an aonach moch sa mhadainn.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall. 10

Gu bheil m'inntinn-sa fo leòn  
 Is cha dùisg i suas ri ceòl,  
 'S mi ri ionndrain a' ghill' òig  
 Nach fhaic mi ri m'bheò tighinn dhachaigh.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall. 15

Chan fhaic mi gu bràth a ghnùis,  
 Aghaidh shìobhalta bha ciùin,  
 Sùil a' chalmair fo rosg dlùth,  
 'S pearsa chùbhraidh mar an canach.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall. 20

Tha do leabaidh fada bhuainn  
 Far a bheil thu sìnte fuar;  
 Gur e dìthean gorm is uain'  
 Tha ri còmhdach d'uaigh san talamh.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall. 25

Gur e mhiannaichinn às ùr  
 Bhith nam sheasamh os a cionn,  
 Gus am faicinn le mo shùil  
 Far 'n do chuir iad thu air d'aineol.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall. 30

Tha do dhealbh agam air *card*,  
 'S anns a' chèis ud gu là bràth;  
 'S tric mo shùilean air an àird  
 'N ùine gheàrr a bhios mi fantainn.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall. 35

Sin an ìomhaigh a bha blàth,  
 Air nach fhacas gruaim no pràmh,  
 'S nach dìochuimhnich mi gu bràth  
 Gus an càirear mi san anart.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall. 40

Nuair bhios càch nan cadal suain -  
 'S iad mo nàbaidhean mun cuairt -  
 'S ann bhios mise trom fo smuain,  
 Cuimhneachadh do shnuaidh nach dealaich.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall. 45

Cuimhneachadh nuair bha thu òg,  
 'S tu aotrom ris na h-eòin,  
 'S tu ri mireag feadh nan lòn -  
 Làithean sòlasach a bh'againn.  
 O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall. 50

Ach tha caochladh air an tràth;  
 Sgaoil am bròn air feadh an àit';  
 Tha gach inneal-ciùil na thàmh

Is cha dùisg iad 'n àird gu h-ealamh.

O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

55

'S lionmhor màthair tha ri caoidh,

'S tha ri ionndrain rùn a crìdh'

Rinn i àrach air a cìch,

Tha na shìneadh 'n-diugh gun anail.

O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

60

'S lionmhor maighdeann feadh gach àit'

Bhios gun leannan gaoil gu bràth

Bhon a thuit e anns a' bhlàr

Leis an nàmhaid tha ro charach.

O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

65

'S tric mi cuimhneachadh leam fhìn

Air an fhiùran a bha grinn;

'S bhon a sheòl e às an tìr,

Gu bheil m'inntinn-sa fo smalan.

O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

70

Tha mo shùilean mar an t-allt,

Mar an t-uisge ruith tro ghleann,

'S tha mo cheum air fàs cho mall

'S nach dìrich mi 'n gleann gun anail.

O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

75

'S ann ro ghoirid bhios an ùin'

Gus an tèid mi leat a-null;

Bhon tha 'n t-eug a' tarraing dlùth,

Chan eil dùil agam ri fantainn.

O, 's ann tha mo ghaol-sa thall.

80

**Date and Context:** This song was composed as an elegy to a cousin of the poet's called Alexander MacLeod, also of Berneray. Little is known of Alexander's life - including the date of his death. In the second volume of Berneray's Croft History he is recorded as having been born in 1895 but the date of his death is merely entered as "WWI".<sup>254</sup> There was no record of him on the website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. In correspondence with Sue Wilson and Lorna MacKillop of Berneray Historical Society, who consulted with a relative of Alexander's who still lives on the island, it was revealed that his family knew very little about the circumstances of his death, but it is believed that he was killed in France. A Harrisman who served in the same troop as Alexander revealed, in an interview with a late resident of Berneray, that most of the soldiers in it had been killed in a shelling, most likely at the Somme.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Bill Lawson, *Croft History: Isle of Berneray, Volume 2*, (Bill Lawson Publications: Northton, 2005) p.133

<sup>255</sup> Sue Wilson, 7th June 2013; Sue Wilson, 11th June 2013

Hector Mackinnon (1886-1954)

Borve, Berneray

### Laoidh dhan Chogadh Mhòr, 1914-1918

- A Thì tha ro naomh, s' Tu 'n t-Aon a chruthaich  
Na daoine, muir agus tìr;  
'S Tu Ard-Rìgh a' Chrùn os cionn nan uile,  
Le ùghd'rras, cumhachd is binn; 4  
Tha 'n saoghal 's a làn nad làimh gu h-uile,  
Le gràdh nach urrainn dhomh inns',  
'S ar guidhe gach là san fhàsach dhuilich:  
Com-pàirtich uile ruinn sìth. 8
- Nach seall Thu a-nuas le truas gu buileach  
Air truaghain dhuilich nan deòir;  
Nach sgaoil Thu do sgiath air an fhìon-lios uile,  
Cur dìon air fuil agus feòil - 12  
Tha anaman caillt' san àm a' fulang  
Tha cràiteach, uireasbhach, leònt',  
Feadh mhonadh is ghlinn nan sìneadh uile,  
Nam mìltean tuiream fo leòn. 16
- O, liuthad mac màthar àlainn, maiseach  
A tha na chadal san t-sliabh  
A dh'àraich i 'n àird le bàidh is canas  
'S le gràdh bha farsaing na cliabh; 20  
Cha till iad gu bràth bhon dh'fhàg iad 'n anail;  
Air sràid chan fhaicear iad sìos;  
Rinn ìnnleachd an nàimh an tàladh dhachaigh  
Dhan cheàrn sam fan iad gu sìor. 24
- O, liuthad gill' uasal, suairc is ceanalt',  
Le snuadh bu mhaiseach air sràid,



Tha na shìneadh sa chuan, 's gur fuar a leabaidh  
 Fo stuaghannan caithriseach, àrd; 28  
 'S bidh pàrantan gaoil gan caoineadh thairis  
 Gach oidhche, madainn is là,  
 'S gu 'n tèid iad dhan ùir cha mhùth 's cha dealaich  
 An rùn do dh'fhearaibh an gràidh. 32

An Ceusar a th'ann, b'e ceann na dunaidh,  
 Chuir lann a' sruthadh nar dòrn;  
 'S e 'n nàmhaid a dhall a cheann 's a mhuineal  
 Thug antlachd dhuinne ri òl; 36  
 Sinn an dubhar san àm e chall no bhuinnig -  
 'S e th'ann ach buille ro mhòr,  
 Na teudan cho teann 's an t-sreang aig fulang  
 Toirt srann le tuilleadh 's a chòir. 40

'S e 'm peacadh a-mhàin rinn tràill dhen duine  
 Bho Adhamh thugainn a-nuas,  
 'S chuir aimhreit 's gach àit' le nàmhaid guineach,  
 'S e ghnàth ri siubhal mu chuairt; 44  
 'S e gach oidhch' agus là gun tàmh, gun fhuireach,  
 Cuir sgàil air cumhachd an t-sluaigh,  
 'S gam fàgail cho dall 's cho mall nam fuireach,  
 A' gealltainn tuilleadh 's an duais. 48

Ach, a charaid mo ghràidh, na tàmh 's na fuirich,  
 'S an t-àite feitheamh ort shuas -  
 Dèan oidhirp is spàirn tro fhàsach dhuilich  
 Bhon phlàigh mus sluig i thu suas; 52  
 Cuir d'aghaidh air Crìosd - 's E dìon nan uil' E,  
 'S a mhiann thu thilleadh le luaths,  
 'S a ghàirdeanan sìnt, gan sìor chur thugad,  
 Toirt mìle cuireadh dhan t-sluagh. 56

Ged choisneadh tu 'n saogh'l 's gun saors' aig d'anam,  
 Dè th'ann ach faileas is sgleò,  
 'S gun sinn ach air chuairt 's nach dual dhuinn fantainn,  
 'S an uaigh gar tagairt le còir? 60  
 Na dèanamaid uailh à snuadh no maise,  
 No buaireadh beairteis no òir,  
 Ach annsan bha uair a chuairt air thalamh,  
 'S chaidh suas gu Cathair na glòir. 64

**Source:** MacFhionghain, *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor*, pp.83-85

**Tune:** *Glòir an Uain*

**Date and Context:** *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor* states that this was composed "dhan bhàrd a bhith na shùil-fhianais air lèirsgrios a' Chogaidh ann an Gallipoli."<sup>256</sup> This would place its composition sometime between February 1915 and January 1916<sup>257</sup> and that is what Black uses in *An Tuil* as well.<sup>258</sup> However, they also state that it was composed after MacKinnon's religious conversion, when his ship the *Ermine* was sunk.<sup>259</sup> But both *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor* and *An Tuil* would appear to be wrong. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary Historical Society's website records the *Ermine* as having sunk 2 August 1917.<sup>260</sup> This website also provides a list of those who drowned on the ship and the cemeteries in which they were interred. Entering these names into the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's online database reveals that the *Ermine* did in fact sink on 2 August 1917, and therefore not during the Dardanelles campaign. The song's composition, and MacKinnon's religious conversion, must therefore be at least a year and a half later than assumed.

<sup>256</sup> MacFhionghain, *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor*, p.83

<sup>257</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918*, pp.117-121

<sup>258</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.738

<sup>259</sup> Black, *An Tuil*, p.738; MacFhionghain, *An Neamhnaid Luachmhor*, p.ix

<sup>260</sup> 'Requisitioned Auxiliary - Ermine', *Historical RFA*, <<http://www.historicalrfa.org/>> [accessed 23 September 2013]

John Campbell (1859-1947)

Lochboisdale, South Uist

### Marbhrann do Dhomhnall Iain

B'e so foghar mo sgaraidh A dh'fhàg mi airtnealach tùrsach, Chuir e maille 'nam léirsinn, 'S cha n-eil ceum agam sunndach	4
Bho'n a chuala mi'n naidheachd Gun thu aca 'sa chunntais Nuair a bhuaill iad ri àireamh Na bha air an sàbhaladh dhiùbhsan.	8
Is goirt an naidheachd a fhuair mi, 'S mi 'san uair gu math sunndach, Gu robh thusa air do bhàthadh, Sgeul mo chràidh tighinn dham' ionnsaigh;	12
'S ann a mach bho Cheann Eireann Fhuair an t-eug thu ri d' chunntais, Is gura mise tha gu deurach Chail mi, m'eudail, mo dhùil riut.	16
Cha n-e airgiod no òr 'S cha n-e stòras no ionntas, Ged a gheobhainn e comhla Dh'fhàg mi brònach 'gat ionndrainn;	20
Bha do chridhe cho blàth dhomh 'S bha do nàdur cho ciuin rium, Is bha thu coibhneil 'nad inntinn A ch-uile nì tighinn le d' dhùrachd.	24
Is beag an t-ioghnadh sin dhòmhsa A bhith cho brònach 'gat ionndrainn,	

Cha dug thu dhomh nàire  
 Rud a dh'fhàgadh air chùl mi; 28  
 Bha thu aoidheil ri d' chàirdean  
 Is cha robh càch ort an diombadh  
 'S bu mhór do theisd aig gach nàbuidh  
 A bh'anns an àite so dlùth dhut. 32

Is bidh mi smaointinn gu tric  
 A Dhomhnaill Iain, gach am ort,  
 Gura sibh bh'anns an éiginn  
 An am dha'n bhéist bhith tighinn teann dhuibh; 36  
 Ach le toil Rìgh nan Gràsan  
 Nuair a thànaig an t-am, O!  
 Gun do theirig an ùine,  
 'S i 'n déidh a cunntais gu ceann dhuibh. 40

Bho'n a tha thusa dhìth oirnn  
 'S nach fhaigh sinn thu le ionndrainn,  
 'S iomadh fear agus té, O!  
 Dh'fhàg an Ceusar gu tùrsach; 44  
 A chuir e an cadal a dhìth orr',  
 Is iomadh oidhche 'nan dùsgadh;  
 'S e rud is urrainn dhuinn fhìn  
 A bhith ort cuimhneach 'nar n-urnaigh. 48

**Source:** Campbell, *Òrain Ghàidhlig*, pp.97-99

**Tune:** Bha mi raoir ann am dhùsgadh

'S mi *beatadh* dlùth air a' chaladh

**Date and Context:** This song was composed for John Campbell's cousin, Donald John McPhee, who is described in *Òrain Ghàidhlig le Seonaidh Caimbeul* as having been "a

bhàthadh ri linn a' Chogaidh Mhóir"<sup>261</sup>. McPhee was a son of Campbell's wife's sister, Mary Ann McPhee (nee MacFarlane), and Campbell and he worked alongside each other on a lobster fishing boat before the War, something which Campbell references in his song 'Oran nan Giomach'.<sup>262</sup> The *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* records Donald John McPhee as having served in the Mercantile Marine and states that he was drowned on 16 August 1917 at the age of 27 while serving on the *S.S. Athenian*.<sup>263</sup> He is described in *Òrain Ghàidhlig le Seonaidh Caimbeul* as having been raised with John Campbell and "'cha do charaich e an sin gus an dànaig trusadh a' Chogaidh Mhóir".<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Campbell, *Òrain Ghàidhlig*, p.99

<sup>262</sup> *ibid.*, pp.10-12

<sup>263</sup> 'McPhee, Donald John', *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, < <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/3060358/McPHEE,%20DONALD%20JOHN>> [Accessed 10 September 2013]

<sup>264</sup> Campbell, *Òrain Ghàidhlig*, p.99

John Campbell (1859-1947)

Lochboisdale, South Uist

### **Oran a' Chogaidh Mhóir**

- Fhuair sinn naidheachd 's cha bu spòrs i,  
 'S dh'fhàg i brònach bho chionn tìm sinn;  
 Gu robh cogadh mór air éirigh,  
 'S chaidh an sgial air feadh na Rìgheachd; 4  
 Cha robh fios aca m'a dhéidhinn  
 Gus na dh'éibheadh nach robh an t-sìth ann,  
 'S chuir iad an sin an cinn ri chéile,  
 'S chunnaic iad gun b'fheudar sìneadh. 8
- Gu bheil an Germailteach air bualadh -  
 Is adhbhar uabhais sin ri chluinntinn -  
 Is nach eil trocair ann do thruaghain  
 Nach b'urrainn gluasad na dìreadh; 12  
 Ach 'gan leagadh leis an luaidhe,  
 'S e 'gan cur dha'n uaigh 'nam mìltean;  
 Air na fhuair e làmh-an-uachdair  
 Cha n-eil buaidh aig' air a choinnseas. 16
- Chuala sinn mar a bha an Flannras,  
 'S coltach nach eil ann ach firinn;  
 Gun do rinn e gnothach oillteil  
 Air na bha chloinn ann 's do sheann-daoine; 20  
 A' chuid dhiubh nach do rinn e mharbhadh  
 E 'gan toirt air falbh dha'n phrìosan,  
 Gus an d'fhuair iad gu ruige Alba,  
 'S i rinn tearmad air na mìltean. 24
- Fhuair iad socair 's fhuair iad tàmh ann,  
 Fhuair iad blàths ann 's fhuair iad sìth ann,

Fhuair iad coibhneas agus càirdeas,  
 'S cha robh nàmhadas dhaibh innte; 28  
 Cha b'ionann 's mar a bha an Ceusar  
 Nuair a fhuair e fhéin fo chis iad,  
 A' cur na Rìgheachd as a chéile  
 'S cha dian i bonn feum a chaoidh dhaibh. 32

Thànaig e an sin chon na Frainge,  
 'S lig i a nall air a' chrìoch e;  
 Bha e an dùil ri tighinn a Shasunn  
 'S nach biodh maill' air a' tighinn innte; 36  
 'S gun digeadh e an sin a dh'Alba  
 'S mu na dh'fhalbh e, bha e 'na inntinn  
 Gu faigh e uile gu léir iad  
 Gus e fhéin a bhith 'na rìgh ann. 40

Cha do thuig e dé bha roimhe,  
 Shaoil leis an toiseach na cùise  
 Gum biodh gach ni mar a b'àill leis  
 O'n a bha e làn do dh'ionntas; 44  
 Ach cha n-ann mar sin a thachair,  
 Am fear a bha 'na chadal dhùisg e,  
 'S dh'fhalbh na gillean uile comhla  
 An déidh an seoladh le luchd-stiùraidh. 48

'S iomadh màthair agus athair  
 Piuthar, 's bean a bha gu cràiteach  
 O'n uair a chaill iad an daoine,  
 Gun dùil ri faotainn 'nan àite; 52  
 Cha n-eile lighiche 'san rìgheachd  
 A bheir sith dhaibh anns a' chàs sin,  
 Fhad' 's a bhios an cridhe air ghluasad  
 Bidh sin dhaibh cho buan 's a tha e. 56

Rànaig iad fearann na Frainge  
 Mu'n do rinn iad lann a rùsgadh,  
 Iad a ghéilleadh dha'n Chommandair  
 Bha aca nuair a gheall iad umhlachd; 60  
 'S minig a chanadh aig an am sin  
 Gun gabhadh a' chlann ud mùiseag,  
 'S iad a' togairt chon na Gearmailt  
 O's i an argmainn thug a null iad. 64

Ged a thòisich iad air cogadh  
 Bha ann o thoiseach an t-saoghail  
 Air ordachadh a bhith diante,  
 Ach bha rìghailtean air daonnan; 68  
 'S mar a bha an Ceusar cho meallta  
 Cha do sheall e air a h-aon dhiubh,  
 'S iomadh fear a thuirte o'n am sin  
 "Bidh an call ud air a dhiùladh." 72

Nuair a fhuair na Gàidheil chalma  
 Cothrom air an airm a rùsgadh,  
 'S iomadh fear thànaig o'n Ghearmailt  
 Nach till le seanchas a null ann, 76  
 Aig an robh misneach is earbsa  
 Gun doir iad dearbhadh mu'n chùis dhaibh,  
 A tha 'nan sìneadh air an raoine  
 'Nan cadal 's nach fhaod iad dùsgadh. 80

Tha do dh'innleachd anns a' Cheusar,  
 'S cha n-eil feum a bhith 'ga innse,  
 'S ged a ghabhadh e cur an seanchas,  
 Tha e searbh a bhith 'ga chluinntinn; 84  
 A ch-uile gin gu daoine mharbhadh  
 No an toirt dha'n Ghearmailt dha'n phrìosan;  
 Ach, ma chinnich iad 'na cheann-san.



Cha b'e chompanaich a mhill e. 88

Nuair a tharraing iad ri chéile  
 'S mór am beud nach robh e dlùth dhaibh,  
 Ach bha esan anns na dìgean,  
 Cha dìreadh e ach a bhith unnta; 92  
 'S nam biodh e air an réidhleach  
 Le 'n claidhmhteannan geura, rùis'te,  
 'S gu fanadh e air am bialaibh  
 Bhiodh fhuil air an fhiar a' strùlaidh. 96

Tha gach innleachd air an taghadh,  
 'S cuid dhiubh 'nan soithichean-gaoithe  
 Gus a dhol faisg air an adhar  
 Air son ar mealladh dha rìribh; 100  
 'S feodhainn eile dol fo'n mhuir  
 A chanar riutha *submarines*,  
 Is iad a' géilleachdainn dha'n ealdhain  
 Ris an canar an *torpedo*. 104

A ch-uile duine tha fo'n ghréin  
 A' faicinn eugcorach an ni sin,  
 Mar a tha obair a' Cheusair  
 'S e dianamh beud le chuid innleachd; 108  
 'S ged a bha iad aca fhéin  
 Cha chuireadh iad an géill a chaoidh iad,  
 Gus na mhuthaich iad gum b'fheudar  
 Dhaibh bhith 'g éirigh 's nach b' ann mìn ris. 112

'S iomadh rìgheachd a rinn éirigh -  
 Is bha sin feumail aig an tìm so -  
 Nuair a chunnaic iad 's gach té dhiubh  
 Gu robh an Ceusar air son dìreadh; 116  
 Thog iad an guth uile comhla

Gun dian iad le 'n deoin an dìcheall,  
 'S thug iad cuideachadh dha chéile  
 A chum an réit' a bhith 's gach rìgheachd. 120

Dh'éirich Ruisia is an Fhraing,  
 'S dh'éirich Flannras 's dh'éirich Sìona,  
 Dh'éirich *America* thall,  
 'S bha *Japan* linn bho chionn linntean; 124  
 Dh'éirich Astràilia mhór linn  
 'S an Eadailt chòir 'na mìltean,  
 'S ged bha an Turcach dubh 'san argmainn  
 Dh'éirich Alba gu cur crìoch air. 128

Sìol nam fear bha làidir lùthmhor  
 A bha riamh cliuiteach o tha cuimhn' air,  
 Ged a tha seanairean a' crìonadh,  
 Tha 'n fhuil ag iarraidh gu dìreadh 132  
 Anns na lasgairean a dh'fhàg iad,  
 'S a bhios i blàth 'nan cuim-san;  
 Bidh an aire aca air a' Cheusar  
 'S cha chuireadh sin fhéin oirnn ioghnadh. 136

Bha iad uile calma sunndach  
 Làidir lùthmhor, ionnsaicht', eolach,  
 'S cuimhne aig gach fear air an àite  
 An deachaidh àrach feadh nam mórbheann; 140  
 Nuair a dh'éibhte iad gu h-uchd cruadail  
 Ghluaiseadh iad air réir an ordain,  
 'S na h-aon-diag far an dà fhichead  
 A chuir bristeadh air a dhòchas. 144

'S thug iad cothrom iomadh uair dha  
 Air son a thoirt suas mar bhà e,  
 'S nach dian iad urad a dholaidh

	114
Na do dhomail air an àite;	148
Gura h-ann a bha e dianamh	
Nach biodh e striochdte gu bràch dhaibh	
Ach théid iad a Shanndar-Lìona	
Ceart cho cinnteach 's a chaidh càch ann.	152
Tha e seachad air trì bliadhna	
Bho'n a rinn e gnìomh gun nàire,	
'S chunnaic gach duine 's bu shearbh dhaibh	
Eadar na mharbh e 's na bhàth e;	156
Ach nuair a théid iad dha'n Ghearmailt	
Gheobh e sin a dhearbhadh dhà-san,	
Ge b'e mar a dh'éireas shuas dha,	
'S ann tha fios aig Dia nan Gràs air.	160
Bidh mise ris a' chomh-dhùnadh	
Ann an dùil nach eil cus dàil ann	
Gus am bi sìth air an t-saoghal,	
'S tric a smaointich sinn mar thà air;	164
'S iomadh fear is té 'ga ghuidhe	
Ged nach ann ullamh dheth thà iad,	
Ged tha cuid eile air a chaochladh	
'S barail liom gu faod mi ràdha.	168

**Source:** Campbell, *Òrain Ghàidhlig*, pp.108-113

**Date and Context:** The focus in lines 17-24 on German conduct in Flanders, and then the reference in lines 153-154 to the "gnìomh gun nàire" committed by the Kaiser over three years previously, presumably refer to the German army's 'rape of Belgium' as it invaded the country in August 1914. This involved the large-scale shooting of civilians and the burning of villages. The worst instance was at the town of Louvain where, from 25 August, German soldiers looted and burned, destroying a library containing 230,000 books, as well as 1,100

other buildings, and killing 209 civilians.<sup>265</sup> This would place the song's composition towards the end of August 1917 or later, and therefore close to 'Marbhrann do Dhomhnall Iain'.

143: **'S na h-aon-diag far an dà fhichead** - The 51st (Highland) Division

151: **Ach théid iad a Shanndar-Lìona** - St. Helena

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<sup>265</sup> Keegan, *The First World War*, pp.92-93

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