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Abstract

Gaelic literature produced by emigrants in nineteenth-century Australia and New Zealand is to be found almost exclusively in the pages of Gaelic periodicals and in the Gaelic columns of newspapers published in Scotland, the Antipodes and Canada. This paper provides an overview of these publications, including the short-lived Tasmanian periodical, *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach*, and considers the literary output of some of their identifiable Antipodean contributors.

The impact of the nineteenth-century Highland diaspora on Gaelic literary output has been considered almost exclusively to date in terms of literature produced in the Scottish Lowlands, particularly in Glasgow, and in Canada and, to a lesser extent, in the United States.¹ This focus is completely understandable given the relative burgeoning of Gaelic publishing in Glasgow in the course of the nineteenth century and the gradual emergence of Gaelic publishing in North America among settled communities of Gaelic speakers. There does, however, exist a corpus of Gaelic literature, albeit significantly smaller and more fragmented, produced by Gaelic speakers who emigrated to Australia and New Zealand from the 1830s onwards, a corpus which reflects different emigration and settlement patterns. While this literature has begun to receive attention, particularly in the work of Cardell and Cummin on Gaels in Australia, both the material and its authors remain relatively unknown.² Given that, almost without exception, this literature found its way into print in Gaelic periodicals and in the Gaelic columns of newspapers in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Scotland, this article will focus on these periodicals and newspapers, their role in stimulating literary production and in sharing this among the global Gaelic community, as well as on some of the literature produced by Gaelic speakers in the Antipodes.³

Although the earliest Scottish Gaelic periodical appeared in 1803 it is

not until 1829 that we can talk of the emergence of a Gaelic periodical press with the publication in Glasgow of the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod's *An Teachdaire Gae'lach* (*The Highland Messenger*), a publication which would run for two years. Glasgow, with its sizeable Highland emigré population, would become the centre of Gaelic periodical publishing with a further seven short-lived periodicals published there by 1850, the only other one to appear in the same period being the bilingual *Cuairtear nan Coillte* (*The Traveller of the Woods*) published in Kingston, Canada between 1840 and 1842, underlining the fact that the Gaelic periodical press was very much a product of the diaspora.⁴ The second half of the century would, in fact, see a periodical press which was more productive overseas than in Scotland with *An Cuairtear Og Gaidhealach* (*The Young Highland Traveller*) published in Antigonish, Nova Scotia in 1851 before being replaced by the bilingual *Casket* in 1852; *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach* (*The Highland Messenger*) published in Tasmania from February to November 1857; *An Gàidheal* (*The Gael*) which ran for seven years, beginning publication in Toronto in 1871 before moving to Glasgow (and subsequently Edinburgh) when its editor, Angus Nicholson, was appointed Dominion Emigration Agent for the North of Scotland by the Canadian government; and *Mac-Talla* (*Echo*) published in Sydney, Cape Breton between 1892 and 1904. In contrast to this notable literary productivity of overseas Gaelic emigrant communities, the only Gaelic periodical to be published in the Scottish Highlands in the nineteenth century was a very brief, one-issue, attempt in Inverness in 1853, although a number of the town's newspapers did carry a Gaelic column, mainly in the later decades of the century. Newspaper columns, particularly those of the *Oban Times* and the Inverness-based *Highlander*, are valuable sources of emigrant literature with a number of songs and poems by emigrant Gaels published in their columns, some of which will be discussed later.

Contributions from overseas to the early Glasgow periodicals are rare, and cannot necessarily always be identified given the propensity of Gaelic writers to use pen-names, or to contribute material to journals anonymously. The earliest identifiable overseas contribution to appear in a Gaelic periodical is a letter from Eoghann Cameron in Cape Breton to *An Teachdaire Gae'lach*, published in 1830. Entitled 'Litir o America' ('A Letter from America'), the writer shares with readers his painful experiences of leaving his Highland homeland, the journey across the Atlantic and his arrival in

Canada to be met by ‘*saoghal farsuing far combair agus sinne gun chumbachd gun chàirdean*’ (‘a wide world facing us, and us without power or friends’). The first point of comfort touched upon in the journey is when the writer and his family reach the place where they would settle and where a prayer is offered and they sing a hymn, marking a turning point for the emigrants. While religion offers the first moment of solace the periodical itself offers the second as we hear of the family’s joyful response to its arrival with almost a third of the letter devoted to detailing this: ‘*Co luath ’s a chualas gur i Ghaellic a bh’ ann, cha robh ann an duine nach robh air a chois gu bhi ’n sàs ann.*’ (‘As soon as it was heard that it contained Gaelic, there was no one that wasn’t on his feet wanting to see it.’) When the writer had finished reading from the *Teachdaire* his father-in-law took out a bottle of whisky – so precious that it was kept under lock and key and drunk only at Hogmanay – and gave everyone half a glass to toast the periodical.⁵ Placed, if not on a par with the spiritual comfort offered by prayer and hymn, the periodical is represented as the secular equivalent, offering linguistic and cultural reassurance.

It is not until 1840, and the publication of Norman MacLeod’s second periodical, *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, that there is evidence of a developing international network of distributors for Gaelic periodicals. By the sixteenth issue, among the forty-eight listed agents for the periodical are the Rev. R. Williamson in Pictou, Nova Scotia and John McNeil, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.⁶ The focus of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* was very much international, having been set up primarily to provide potential emigrants with reliable information in Gaelic about emigrant destinations in the wake of the potato famine of 1836–37.⁷ During its first year of publication almost every issue carried at least one article directed towards this audience. The very first issue carries a *còmhradh* (dialogue) between two characters, one of whom is resigned to emigrating to Canada and explains his reasoning to the other, and also a very positive article about New Zealand in which readers are told: ‘*tha fas agus cinneas fèidh agus mheasan agus luibhean san eilean so na’s laidire ’s na’s reachdmhoire na ann an aon àit eile air a bheil cumtas againn*’ (‘the growth and production of grass and fruit and plants in this island is stronger and more luxuriant than in any other place of which we have heard tell’).⁸

No fewer than ten contributions from Canada appeared in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* during its three-year run, a number of them, like the letters from ‘Gaidheal’ (‘Highlander’) in Pictou, telling potential emigrants about the

country in which they had settled.⁹ It is also in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* that the first contributions from Gaels in Australia and New Zealand appeared in print. All take the form of letters and the first, written in January 1842, was from a Duncan Cameron to ‘MacTalla’, the pen-name of Lachlan MacLean, a native of Coll living in Glasgow. In it Cameron relates how he had left Tobermory some four years previously with one of the ships organised by the government emigration agent, Dr David Boyter.¹⁰ Although Cameron does not name the ship, it seems likely that this would have been the government-subsidised *Brilliant* which left Tobermory in September 1837 with three hundred emigrants on board, arriving in Sydney in January 1838. Among those on board was an eighteen-year-old Duncan Cameron who, in all probability, was the writer of this letter.¹¹ Cameron’s story is very much one of success and thus in line with the aims of the periodical of promoting emigration while providing reliable information. Despite having arrived with only seven pence to his name, within four years of arrival his wages had risen to £140 a year. The letter from the as yet unidentified ‘F. S.’ in Wanganui on New Zealand’s North Island offers a more mixed picture, with the land which emigrants had been promised not materialising, but with a positive outcome nonetheless as the writer establishes himself and turns to building both a house and a boat.¹²

The final article from the Antipodes to appear in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* was a letter from Robert MacDougall (1813–1887). MacDougall is an interesting figure, having left Fortingall in Perthshire for the Huron Tract in Canada in 1836 only to return to Scotland three years later. Upon his return he worked in Glasgow in the office of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* itself and in 1841 published *Ceann-Tuil an Fhìr-Imrich* (*The Emigrant’s Guide*), the first book of its type in Gaelic and drawing on his own Canadian experiences.¹³ During his time in Glasgow MacDougall also published a translation of ten poems by Burns and a number of his own poems in the volume *Tomas Seannsaigh*.¹⁴ In 1841 he emigrated to Australia where he would become a very successful cattle-breeder near Melbourne and where he would continue, initially at least, to write in Gaelic. His published writings in Gaelic from his time in Australia amount to two letters and a poem. His first letter appeared in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in 1843 and the poem and second letter in another Glasgow periodical, *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal*, in 1845. MacDougall sailed with the *Manlius* from Greenock in October 1841, a ship particularly badly affected by fever which killed sixty-three of the three hundred and eight indi-

viduals on board during the voyage and the passengers' twelve-week period of quarantine after arrival in Port Philip.¹⁵ MacDougall's letter alludes to this quarantine when he writes '*bha sinn [. . .] air ar cròdbadh air mir beag fearainn, ri taobh na fairge, gus am fàgadh am fiabhras sinn*' ('we were [. . .] herded on to a small piece of land by the ocean until the fever left us'), although there is no suggestion that he himself was afflicted.¹⁶ Much of the remainder of his letter is taken up with describing Melbourne, with which he is very favourably impressed, and 'Boningong' (Buninyong), where he had settled, some sixty miles from Geelong. The beauty of the place surpasses anywhere he had seen before and would, he declares, require the best of poets to describe it. The account he gives combines his own prose and numerous quotations from eighteenth-century Gaelic verse: from Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's 'Fàilte na Mòr-thir' and 'Smeòrach Chlann Ragh-naill'; and from Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir's 'Coire Cheathaich' and 'Cead Deireannach nam Beann', imbuing the Australian landscape with the qualities of a Highland one.

MacDougall's poetic representation of the landscape, 'An Gáel air Fuadan 'sna Coilltean Fas' ('A Gael Exiled in the Desolate Woods'), was composed during the following year and sent back to Glasgow for publication in *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal*. From the first line, in which MacDougall expresses his keen wish to travel in the desolate woods of his new homeland, it is evident that this poem does not follow the common elegiac mode of Gaelic emigrant verse. Although he laments his distance from his homeland and those he knew, and refers to the pressures of the world in which he lives ('*Nuair bhios dòighean an t-saoghail cur daorsa air m' fhoill*', ('When the ways of the world oppress my mind')), his surroundings are in fact a source of relief rather than part of the problem. In contrast with the Tíre bard, John MacLean, who, over two decades earlier, had lamented his physical and linguistic isolation in the early days of his emigration to Nova Scotia, MacDougall appreciates the remoteness of his own location: '*Far nach bi luchd na pòite le'n còimradh gu'n cheil | (An t-aon nì 'thig 'o 'm bèil) ga mo chòimblach' aig feil- | 'S an aite nach cluinn mi nì truailidh no baobh, | Ach osag o thuath a's i luasgadh nan craobh.*' ('Where there won't be drinkers with their senseless talk | (The only thing that comes from their mouths) meeting me at a market | And in the place I won't hear anything corrupt or foolish | Just the breeze from the north shaking the trees').¹⁷ So too he delights in the fauna of his new home: '*Far am bi 'n Kangaroo criomadh fhlùr feadh nan*

tòm | A's an t-àl og r'a chùl, ruith gu sìrdail neo-thròm; | Far am bi'n Cockatoo ga mo dhùsgadh a' crann; | A's na b-eoin bheaga bhrù-dhearg, le'n ciucharan fann.' ('Where the Kangaroo nibbles flowers among the bushes / And its young behind it, running eagerly, playfully; / Where the Cockatoo from a tree awakens me / And the scarlet robins with their faint lament').¹⁸ MacDougall's second, and final, contribution to the journal appeared in the following issue, a letter in which he gives an account of Christmas day celebrations among the Highlanders centred round a shinty match near Melbourne, emphasising the continuity of traditional pastimes among his countrymen. When words fail him for describing the match he projects the views of others, albeit with tongue in cheek, aiming to impress readers back in Scotland with the way in which Australian Gaels were upholding the reputation of Highlanders:

*Sheas gach Gall agus Eirionnach a thainig a dh' amharc orra 's a shuilean air bolgadh 'us air tionndadh geal 'n ceann [. . .]; a reir coltais bha iad ag amharc air na Gaidheail mar gu'm bitheadh dé air tighinn a dh'ionnsaidh na faiche, 'an riochd dhaoine.*¹⁹

(The eyes of each Lowlander and Irishman who came to watch them was bulging and turning white in their heads [. . .] apparently they were watching the Highlanders as though they were gods who had come to the field in the form of men.)

Despite the large number of Highlanders who would, like MacDougall, settle in Victoria, it was in fact in Tasmania that the only Gaelic periodical known to have been published in the nineteenth-century Antipodes found its way into print. *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach*, described by the *Inverness Advertiser* as 'a novelty in this age of novelties' when it appeared in February 1857, was not the first attempt at a Gaelic periodical in the southern hemisphere.²⁰ A prospectus for *Am Fìor Ghaidheal* (*The True Gael*) appeared in the Melbourne *Banner* in June and July 1854, informing readers that the aims of the projected publication were to provide Gaelic speakers in the Australian colonies with religious and moral instruction, as well as information which would be both useful and entertaining.²¹ The journal was to be launched once five hundred subscribers had been found, a target presumably not reached given that the periodical does not seem ever to have been published.

A prospectus for *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach* appeared a little over two years later outlining similar aims and specifically mentioning an intention to publish literature, including new poetry.²² This prospectus was bilingual compared with the English only one for the abortive earlier attempt at a periodical. The prospectus estimated that there were some twenty thousand Highlanders in Australia and New Zealand and referred to ‘various favourable circumstances’ which had led to the periodical’s location in Tasmania such as its ‘central position in relation to the Australia Colonies’. Although not explicitly stated, one of the other factors, and perhaps the over-riding one, may have been the new periodical’s editor, and perhaps instigator, John Cameron, who was employed by Hobart’s *Daily Advertiser*. It was from the offices of this newspaper that the *Teachdaire* was published, giving Cameron ready access to the infrastructure needed to produce the journal.

John Cameron had been the postmaster at Bonawe, Argyll until his conviction in 1847, at the age of twenty-five, for theft and forgery, for which he was sentenced to fourteen years’ transportation. Transportation records show him arriving in Hobart at the end of November 1850, and receiving a conditional pardon three years later.²³ On his arrival in Hobart, he was assigned to work for the *Guardian* newspaper there and he was subsequently employed by the *Daily Advertiser*.²⁴ Although there is no evidence to suggest that Cameron was involved in contributing to Gaelic periodicals while he lived in Scotland, his name does appear as one of the agents for *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in the early 1840s. His rehabilitation in Australia through his editing work is evident in his election as an Honorary member of Geelong’s Highland Society, *Comunn na Feinne*, in January 1858.²⁵

It is interesting to note that from the outset, among the thirteen agents listed for the Australian *Teachdaire*, there are two in Scotland – one in Inverness and one in Glasgow – reflecting the prospectus’s explicitly stated intention that the periodical be distributed ‘in the Highlands and other parts of the United Kingdom’ and that it function as ‘*slabraidh leis am faod ar luchd-dùtbha an seo a’s ann an Albainn, a bhi an dlu cheangal inntinneil ri cheile ann an caidreamh taitneach agus feumail*’ (‘a chain by which our countrymen here and in Scotland may be intellectually linked in pleasant and useful discourse’). The periodical received a favourable review in the *Inverness Advertiser* although not without comment on the one shilling cost of the eight page periodical, with the Inverness paper cautioning that for a readership ‘in Old Scotland, the gold is not found in the rocks and caves of the earth as it

is by our antipodal brethren'.²⁶ This compared with prices of between 4d and 6d for the Scottish periodicals of the 1840s. Gaelic periodicals throughout the century struggled to attract sufficient subscribers to make the publications financially viable. It is not clear whether the Australian *Teachdaire* faced similar problems to the publisher of its Scottish namesake with *An Teachdaire Gae'lach's* Glasgow publisher reporting that 'the parcels of "Messengers" sent to the Highlands and Islands came back at the end of the year, *after they had been read*, without any accompanying payment'.²⁷ While no reason is given in the Australian journal for it ceasing publication after its tenth issue, the difficulty of attracting subscribers and readers who were dispersed throughout the southern parts of Australia should not be underestimated and indeed, Cardell and Cummin have established that the bankruptcy of the proprietor of the *Daily Advertiser* was what brought the Australian *Teachdaire* to such an abrupt end.²⁸

The very first issue of the Antipodean publication reminds its readers of its Scottish predecessors and casts itself as their heir, anticipating that their distance from the Highlands will serve to increase support for its efforts:

*'Nuair a bha a leithid seo de mbeas air an Teachdaire anns a Ghaeltachd 's an àm a db'fhalbh, shaoileamaid gu'm bu choir am moran tuilleadh a bhi air a nis ann an dùthaich chein Astrailia.*²⁹

(When there was such admiration for the *Teachdaire* in the Highlands in the past, we would expect that there should be even more now in the distant land of Australia.)

The Australian *Teachdaire* included a range of new writing and poetry alongside material republished from the earlier Glasgow journals as well as from other Scottish publications, material which would have allowed the editor some breathing space while he built up a network of contributors. Although the journal does not acknowledge that any of the texts had been published previously, close to half of the content over its ten-month run had in fact been drawn from earlier publications, not taking into account news stories which are clearly translations of reports from the Highland press. In terms of column-space, the quantity of republished material ranges from approximately eight and a half of the twenty-four columns in the first issue to sixteen in the fourth. By the time of the final issue, only five

columns of re-published material are included pointing to an increase in literary productivity in Australia to fill the *Teachdaire's* pages, ironically just as it would come to an end.

Looking at the eighth issue from September 1857, five items had appeared in earlier Gaelic periodicals and reflected the religious leanings of these: two were taken from the seventh issue of *An Teachdaire Gae'lach* in 1829, 'Mu Shonas a Chriosduidh' (About the Happiness of the Christian) and 'Leigheas arson Losgaidh' (Treatment for Burns); two had first appeared in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in 1841, 'Am Ministear Làidir' (The Strong Minister) and 'Innseanaich America' (American Indians); and 'Eachdraidh Spioradail nan Iudhach' ('The Spiritual History of the Jews') had been published in the Established Church's *Fear-Tatbaich nam Beann* in 1848. Also included, but in English, were the *Inverness Advertiser's* 'The Reception of the "Australian Gaelic Messenger" in the Highlands of Scotland', the review from Scotland serving as validation of the Tasmanian publication; and excerpts about the poet Allan MacDougall ('Ailean Dall') from John Mackenzie's *Sàr-Obair nam Bàrd Gaelach* were also reproduced alongside one of his songs. Mackenzie's volume, first published in 1841, and republished nine times by the early twentieth century, was ground-breaking, containing not only a selection of work by what have come to be recognised as some of the most important Gaelic poets, but also short biographies of these poets. This is a volume which has done more than any other nineteenth-century publication to shape the Gaelic literary canon over the decades and we see this process in action here with the Australian periodical mining it for content, as too had the two earlier Canadian periodicals, *Cuairtear na Coillte* and *An Cuairtear Og Gaidhealach*.

It is also interesting to note that 'Am Ministear Làidir', about the Rev. James Robertson of Lochbroom who travelled to London in 1746 to petition on behalf of Jacobite prisoners, had in fact been written by 'Eilthireach' ('An Emigrant'), a Gael living in Pictou, Nova Scotia, highlighting the international travels of a Gaelic text from Canada to Tasmania via Glasgow. Turning to the remaining texts, 'Oran an Eilthirich' ('Song of the Emigrant') by Angus Beaton, was clearly composed either partially, or entirely, after the poet's arrival in Australia as will be discussed shortly; 'Loch Laggain' ('Loch Laggan') is a song which does not appear to have been previously published, although evidence from the text itself suggests that it was most likely composed in Scotland; 'Aran na Beatha' ('The Bread

of Life'), is a review of an English religious text written by a Hobart minister, excerpts of which the periodical hopes to publish in translation; 'Naigheachdan' ('News'), which mainly relates to the Highlands and, was presumably drawn from publications such as the *Inverness Advertiser*.

The song 'Oran an Eilthirich' ('Song of the Emigrant') by Angus Beaton is one of the relatively few songs or poems published in the *Teachdaire* which can be said with certainty to have been composed after leaving Scotland, dealing as it does with the voyage to Australia and the poet's initial impressions of the country.³⁰ This fifteen-verse song is prefaced with the explanation that the poet had left the Highlands in the autumn of 1852. Although neither the ship nor the port of departure is mentioned, the poet would seem to have been fifty-five-year-old Angus Beaton from Dervaig, Mull who was among the two hundred and thirteen Highlanders, mainly from Mull, Iona and Ardnamurchan who, with support from the Highland and Emigration Society sailed from Liverpool in August 1852 on the *Marmion*, arriving in Victoria in early December.³¹

Beaton's poetic account of the voyage documents the emigrants' experiences from their sorrowful departure to their arrival in Portland Bay and their impressions of those they encountered there. The effect of illness on board is noted early on when he comments with bitter irony '*Dh'eirich tinneas 's bochdainn a bha goirt da luchd-deuchainn, | Dol a dh'iarruidh an fhortain taobh toisgeal na greine*'³² ('Sickness and misfortune occurred which was painful for those afflicted / Who were going to seek their fortune on the unlucky side of the sun'). The damage to the ship caused by bad weather is commented upon, '*A siuil ard air an reubadh – a croinn reidh air am bearradh*' ('Her high sails torn – her masts sheared off'), but the ship withstood the storm, '*cha do gheill i na darach*' ('the oak did not yield') and in the tradition of Gaelic seafaring poetry the skills of those who built the ship are praised: '*Rinn na saoir i cho laidir 's nach robb lamb air piob-thaomaidh | Siuil ur oirr 'on tailleur gum charadh gum sgaoileadh*' ('The carpenters made her so strong that there was no need of hands for bailing out / New sails from the tailor not raised or unfurled'). Beaton tells of the emigrants' spirits rising when the new land is sighted, juxtaposed with a reminder of the deaths on the voyage: '*Bha iad toillichte an uair sin gum d'fhuair iad teachd sabhailt, | Seach laidhe 's chuan dol am ploc 's luaidhe 's a mhas aig*' ('They were happy then that they had arrived safely / Instead of lying in the ocean in a sack with lead to weigh it down'). Composed sometime after he had settled in Australia, the

poet accepts that he has sufficient food and clothing, but his isolation from others does not suit him the way it had MacDougall. He refers sadly to there being no one near him, and to having only his dog for company, suggesting that he had become a shepherd. He expresses contempt for the aborigines he encounters: *‘S olc na coimbearsnaich ’th’ agam ’on a thainig mi ’n aite | Daoine dubha ’s coin-fhiadhaich gur e’n gniomb ri meirle’* (‘Bad are the neighbours I have since I came here / Black men and wild dogs who are into thieving’). This composition, with its account of voyage and settlement, stands out as a valuable and balanced depiction in Gaelic of the Australia emigrant experience, unencumbered by excessive *cianalas* (homesickness/nostalgia), and open in its prejudice against the indigenous population.

While the emigrant voyage features occasionally in Gaelic verse from North America, when it does, it is generally in less detail than is found in this song by Angus Beaton, with ten of his fifteen verses detailing the experience, no doubt in part prompted by the particularly painful and drawn-out nature of this journey which would always have been longer than one to Canada, even if all had gone well. This is not the only Gaelic composition from the Antipodes in the middle of the century which focuses on the voyage. So too does a song by John Gillies who left Scotland for New Zealand in late 1857 and which may have been composed during his journey, as the penultimate verse states *‘Tha sinn a’m port Dhunéidin | ’N Otago ann an acarsaid’* (‘We are in in the port of Dunedin / In a harbour in Otago’).³³ Gillies, from Bracadale on Skye, had been first a merchant and, latterly, a publisher of Gaelic books in Glasgow, as well as a Gaelic poet and a translator of sermons.³⁴ He sent this ten-verse song back to the Glasgow-based Gaelic publisher, Niall Campbell, and it appeared in print in pamphlet form as *Litir bho Iain Mac-Gil’-Ios’ á New Zealand (A letter from John Gillies in New Zealand)*. The journey itself is commented upon with the shipboard views contrasted with those he was accustomed to on land: *‘Chan fhaicinn ach na speuran, | Le gealach, grian, is reultan, | A’s tonnan borb a’ beucail, | Air muin a chéile gu faramach.’* (‘I can only see the sky, | With moon, sun and stars | And wild waves roaring | Noisily on top of one another’). What stands out in Gillies’ song is his anger at the causes of emigration, depicting Scotland’s transformation from a nurturing mother to a wicked stepmother under English influence: *‘Bha Alba uair mar mhàthair | ’Bha dìleas, blàth is tairisneach, | ’S cha treigeadh i a b-àlach | Fhad ’s bhiodh fuil bhlàth fo ’h-aisnichean | Ach o’n leag Sasunn sàil oirre | Dh’fhàs i na muime ghràineil | Ag altrum clann nan*

tràillean, / A's sliochd nan armunn sgap i iad. ('Scotland was once like a mother / Who was loyal, warm and compassionate / And she would not forsake her offspring / As long as there would be warm blood under her ribs / But since England has placed a heel on her / She has become a hateful step-mother / Raising children as slaves / She has dispersed the heroes' offspring').³⁵

Gillies is reported as having left Scotland 'in possession of the highest credentials, recommending him to the office of a Gaelic missionary', but no such official position was offered to him.³⁶ Nonetheless, having established himself as a farmer in Hampden, North Otago, he travelled around holding prayer meetings and preaching in Gaelic. At least one further composition from his time in New Zealand survives in the form of *Cumba do Eoghan Mac Coinnich (An Elegy to Ewan Mackenzie)* which, like his voyage poem, was sent back to Glasgow to be printed as a pamphlet, this time to Alexander Sinclair.³⁷ This elegy to an as yet unidentified Highland emigrant, but who Gillies refers to as being related to the Mackenzies of Gairloch, and as being a neighbour of his own both at home and abroad, is traditional in its praise of the qualities of the deceased, with a particular emphasis on Mackenzie's spiritual virtues. Gillies' continued use of Glasgow Gaelic publishing houses reflects the lack of any established Gaelic printer or publisher in New Zealand, but also Gillies' own close ties with the Gaelic publishing scene in Glasgow which afforded him the opportunity to retain cultural links with his homeland.

John Murdoch's radical weekly *Highlander*, which was established in Inverness in 1873 and ran until 1882, had an international network of agents. Of the fifty-nine agents listed by the end of 1873, four were in Australia (two in Melbourne and one in each of Sydney and Ballarat); one in New Zealand (Invercargill); three in Canada (Toronto, Guelph and Glace Bay, Cape Breton); and one in New York.³⁸ The *Highlander* was unique at the time in being an English-language newspaper which carried a regular Gaelic column. This column frequently featured songs and poems from both home and abroad, among them contributions from Farquhar D. MacDonell from Lochalsh who emigrated to New Zealand in 1873 at the age of forty-four, settling in the Hawke's Bay area.³⁹ MacDonell, from Plockton, was listed in the 1861 Census as a shipowner and in that of 1871 as a meal merchant.⁴⁰ He also seems to have acted as an emigration agent judging by a letter from him, published before he emigrated, at the end of a

New Zealand emigration guide from 1872, *Gearr-chummtasan air New Zealand air son feum Luchd-imrich*.⁴¹ MacDonell had already established his reputation as a poet before emigrating, winning second place in the Highland Society of Edinburgh's competition for the Best Gaelic Poem in 1857 and first place in 1859.⁴² He became a regular contributor to the *Highlander* from New Zealand, writing under the pen-names 'Loch Aillse' and 'Aillseach'. Sometimes he sent his own compositions to the newspaper such as 'Luinneag an Eilthirich' ('Song of the Emigrant'), his poetic farewell to Scotland composed shortly before his departure.⁴³ More often, however, it was the verse of others, generally composed in Scotland, which he sent back to the Inverness publication. One of the most interesting songs which he sent to the *Highlander* is 'Am Bothan Dubh' ('The Black Hut') which was published in 1877 and which he attributes to a native of Ardgour, 'Eoghann Cutach' who had arrived in New Zealand fourteen years earlier. This as-yet unidentified Gael had settled in Gwavas, Hawke's Bay, presumably working on the large sheep and cattle run there. The note appended to the poem states that when the song was composed the poet was living alone in a hut in the remote mountains of New Zealand and comments on racial tensions between the settler and Maori populations: '*bha na Maories ri moran marbhadh aig an am*' ('the Maori were involved in much killing at the time'). This serves as the starting point for the song which begins conventionally with its exposition of the mood of the poet:

*Gur trom a ta mi 's mi 'n so 'nam aonar,
Gur cianail tha mi, 's mi 'siubhal combnard,
Am bothan fasail am braigbe 'n aonaich,
'S na Maories laidir 'tigh 'n oirnn le foirneart.*

(Wearied am I here on my own,
I'm lonely crossing a plain
In a desolate hut on the brae of a hill
And the Maori descending upon us forcefully with violence)⁴⁴

The tone of the rest of the poem is not entirely as wearied as the formulaic first two lines would suggest and poet's main focus is, in fact, the wildlife around him, both the herds of wild horses and the wild pigs, demonstrating his knowledge of the latter when he refers to their arrival with Captain

Cook during the previous century, ‘*Cha’n eil ’s an ianlaith aon dath ri iarraidh, / Nach ’eil ri fhiachainn measg mbuc nan or-bheann*’ (‘There’s not a single colour to be found on the birds of the air / That can’t be seen among the pigs of the golden mountains’). The fleeting reference to conflict with the local Maori population is similar to that made by Duncan Cameron in his letter to *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in 1842 in which he describes his work as a shepherd in Australia: ‘*S e cron as mò th’air an àite gu bheil ar beatha an cumart bha na nàistinean fiadhaich. Mhort iad dithis de m’ chòbhairean-sa, agus ceithir no cùig de m’ choimbearsnaich; ach a-nis tha iad an sìth ruinn.*’ (‘The greatest problem in the place is that our lives are in danger from the wild natives. They killed two of my shepherds and four or five of my neighbours but are now at peace with us’).⁴⁵ ‘Am Bothan Dubh’, composed according to MacDonell’s introductory note during the 1860s, coincided with a period of armed conflict over land between the Maori and the government and lies behind the poet’s reference to racial conflict. This land struggle is also referenced in MacDonell’s traditional elegy to Tīree-born Sir Donald McLean (1820–1877) who fulfilled a number of official roles in New Zealand, including that of Minister of Native Affairs in the middle decades of the century. In this elegy, published in the *Inverness Courier* seven months after McLean’s death, the poet’s colonising perspective is evident in his reference to ‘*na treubhan a b’ fhiadhta*’ (‘the wildest tribes’) and his praise of McLean’s handling of negotiations between the Maori and the government.⁴⁶

The bleakest view of the Antipodean emigrant experience is to be found in a four-verse song, whose author is unknown, but which was sent by Donald Beaton, son of Angus Beaton, the author of ‘Oran an Eilthirich’, to the *Highlander* for publication in 1874. Beaton’s letter, in Gaelic, to the newspaper warns against emigration to South Australia where, he informed readers of the *Highlander*, employment prospects were not as good as suggested by emigration agents. The song refers to Australia (or perhaps specifically South Australia, given that is the focus of Beaton’s own complaint) as ‘*duthaich na dosgnaich, an duthaich bhochd*’ (‘deplorable country, wretched country’) as the poet recounts travelling from house to house, carrying his bedding on his back, and seeking work from squatters: ‘*S e na gheibh mi uap do dh’arran / Sconn Damper as an luaithe, / ’S mir do dh’fheoil an t-seann daimh / A bh’ aca treabbadh ’s ris a’ bhualadh*’ (‘And all I get from them in the way of bread / is a slice of soda bread from the ashes / And a bit of meat from the old ox / they had for ploughing and threshing’). The verses reflect Beaton’s

own experiences of seeking employment as described in the accompanying letter and may in fact have been his own composition.

Like Farquhar MacDonell, Beaton became an occasional Gaelic correspondent of the *Highlander*, writing, for instance, in 1874 in support of the newspaper's campaign for Gaelic education in the Highlands in the wake of the 1872 Education Act.⁴⁷ In 1875 the *Highlander* published a song which he had sent entitled 'Failte do 'n Teachdaire' ('Welcome to the Messenger'). Beaton explained that it had been composed by his late father, Angus, in 1857 when he received the Tasmanian *Teachdaire Gaidhealach*, but that it had never been published, and went on to suggest that the words of praise for the Australian journal fit the Inverness publication equally well. This song reflects a trend among Gaelic poets in the nineteenth century for praising their new patrons: Gaelic periodicals and those newspapers which published Gaelic columns.⁴⁸ For the older Beaton receiving this tangible link with his homeland transformed his mood:

*Cha robh leon-dubb no bruaillean
A bha gluasad mo chinnse,
Nach do bhochdraich e combla.
Dh'fhalbh an ceo a bh' air m' inntinn
Dh' fhas mise cho sunndach
'S ged bu Phrionnsa air an righeachd mi [. . .],⁴⁹*

(There was no sadness or melancholy
Which was moving my mind
That it didn't dispel together
The mist that was on my mind left
I became as cheerful
As if I were a Prince of the kingdom [. . .])

This traditional eulogy for the Australian periodical, re-purposed for a Highland publication, speaks to the international nature of the nineteenth-century Gaelic periodical press, to its importance as a stimulus for literary creativity among the Highland diaspora, to its key role in creating literary networks, and its crucial importance as a repository of Gaelic literary output which merits further study. Among those newspapers which merit further study is the *Otago Witness* which published occasional Gaelic songs.⁵⁰

In drawing this preliminary overview of the Gaelic literary output of Gaelic

speakers in Australia and New Zealand to a conclusion, it should not go un-noted that the Canadian weekly newspaper *Mac-Talla* (1892–1904) had a small number of subscribers in New Zealand (for example, ten individuals in 1902) and also published contributions from there over the years.⁵¹ Some of these individuals were Gaelic settlers in Waipu who were descendants of those Highlanders who had left Assynt with the Rev. Norman MacLeod in 1817 and settled at St Ann’s, Cape Breton, leaving there for Australia in the early 1850s and finally settling in New Zealand. One of these Cape Breton settlers was John Munro (Iain Rothach) who contributed regularly to the Canadian newspaper, often providing lengthy descriptions of the flora and fauna of his new homeland. Reflecting on these writings he observed: *‘nuair a bhios mi a’ sgrìobhadh mar so, tha mi mar gu ’m bithinn na b’fhaighe air mo chàirdean, agus ann a bhi ’conaltradh ri’*⁵² (‘when I am writing like this, it’s as though I were closer to my friends and in contact with them’). He voiced here what other emigrant poets and writers must also have felt, underscoring the importance of periodicals over the course of the century both in stimulating Gaelic writing in an emigrant context, and in providing a cultural and linguistic outlet and purpose, for Gaelic poets and writers in their new homelands.

Notes

- 1 Kenneth D. MacDonald, ‘Glasgow and Gaelic Writing’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 57 (1992–93), pp. 395–428; Michel Byrne, “‘Chan e chleachd bhith an cabhsair chlach’: Am Bàrd Gàidhlig ’s am Baile Mòr bhon 17mh Linn chun an 20mh’, in *Glasgow: Baile Mòr nan Gàidheal | City of the Gaels*, ed. by Sheila M. Kidd (Glasgow, 2007), pp. 55–88; Margaret MacDonell, *The Emigrant Experience: Songs of Highland Emigrants in North America* (Toronto, 1982); Robert Dunbar, ‘The Poetry of the Emigrant Generation’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 64 (2008), pp. 22–125; Michael Newton, *Seanchaidh na Coille | The Memory-keeper of the Forest: Anthology of the Scottish-Gaelic literature of Canada* (Sydney N.S., 2015); Michael Newton, *We’re Indians Sure Enough: the legacy of the Scottish Highlanders in the United States* (Auburn, 2001).
- 2 See the five-part article by Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cummin, ‘Gaelic Voices from Australia’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 19 (1999) through to *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 30 (2016); Ruth Lee Martin, ‘Paradise Imagined: Songs of Scots Gaelic migrants in Australia, 1850–1940’, *Humanities Research* 19:3 (2013), pp. 27–44; Niall Ó Ciosáin, ‘Old Languages in a new country: publishing and reading in the Celtic languages in nineteenth-century Australia’, *Australasian Journal of Irish Studies*, 11 (2011), pp. 58–72.

- 3 The only Gaelic text which I have found, thus far, published in either Australia or New Zealand in the nineteenth-century which did not appear in a monthly periodical or newspaper is the anonymous pamphlet *Litir Impidh agus Rabbaidh a chum Luchd-eisdeachd an t-Soisgeul an canain an Sinnsear ann an coimhthional nan Gaidheal a'm Melbourne* (A letter of exhortation and warning to listeners of the gospel in the language of our ancestors in the Gaelic congregation in Melbourne). This was published in Melbourne by a printer named Ewan MacColl. While this pamphlet has no year of publication it seems likely to date to the mid-1850s as it relates to raising funds to build a Gaelic church and manse in Melbourne, fundraising which began in 1854.
- 4 Sheila M. Kidd, 'Early Gaelic periodicals: knowledge transfer and impact', in *Rannsa-chadhb na Gàidhlig 6*, ed. by C. Ó Baoill and N. McGuire (Aberdeen, 2013), pp. 177–206. The initial English title of this Kingston publication seems to have been *The Ranger of the Woods*.
- 5 *An Teachdaire Gae'lach*, 18 1830, pp. 123–26.
- 6 *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, 16 1841, p. 120.
- 7 Sheila M. Kidd, 'Caraid nan Gaidheal and "Friend of Emigration": Gaelic Emigration Literature of the 1840s', *Scottish Historical Review*, 81:1 (2002), pp. 52–69.
- 8 For a discussion of this *còmbradb*, see Sheila M. Kidd (ed), *Còmbraidhean nan Cnoc: the nineteenth-century Gaelic prose dialogue* (Glasgow, 2016), pp. 113–14 and pp. 139–40.
- 9 Gaidheal, 'America mu Thuath', *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, 15 1841, pp. 75–78.
- 10 'Litir bho Dhonncha Cameron, ann a New South Wales, gu Mactalla, an Glaschu', *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, 23 1842, pp. 320–21. Dr David Boyter was the government emigration agent for Australia.
- 11 New South Wales Government, State Records, indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?Page=NRS5313/4-4780/Brilliant-24 Jan1838/4-478000021.jpg&No=2
- 12 F. S. 'Litir', *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, November 1842, pp. 245–47.
- 13 Robert McDougall, *Ceann-lùil an Fhìr-Imrich do dh'America Mu-Thuath* (Glasgow, 1841). For an English translation of this book see Elizabeth Thompson (ed.), *The Emigrant's Guide to North America* (Toronto, 1998).
- 14 Rob Mac-Dhughail, *Tomas Seannsair* (Glascho, 1840).
- 15 *Inverness Courier*, 7 December 1842, p. 4.
- 16 *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, 40 1843, pp. 113–17 (113).
- 17 For MacLean's song, 'Òran do dh'Ameireaga' ('A Song to America') see *The Wiles of the World. Caran an t-Saoghail*, ed. by Donald E. Meek (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 64–73.
- 18 *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal*, 7 1845, pp. 55–56 (55).
- 19 Rob Mac-Dhughail, 'Litir do'n Teachdaire a Australia', *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal*, 8 1845, pp. 57–58 (58).
- 20 Quoted in *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach*, 8 1857, p. 1.
- 21 *The Banner*, 20 June 1854, p. 13.
- 22 See for example, *The Tasmanian Daily News*, 11 October 1856, p. 1.
- 23 www.linc.tas.gov.au: CON33-1-99; CON14/1/41.
- 24 www.inverarayjail.co.uk/our-history/prisoner-records/
- 25 *The Cornwall Chronicle*, 30 January 1858, p. 2.
- 26 *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach* 8 1857, p. 1.
- 27 Nigel MacNeill, *The Literature of the Highlanders* (Inverness, 1892), p. 334.
- 28 Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cummin, 'Gaelic Voices from Australia: Part V Gaels and their Language', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 30 (2016), pp. 1–53 (19).

- 29 *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach*, 1 1857, p. 1.
- 30 *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach*, 8 1857, pp. 4–5.
- 31 www.angelfire.com/ns/bkeddy/HIES/marmion.html
- 32 *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach*, 8 1857, 4–5.
- 33 *Litir bho Iain Mac-Gil'-Ios' à New Zealand* (Glasgow, [1858]), p. 3. A shorter version of the song, which omitted two of the verses, was sent to the *Oban Times* fifteen years after the poet's death by his brother, Roderick: 'A Gaelic Poet and Translator', *Oban Times*, 25 August 1888, p. 3.
- 34 Donald E. Meek, 'Gaelic Printing and Publishing', in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 3: Ambition and Industry, 1800–80*, ed. by Bill Bell (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 109. The poems which he published under his own imprint while in Glasgow include: *Fianuis a' Ghaeil an aghaidh na Ceilg agus an Fhoirneirt a chreach na Gaeil bhochda* (Glasgow, 1851); *Oran an aghaidh misg mi-dhiadhbair eachd agus encoir dhaoine . . .* (Glasgow 1853); *Cumba no Marbh-Rann do Iain Moristan* (Glasgow, 1854); *Oran air gaisgeadh nan Gaidheal aig Alma* (Glasgow, 1855); *Caoidh airson cor na Gaidhealtachd agus fògradh nan Gaidheal* (Glasgow, n.d.).
- 35 *Litir bho Iain Mac-Gil'-Ios'*, p. 2.
- 36 'In Memoriam', *Otago Daily Times*, 15 October 1873, p. 2.
- 37 Iain Mac-Gill'Ios', *Cumba do Eoghan Mac Coinnich a chaochail an Otago, New Zealand* (Glasgow, 1867).
- 38 *Highlander*, 29 November 1873, p. 16.
- 39 National Archives, Wellington, familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FSBY-CP5 F. D. McDonnell, 26 Sep 1873; Douglas, Ship; Arrival Port, Wellington.
- 40 Census 1861 074/00 001/00 008; Census 1871 074/00 001/00 008.
- 41 P. Barclay, *Gearr-chunntasan air New Zealand air son feum Luchd-imrich* (Dunéideann, 1872), p. 30. The Rev. Peter Barclay had been a minister in Napier in the 1860s. The work states that this is a translation, but not who the translator was.
- 42 *Inverness Courier*, 6 August 1857, p. 7; *Inverness Courier*, 20 October 1859, p. 5. See also, Keith N. MacDonald, *MacDonald Bards from Mediaeval Times* (Edinburgh, 1900), pp. 66–68.
- 43 *Highlander*, 11 October 1873, p. 3.
- 44 Aillseach, 'Am Bothan Dubh', *Highlander*, 3 November 1877, p. 3.
- 45 'Litir bho Dhonncha Cameron', p. 321.
- 46 'Marbhrann do Shir Domhnall Mac'Illeathain', *Inverness Courier*, 16 August 1877, p. 5.
- 47 'A' Ghaidhlig 's na Sgoilean', *Highlander*, 5 September 1874, p. 3.
- 48 Kidd, 'Early Gaelic periodicals', pp. 177–206; Robert Dunbar, 'Gaelic periodicals and the maintenance and creation of networks: Evidence from the Eastern Canadian Gàidhealtachd', forthcoming in *Gaelic Networks* ed. by Michel Byrne and Sheila M. Kidd.
- 49 'Fàilte do 'n Teachdaire', *Highlander*, 1 May 1875, p. 3.
- 50 'An Gaidheal ra dhuthaich 's ra dhaoine' by John Campbell of Ledaig was published in the *Otago Witness*'s 'Select Poetry' column, 6 May 1876, p. 19; Mary MacPherson's (Màiri Mhòr nan Òran) 'Brosnachadh nan Gaidheal 's binn air an brathadairean', appeared in the same column on 16 December 1876, p. 19.
- 51 For the collected Gaelic writings of John Munro, the most prolific New Zealand contributor to *Mac-Talla*, see Bev. Brett and John Alick MacPherson (eds), *Letters to Mac-Talla from John Munro: A Cape Breton Gael in New Zealand 1894–1902* (Baddeck, 2016).
- 52 Ian Rothach, 'Litir a New Zealand', *Mac-Talla*, 15 October 1897, p. 1.

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