TORIES IN KILTS
EYE WITNESSES OF THE CLEARANCES
KEN CURRIE
THE GAL-GAEL PEOPLES OF SCOTLAND

POETRY • MUSIC • FICTION • REVIEWS

THE MAGAZINE FOR SCOTTISH AND INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE, ARTS AND AFFAIRS
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Front Cover:
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Inside Front Cover:
Sacred Peace Pipe Carrier Fulian Stone Eagle
Henry (pic: Murdo Macleod)

Inside Back Cover:
Alastair McIntosh and Stone Eagle Henry at site of proposed superquarry on Harris (pic: Murdo Macleod)

Inside Back Cover:
Jimmy Sweeney, Pollock (pic: Drew Farrell)

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THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL
The Gal-Gael
Peoples of Scotland

Alastair McIntosh

Written at the request of and dedicated to Tawny, Colin and Gehen MacLeod and other powerful gentle warriors at the Pollok Free State M77 Motorway Protest in Glasgow, whose endeavours for renewal are both ecological and cultural.

We, the Gal-Gael, being a loose association of some native peoples of Scotland, extend our hand to all other indigenous peoples in the world. By invitation of First Nation friends in North America we ask to address you with these words.

(I) The Shoaling
Dear fellow creatures, sisters, brothers, children:
for some years now we have been listening
Awakening to hear you speak
in ocean swell across the great Atlantic
in musical rhythms danced from brightest Africa's savannah
in wind's feathered mantras fluttering out from prayer flags
of the high Himalaya
in ancient Aboriginal songlines
waulking even through Precambrian bedrock folds1
of overworld high roads
underworld low roads2
North South East
West of our own recovering discovering shamanic tradition
By all such ways and more
dear long-lost much-abus'ed friends
we have heard the speaking of your drums
been touch'ed
late if not last
by open waiting of your hearts
And ask you to accept us now
a native peoples
the 'Gal-Gael'3
of Scotland, Alba,
these Northern tracts of Albion
by apple fragrant Avalon
When sun's white light streams in through raindrop lens
and rainbows arch the covenant of hope4
all colours make all peoples from one source
And so it is we here
and more besides
have wrestled long and hard with what it means
to be a Scottish native peoples
of diversity
What does it mean
to be the black among us like the white
the Pole, Italian, Russian and Pakistani
the Tamil, Sinhalese the Japanese and Chinese
English just as Scot or Welsh, Flemish German
Moslem Jew pagan
Irish - Protestant and Catholic?
What does it mean for us a rainbow spectrum
to be a Peoples of this place?
Fully indigenous. Fully belonging.
By salmon's course
we have arrived
long shoaling at the estuary, waiting, waiting, waiting
but Spate now running So we leap ...
Protesting motorways in Glasgow

1 Woven cloth (tweed) was traditionally softened by "waulking," i.e. thick folds along the length being communally and rhythmically pounded to the accompaniment of waulking songs. Margaret Fay Shaw (Folk Songs and Folklore of South Uist, Aberdeen Uni. Press, 3rd Edn., 1986, p. 7) remarks: "Those were the days when a wearer could regard his homespun from the Hebrides with the thought of the songs and gaiety that went into the making of it."
2 In the "Loch Lomond" song, the lover to be executed expects to reach Scotland first because, after death, the soul was believed rapidly to travel home under the surface of the Earth - the "low road."
3 Normally spelt "Gall" in English, but "Gal" is how it has been carved in wood and stone at Pollok which, being a "free state," is permitted a measure of distinctive anarchy.
4 Here a social connotation, but cf. Genesis 9:9-17 where the rainbow signifies ecological covenant.
Refuting superquarry mountain destruction 
Bride’s isle the He-brides1
Fighting to heat the dampened love-warm
of those of us in urban native reservation
(wher TV up a tower block offers nature’s
one fifth of Scotland’s people live in poverty)
And “resetting seeds of Eden”3

one foot venturing into Eden4
with Muir and Burns, MacDiarmid, White
and mostly unnamed women’s song5
pressing down “wet desert” sod to replant
native trees6

in Border dale and Highland strath
and on the blighted bing
Struggling to regain
a music, dance and language
once usurped from forebears’ cradling
ushered to break the spirit
and even God and gods and saints of old
and scar the very strata deep
with alcohol soaked nicotine smoked Prozac
choked
dysfunctionality
Lateral violence of unresolv’ed angst7
unable to engage–
with power from above
so sideways striking to and from within and
all around
... hurting ... hurting ... hurting ...
with intergenerational poverty knocking on
from then to now
people disempowered in rent-racked famine
days

Half a million Highland folk ...
(Lowlanders before like English further back in
time)
... Cleared ... from kindly providential
clachan

... Cleared ... to fact’ory or to emigrant ship
... dumped ... Aotearoa ... North America8
... recruited ... skirling hireling regiments of
“Queen’s Own Highlanders”9
Empire stitched from butcher’s wounds
opp’ressed turned oppressor sprung from
opp’ressed’ pain
both sides the Atlantic surging with emotion
Intergenerational Transatlantic Cultural
Trauma

a three-way brokenness
native peoples our side, the Ossianic
Western edge
native peoples their side, the Eastern oceanic
seaboard
and Everywhere that breaking dominant
disembodied culture
that is in part
us too

Can you forgive us?
Red woman, man, child, creature
red earth
Can we together mend these bygone
ongoing murders
of murdered souls murdering bodies filled
with soul
cultural genocide Roman Norman Modern
Empire
corporate limited liability limited
responsibility
IMF, GATT-World Trade Organisation,
World Bank
triumvirate idols Mammon Moloch Money10
loansharks surfing water gardens of the poor
thrasing around in usurious name of pax
prosperity

1. The name, “Hebrides,” probably results from scribal error. The earliest reference was to “Ebudae.” However, the sense of inferring “Bride’s Isles” (i.e. Brigh, Bride, Brides, Brigt) is too pleasing to reject in a literary work. As note about Kilbride implies, it is eminently appropriate.
2. On the relation between ecology and Scotland’s urban poor, see MS human ecology dissertation work of Tara O’Leary, Na e fu r th e Like s O ’ Us: Poverty, Agenda 21 and Scotland’s Non-Governmental Organisations, at press, Scottish Affairs, summer 1996.
4. Edwin Muir, One Foot in Eden.
6. Frank Fraser-Darling, author of the famous study in human ecology, West Highland Survey.
7. Jane Middleton-Moo, American therapist, whose talk at the International Transpersonal Association conference in Killarney, 1994, inspired my thinking about the need for cultural psychotherapies – a notion I now see that Paulo Freire was also effectively aware of.
9. Lewis poet Mary Montgomery – poem by this name.
10. Moloch was an Old Testament god into whose fire filled stone arms the children were sacrificed to secure present prosperity. American theologian Walter Wink advocates new ways of naming, unmasking and engaging the powers in order to transform and redeem power. In this sense Moloch can be seen to have many contemporary incarnations, not least nuclear weapons.

Cencrastus 7
... Trashing all ... All ... but that Invincible prophetic Remnant of humanity that hazel nut-like flotsam coasting oceans of the heart in Exodus those holograms of wisdom dropped by tree of life in sacred trout filled limpid pool swept down of old on mighty streams of righteousness but cast up fragile yet relentlessly on shore of modern times there to wait reminding us, reminding us, reminding us ... re-member ... re-vision ... re-claim ... and with a raindrop soft pre-emptive start reminding too that "only forgiveness ... breaks the law of karma"5

(II) Invocation
Ohhh ... friends we call across the seas to you from echo chamber of the soul we call now stirred by rhythm that you drum We call upon the triple billion year old songlines of world's oldest rock "I lift a stone; it is the meaning of life I clasp" - says the bard MacDiarmid6 So let us honour stone. Let us call afresh the foundational litany: The Lewsian Gneiss ... ... Drum Alba\'n\'s kelson of the Baltic to Canadian Shield7

The superquarry threatened South Harris igneous complex (surveyed by supine Roinneabhal beholding all Scarista\'s ancient parish of Kilbride8 announciating Brigh, Bride, Brigit, womanhood of God9 from Barra and the South to Clisham and beyond ... the Holy He-brides these scattered jewels from God\'s eighth day of leg\'dary last Creation act) 10 Ohhh ... the lithogenic litany ... "turn but a stone an angel stirs"11 The Cairngorm pegmatites and sparkling Aberdeenshire granite The Old Red Sandstone The Durness limestone sequences and Bathgate\'s forest Carboniferous The Tertiary radiating basalt dykes from great volcanoes Mull and Raasay The Sgurr of Eigg and Alisa Craig (where seventh century Irish shaman Sweeney roasted)12 The Seat of Arthur (watching over Calton faerie hill13 where pending Parliament awaits return of Stone of Destiny) The Calanais standing stones and Ring of Brora The high crosses of Iona pulsing Ireland Ireland Southern Hebridean Ireland The twin menhirs of Muirkirk

1 Eg. Isaiah 11:21-22; 1 Kings 19. In the Old Testament the "Remnant" are the few remaining people of God. A role of prophets - visionaries who "speak truth to power" especially on issues of social and ecological justice - was to "gather" the Remnant to restore society. Shamanic understanding opens a whole new realm of revealed biblical insight. The shamanic nature of this prophetic role is evident, prophets and shamans alike being personalities who functioned on the outermost circle of sacred space, where they return, to try and heal its ills. In so doing they often had special relationships in the natural world. Moses, for instance speaks to God in a Bush; each of the four apostles is totemically represented, John's being the eagle; Elijah was fed by ravens (1 Kings 17:4-6) and used his mantle for changing the state of reality (1 Kings 19:13; 2 Kings 2:7-15); Daniel had command over lions in the den; and Elisha was aided by two she-bears when the double dose of power he inherited through his master, Elijah's mantle went to his head. His emergence truly resulted in forty-two children's being torn apart by the bear (2 Kings 2:23-24). Moses in Numbers 11 leads his people away from the treasure houses of Egypt towards an ecologically sound land of milk and honey, declaring as he does so, "would God that all the Lord\'s people were prophets" (11:29). In the spirit of "contextual theology" I have written Numbers 11 as a metaphor for the work of anti-military/protest actions, likening them to a prophetic Remnant living off manna, speaking to the ills of our times, and holding out an alternative wholesome ecological vision ("MackMoses Motorway" in Last Godling, 97, Oystrey, 1996, 18-20). In ecology, the concept of the remnant is similarly used for those remaining few areas of native flora - remnant pinewoods, etc. - which if saved will provide seedstock of local provenance to restore ecosystems.

2 In Celtic folklore, hazel nuts contained the knowledge of poetry and art. Eaten by the salmon (or "trout") on falling into sacred wells or streams they caused the red spots on the fish's belly and conveyed wisdom to whoever first tasted juice from its cooked flesh - hence the "salmon of wisdom" and my reference to "by salmon's course." (I refer: F. Marian McNeill, The Silver Bough, Canongate, Edinburgh, 1989, 74-75; W. B. Yeats, The Song of Wandering Aengus, (sing by Donovan).

3 Amos 5:21-27.

4 While writing this, inspiration was fuelled by finding a perfectly preserved small half hazel nut shell. It lay in mud, packed hard. Inside with peat, amongst ancient forest detritus washed out of a sea-ended peat bank at a remote location on Great Bernera, Isle of Lewis. I was there with anthropologist Jim Crawford and we were walking to see a lobster pond wall he had rebuilt and for me to read him a draft of this work. Such ancient forest detritus usually radio-carbon dates at 4,000 to 6,000 years old.

5 Raimon Panikkar, Nine Sutra on Peace, Interculture, XXIV:1, Montreal, 1991, 49-56. This remarkable paper by a remarkable Hindu-Catholic cross-cultural scholar also points to rhythm as being central to Being, and therefore to peace-making.

6 On a Raised Beach - Scotland's finest work of mystical geology.

7 (On a Raised Beach - Scotland's finest work of mystical geology.)

8 General name going back to ancient times for "the spine of Britain" Highland massif.

9 Jim Crawford (note) has recently discovered fossilised grave slabs at Scarista including one of the Iona School. He believes part of the original St Bride's Church foundation is still apparent, most of it having disappeared when the pre-Reformation church was pulled down to build what is now the Church of Scotland building. He informs me that kilbride (Clic) Bride (the cell/church or parish) of St Bride was an old name for Harris, marked on a map as late as 1750. The pre-Reformation parish of kilbride extended from Harris down to Barra. Christianised as St Bride or Brigh, Brigh originally represented the Celtic Goddess. Irish Irish tracts associate her veneration not just with the cow and milk (thus with shining transhumanism), but also with the long-extinct bear, thus suggesting links going back to early human settlement. The Irish name MacMahon and the Scots Matheson have the bear as their totem. Use was made of this to draw on strength of gentleness at Pollok Free State.

10 Song of Songs, the femininity of Sophia (Wisdom), identified with the Holy Spirit in Proverbs 8:4, and reference to Creation pouring out of the womb of God in Job 38:9,29.

11 Rev. Allan MacLean, Herefordshire Alls, Moray Press, Edinburgh, 1937, 12-13: "The world was finished and the Good One was mighty tired and took a rest and, while He was resting, He thought "Well, I have left my earth-children see the form of my mind, in rock and mountain and tree and wing and flower. And I have shown them the likeness of my mind, for I have made them like my own, I have made them happy. But, all say the Good One to Himself, "I have not shown them the beauty of my mind." So the next day, and that was the eighth day, He takes up handful of jewels and opens a window in the sky and throws them down into the sea. And those jewels are the Hebrews. I had the story of it from my father's father, he went on. 'An extra fine man, and terrible strong for the truth.' - "John of the Castle" of Mull.

12 George MacLeod, Iona Community.

Th e ca irns to poets and to the brave land raiders
with cosmogenic tanka’s spiral winkle shell
ossed to and fro, round and round, inwards
outwards
dark moon full moon vortexing on today’s high
tide at noon
Ohhh ... the rocks the rocks the rocks
we call on you ...
Rise up from sleep sunk strata beds!
Giant women, wizened men, totemic creatures
once laid down to be our hills
Wake up! Wake up! Wake up and waulk this
Earth in us!
... bring back the land within the people’s care
... bring back the care to touch from hand to
land

We have united, men of gentleness
straining back temptation just to be like them
and bomb and brieve and blight
Turning instead the heartwood of their minds
by climbing threatened tree
or gently blocking course of Trident submarine
(six-hundred two-score-ten Hiroshimas each one)

Aye ... Aye and three times Aye

(III) Re-membering

Aye and so we have united as strong women
resisting landlord’s factor
non-lethal direct action Crofter’s War, Timex
strike

We have united, men of gentleness
straining back temptation just to be like them
and bomb and brieve and blight
Turning instead the heartwood of their minds
by climbing threatened tree
or gently blocking course of Trident submarine
(six-hundred two-score-ten Hiroshimas each one)

Aye ... Aye and three times Aye

one) (resanctifying desecrated open cast fields
ploughed of coal)

The cairns to poets and to the brave land raiders
The idle pebbles tossed

Orthodox Catholic Councils. Traditionally this was
St. Bridie’s day, 1st February, each spring to restore life to
the world. An Irish tune, “Her Mantle so Green” captures
the beauty of this spirit. Burns uses the mantle as
an image for consciousness change in The Vision.

As the vision drew to a close, the woman saw the
forementioned mantle gradually receding from her in its flight,
and increasing in size so as to exceed the width of the plains,
and to envelop the mountains and forests” (extract in McNeill (ed.), 19, op. cit. note 33, transcribing Adamman 3:1)

The gender construction of these Christian accounts is interesting. Woman is no longer Goddess, but nun/nunomial or mother to God incarnate or to the carrier of a male-gendered God’s message. For those of us to whom this is a problem when taken out of the context of the totality of womanhood, such construction requires attention if we still want to draw on the best from ancient traditions in shaping spiritual understandings for today. Such work is being undertaken by some feminist Celtic theologians and hagographers (see especially Condon, M., The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland, HarperSanFrancisco, 1989).

For a summary of Scottish and some Irish history on this crucial period and its bardic tradition, see the Introduction to O’Cathain, P., The Story of Ireland, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 1967.

Alastair Maclean (op. cit. note 143-143) describes how at night in the isles the fire would be smooched with three leaves in the name of the Holy Trinity and to the name, “The Sacred Three, My fortress be, Encircling me. Come and be round, My heart, my home ... Through midnight, To light’s release.”

1 As a result of Ian Ramsay’s negotiations with the Coal Board. Hopefully a wood is to be planted around them to make a special site. Each boulder stands some 12 feet high and would otherwise have been blasted and bulldozed as part of site landscaping.

2 The wrinkle is associated with Brigh (O’Cathain, p. xi, see note). In Tibetan Buddhist tankas (religious art) and in Hindu depictions of Krishna, the conch shell symbolises the call to spiritual awakening. Spirals symbolise life.

3 A Lewis legend has it that the mountains were once giant women who lay down to sleep.

4 Waulking is the process of softening cloth by rhythmic folding and beating by a team of women. A host of “waulking songs” accompany this work. See Carmichael (note), 443-470. Carmichael’s material from the second half of the 19th Century is also relevant to many other parts of this text, e.g. feerie lore.

5 The Irish St. Bridie is said to have established her convent at Killare (Cill-Dara/Doire – the church of the oak). The Scots equivalent was St. Bride of the Isles or Brigh-nam-Brat, Bride of the Mantles, or Plaid. Traditionally this was woven by bride herself on Iona. There she lived (Flora MacLeod’s perhaps inspired fiction suggesting that she learned from drums), until she was taken up in a dark blue mantle (the colour of her own eyes) by two angels and transported to Belfast to be foster-mother to the newborn Jesus.” – F. Marian McNeill (ed.), An Iona Anthology, Iona Community, 1990, 63-72; Alexander Carmichael, Carmnach Gadelic, Homo in Collections, Port, Edinburgh, 1995, 1977, 1997, 336-344.

6 The Silver Bough (Celtic equivalent of the Golden Bough) is the bough of apple blossom gifted by the fairies as passport into the musical realms. The band’s bough with nine bells symbolised such connection – F. Marian McNeill op. cit. note, 105-106; W. Evans Winsten, The Fairy Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, 1977 (1911), 336-344.

7 Burns dubbed the mercantile MPs who sold out Scotland’s parliament in 1707, “Sir (such) a parcel of rogues in a nation!”


9 Alastair Maclean (op. cit. note, 143-143) describes how at night in the isles the fire would be smooched with three leaves in the name of the Holy Trinity and to the name, “The Sacred Three, My fortress be, Encircling me. Come and be round, My heart, my home ... Through midnight, To light’s release.”

10 Alistair Maclean (op. cit. note 143-143) describes how at night in the isles the fire would be smooched with three leaves in the name of the Holy Trinity and to the name, “The Sacred Three, My fortress be, Encircling me. Come and be round, My heart, my home ... Through midnight, To light’s release.”
Aye ... we now bypass you 664, 1609, 17471
We rise now up on eagle wings
above that colonisation of our lands and minds
... as fire in head renews the sacred salmon's

sap2

we watch it run ... a bawling silver stream
anointing wisdom's ninth Proverbial dwelling
place the heart
We hear with inner ear ancestral chorus, look, and see,

And Are Again O Shining Countenance!
We are the Tuatha de Danann3
emerged by standing stone from Sithean, faerie
hill emerged to Be again Free again the mother
Godess Danann's people
... Holy ... Holy ... Holy ...
No exiled "metaphor for the imagination" any
more4
the tree ringed mushroom fringed hollow
knowe of light5
No fortress mound to house nature's child
unfree in wider desecrated world to be true

1 Lynch (op. cit. note 15, 31-36) suggests that too much has been made of the 664 Synod of Whitby's merging of the Celtic Church of Columba with that of Rome. However, the psychological impact of a change of calendar (concerning the date of Easter) is perhaps underestimated by the modern mind. My friend Fr. Dara Molloy of the Aran Islands, Co. Galway, once reminded me of a passage in G. R. Collins's The Calendar and the Church. See, Redisposing the Celtic Church. The Ringing, Aran Isles, 1896, 5-13, where he notes, "The Roman model of Church is hierarchical, patriarchal and clerical. At all levels of Church life the priest, bishop or Pope is in charge. The Celtic model of Church is communitarian, inclusive, and locally controlled. In this model, the people are the Church, and look after itself while serving on the walls of the priest, bishop and Pope."  

2 You are too splendid but malformed book, The Celtic Twilight ... "I went out to the hazel wood, because a fire was in my head ... I dropped the berry in a stream, and caught a little silver trout." This has got to be our finest contemporary Celtic shamanic song. Fire in the head is a shamanic experience widespread in the world, the Shaman, meaning "to feast." The dwelling place of wisdom, according to some interpretations of Proverbs 9:1, is the heart.  

3 According to the Irish Book of Invasions, the Danann were driven underground by the invading Milesians some 4,000 years ago. Many legends say they became the 664, the people of peace, the faeries, living in the Sithean or faerie mounds. When I asked Mike Coleran of Bantry "who are the faeries?" he replied that we are. The old nature conscious-ness is coming alive in us now. Our Millennial ways have damaged the earth to such an extent that we are learning again to listen to the sounds from inside the mill. One of my 1994-95 MSc students, Patrick Lavoliette, has undertaken research with me and done his human ecology dissertation into Scottish faeite hills as reserves of biodiversity. The folklore and labors surrounding wooded ones helps maintain habitat remnants not unlike sacred groves elsewhere in the world. We hope to publish this in ECO - journal of the British Association for Nature Conservation.  

4 John Macinnes, School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University, St. Bridie's Day lecture, 1-2-96. John describe how a Uisg man would say to him, "my mind was away in the Hill," the realm of the spirits being an imaginary ('real')/imaginary' realm. Another expression is to be "away with the faeries" (of Synge, J.M. The Aran Islands, p. 284 of 1902 Dent edition of his Plays, Poems & Prose). To the modern "Gal", metaphor is often little understood and the imagination often dismissed as unreal. The converse is commonly true of the "Gael." Imagined metaphysical reality is the foundation of reality in mythopoetic societies. Future dignified human survival will depend upon choosing understandings of reality that best accord with deep truth. Increasingly I believe this to be musical, poetic, and that we must rethink Plato's elevation of the rational and denigration of rhetoric. The word, poetic, derives from the Greek poiesis and means "the making." Mythopoesis is the view that poets form the ultimate basis of reality, usually expressed in story, legend. The "West" needs a new mythopoesis to live sustainable. In the past such structures this and held political power exerted not least of all through language. It is pleasing that when the subsequent Constitutional Convention launched their parliamentary proposals in November 1995 the hands were present, political speeches being interspersed with harp music, folk songs and Sheebus -- a troop of women drummers. The significance of this has not escaped some of the Convention's senior organisers.  

5 After completing drafts of this text I was additionally inspired by John Macinnes's lecture on Brigh and his work in preparing to travel to the Aran Islands and to discover The fes-tival of Brigh: Celtic Goddess & Holy Woman, (DBA Publishing, Co. Dublin, 1995) by Professor Seamas O 'Cathain, dean of Celtic Studies at University College, Dublin. O' Cathain's work on the Origin of the British (including an interesting German) folklore material to propose links between Brigh and the ancient Goddess of the Caledonian woods. His work (with my section IV) is a remarkable conclusion he also presents evidence to suggest that the colouring of Brigh's feast day (1st February) into "speckled" and "white" pertains to ancient shamanic use of the fly agaric mushroom (Amanita muscaria). This grows in association with birch or pine. "Punk" from the birch bracket fungus makes tinder, thus creating fire of both wood and bark, by metaphor, of the spirit. O'Cathain refers to the "fitting and wonderful harmony" of this with aspects of the festival of Brigh, noting that, "Wasson describes this combination of birch, punk and fly-agaric as 'nature's triangle', fly-agaric holding 'the place of honour in this Trinity' (p. 158). He cites the noted ethnobotanist, Wasson, as saying, "I suggest that the 'toadstool' was the fly-agaric of the Celtic world; that the toadstool in its shamanic role had adorned such awe and fear and adoration that it came under a powerful label (p. 159)." O'Cathain's scholarly efforts are partly linked to Wasson's view that the fly-agaric's cap suggested an udder to the Rigveda poets, to whom it was probably the sacred soma. Soma has links with the Hindu fire god Agni and, possibly in the Celtic counterpart, with Aed mac Brecc -- the "flying master-pianist" of Sláboi (Lag in Co. Donegal). And means "the," and he is linked to Brigh's feastday. Brigh's relevance to the udder or breast is that she was also goddess of pastures and milk, the white cow being especially sacred to her (cf. Hinduism's sacred cow, some species of the mushroom psilocybe grow in cow dung).  

6 O' Cathain concludes on a link with St Columba of Iona. Noting that fly-agaric is a powerful disinfectant to counteract the impact of fly agaric, he says, "We may well wonder whether some such consideration lies behind Aed mac Brecc's chaffing of Colm Cille (Columbia) about ... the adulteration of his daily sustenance with watered down milk (p. 161)." The milk was secretly added by the saint's cook to improve his physical condition. The implication of O' Cathain's speculation might be considered unthinkably had it derived from a local authority in the fields.  

Surprisingly, O' Cathain does not discuss the "liberty cap" or "magical mushroom," psilocybe semilanceata. These grow in profusion in the British Isles from September to November, favouring unimproved pasture. I have noticed particular association with eyewitness - in visual terms a fire-fest but ever there was one. Some 30-60 such mushrooms, fresh or dried, are said to induce powerful experiences in nature that can be terrifying. This frequency includes includes seeing the light," the fire of God, and developing totemic relationship with spirit animals etc... The beautiful little mushroom, usually about 1 cm across, assumes a perfect breast shape complete with an often pronounced nipple. I have interviewed occasional eco-activists who consider that the divine consciousness in nature speaks through the mushroom. This is one factor present in the resurgence of neo-shamanism, not one to be taken out of proportion and used to caricature the whole movement.  

Presumably it would be going too far, on purely morphological observation, to speculate that faeite knew or came were diminutive, earth piled up or natural locations cho-osen to grow these small mushroom vegetables. However, it is tempting to say the least, that O' Cathain's building on Wasson's work gives grounds for speculation that Brigh's feastday, perhaps especially its eve, 31st January, may originally have been the magical mushroom festival of our ancient peoples celebrated on the first day of Celtic spring when life bursts out anew across the face of the Earth.  

May I suggest, was pointed out to me by Murdo MacDonald of Edinburgh University when discussing the various spellings of "fairy," that diverse spellings of Brigg might be seen as part of a shape-changing feat to be delighted in, I mostly choose "Brigh" in this text because it most approximates an Irish pronunciation that I find pleasing in a mantric way. "Brigh."  

7 The 19 foot tall standing stone, Clach an Truiseil, is said to be the tallest monolith in Britain and believed to be a Fiann left behind by the Irish warriors, the Fiana, after they came to Lewis to free the people from oppression by giants (Donald MacDonald, Feats of the History of the Island, Gordon Wright, Edinburgh, 1890, 14-16). It was Mac- donald's paragraph on the Gai-Giel that prompted Colin MacLeod who started the Polly portfolio to rework the concept of the Polly portfolio, "Better than the Sun", "Sun". Lewis. Colin grew up in Gowan and Australia. He attended the secondary school immediately beside the Free State protest site.) The name Polly may derive from a Celtic word, "bolwol" meaning "muddy place,"  

7 Isaiah 2:4.
STOP DESTRUCTION
OF PINLANDS FOREST.

Does this sound like
sustainable forestry to you?

WHEN THEY ARRIVE - CALL
041 836 492 (evenings)
and say 'yes'.
by eagle, deer, wild cat and long-gone bear
here in spirit where extinct in flesh
Strong totems for recovery – we need strong
totems at this time
Remember ... that three years before
Culloden massacred gasp from clansfolk’s tribal
voice
the last wolf was shot extinct in Scotland
Nature’s death precursing culture’s “thickest
night”
Culloden – last battle mainland British soil 1746
internal colonial conquest
blood mingling inseparably soaked through
mosh Drumossie moor
friend and foe and which is “us” and which is
“them” now?
Where the “Gaeltachd” wither “Galltachd”
Unavoidably mingled
for a’ that and a’ that
sacrificing, sanctifying, down to an ice-age
cleans’ed strata
that is both cultural and in depth,
archaological
long stinking but now compost-rendered for
new growth
Something poised
... both psychic and somatic
... genetic and prophetic
Remnant sprig from taproot of antiquity
awaiting spring to bud re-formed
and Blossom as is needed in our agitated times
... a cultural cultivation ...
Indeed! Let us observe that
the capacity of nature and of human nature
to be hurt
is exceeded
in the fullness of time
only
by the capacity to heal ...
And that must be joy’s greatest cause for hope
So you ... our friends to whom this statement
is addressed
You, we know, will understand.

Take you, First Nation Peoples, North America
uneasy unasked hosts to our Diaspora
You, Chippewa protest leader challenging
Exon’s mines, Walter Bresette
says ... “We are all native people now. The
door is shut. We are all inside.”
You, Mi’Kmaq superquarry warrior chief Sulian
Stone Eagle Herney
says ... “Your mountain, your shorelines your
rivers and your air
are just as much mine and my grandchildren’s
as ours is yours.”
You, great teacher huntress Winona La Duke
walking troubled by the Minnesota lakes
who rejects “genocide by arithmetic”
that allows “indigenous” belonging
to be governmentally defined by statutes
staturing racial purity
Rejecting thresholds like one-sixteenth blood
relationship
to be a Sioux or Cree or Cherokee
for human love will always
mingle, meld, and make of prised light
a golden melanged mockery of all pretensions
of racial purity
that violates sunlight’s loving magic dance
a dance insisting
as it pleas, teases
Equally to be white light, coloured light
or warm absorbing dark that holds all light

(V) Re-claiming
Aye ... aye ... aye
Scotland understands a thing or two about
belonging
We have a Gaelic proverb:
“The Bonds of Milk are Stronger than the Bonds
of Blood”
Nurture, kinship, counts for more than mere
blood lineage
And so let us propose
an ancient new criterion for belonging here;
All Are Indigenous, Native To This Place. All
Who Are Willing To Cherish

Notes:
1. MacDiarmid – The Little White Rose. The Burnett rose (Rosa spinosissima) has been a totem for our original work with the Isle of Eigg Trust. As Neil Gunn noted, it grows on what is almost certainly from his description) Eigg “in greater abundance than anywhere else I know. It is the genus of this place.” For me it has a fragrance more exquisite than that of any other rose” (Highland Park, Faber, 1949). Mention here is included at the request of, and in honour of the Trust’s founder, Tom Forsyth.
2. Martin Mathers of Worldwide Fund for Nature (Scotland) pointed this out to me.
3. Burns, Strathallan’s Lament (see note).
4. Acknowledgement to Seamus Heaney for the concept of the bog as the unconscious.
5. My friend and mentor in some of the issues discussed in these notes, Michael Newton of the Celtic Department, Edinburgh University, strenuously points out that the Gael did not in the first instance choose to be a coloniser, but became performe a party to others’ colonising aspirations. A rightly proud claim of modern Irish people is, “We were colonised, but never colonised anybody else.” Residual Pictish voices might think otherwise ... but with no hard feelings any longer, especially as incursions between like tribes make poor comparison with the principles of Romanesque colonialism.
6. During a joint ceremony that we conducted at a University of Wisconsin conference on spirituality and ecological resistance, 1995.
7. Harris proposed superquarry public inquiry pre-consultation statement.
9. I think my source of this was a Ronnie Black (Edinburgh Uni. Celtic Dept) article in the West Highland Free Press several years ago.
And Be Cherished
By This Place
And Its Peoples

All are indigenous, native to this place. All who are willing to cherish and be cherished by this place and its peoples.

Those whose souls so resonate
All we, known and unknown to us are troubled claiming for ourselves the obvious tribal names of indigeniety. Few if any are “pure” Pict, Norse, Flemish, Saxon, Angle, Indian, Greek, Hispanic, Arab Scotia’s royal lineage to daughter of Pharaoh. Even Gaelic tongue of Irish forebears dappled once a Pictish land with blood as well as milk. So What Choice Have We But To Embrace Full Spectrum? What choice want we save the pleasures so to do? And to SHINE ON. Oh yes friend. SHINE ON!

Once Vikings raped and pillaged here and then too melded gentle with the healing power of place and time Became us! became “Gall-Gaidheil,” the Gal-Gael “emerged as a mixed ethnic group by the middle of the ninth century” in the Hebrides and south-west Scotland giving Gall-oway its name and Isle of Lewis, Harris – “Innse Gall” – the Isle of Strangers terrible then, a violated and a violating people (like us today perhaps?) but us they were We’re all Gal-Gael now and only by facing the shadows of history can sunlight warm our backs and melt the frozen crust of ice congealed’ed blood around the heart.

Today eight-tenths of Scotland’s private land is owned by less than one tenth of one percent of Scotland’s people. Let’s call a spade a spade: ... too many of us languish lost in concrete jungles’ post-industrial redundancy dumped there by those who see no treasure in each soul (for that is what distinguishes their force for life-extinguishing in sectioning nature off these men of property) We’ve had enough! We now insist on being heard and standing up and standing out and coming into Being speaking as it is our truth to power for what it is “… fur the wains’ sake … our ane sake …” So we declare ... identity a claim of right a name that mingles, honours many nations in this place A bioregional identity defending place nae force of arms but power o’ reverence transcending narrow nationalism so not to bleach out ethnic richness rainbow hues and not to fight in ways that scar and cannot be undone but yet to find a focal understanding ... some constellation of belonging ... of folk and place and wanted work

(VI) Affirmation
Well ... here we are Round protest hearth in Glasgow’s Pollok wood and we again evoke the name “Gal-Gael” Impure. Bitter-sweet. Riddled with contradiction.

1 This line is prompted not just by Pink Floyd’s famous “shine on you crazy diamond,” but also by the way in which “Glasgow Two” hunger striker Tommy Campbell ends his letter from Slotts prison. Tommy’s and Joseph Steele’s campaign for judicial review is not just personal, but concerns the quality of Scottish justice generally. “Shine on! Tommy. Your captors may or may not be dead, but you’re certainly not.


3 It is a paradox that the Long Island, Lewis and Harris together, became known by the Gael of the past by this name because mainly Viking settlement meant that so many strangers (Gall) lived there; but now it has become the Remnant heartland of the Gael. This resonates richly into the philosophy of cultural renewal behind Pollok’s “Gal-Gae” concept.

4 From the Scottish Landowners’ Federation’s own perhaps exaggerated claim that their 4,000 members control 80% of Scotland’s private (non-government) land. A 1976 study showed that just 35 families or companies possessed on third of the Highlands’ 7.39 million acres of private land. See McIntosh, A., Wightman, A. and Morgan, D., Reclaiming the Scottish Highlands: Clearance, Conflict and Crofting, The Ecologist, 24:2, 1994, 64-70.

5 Brendan women interviewed in O’Leary, op. cit. note (wains = children).

6 I.e. the Patrick Geddes human ecology trilogy of folk, work, place. The pun on “wonted” is deliberate. Something is “wonted” if it is habitual, belonging to a place or custom. cf. “as is her wont.” Michael Newton points to the similarity of the Gaelic word docht.
But belonging here, now here and now to and fro rocking rocking rocking But belonging here, no now

Aye Rabbie Burns – your passion’s won two hundred years your Vision’s come The bards like emerald ears returned no more the people’s soul be spurned (VII) Homecoming

Dear fellow creatures

1 John 10:10.

2 Burns. In Strathallen’s lament Burns portrays the psychic collapse of Strathallen who can no longer enjoy nature (the river’s torrent, etc.) and see the wide word before him “but a word without a friend.” In The Tree O’ Liberty Burns uses the oak as a symbol national strength and freedom. “I’/many’ of ace trees I sowed / the world would live in peace, Man / the world would help to make a plaque / the din o’ war would cease, Man.”

3 Colin MacLeod started Pollok Free State M77 protest site by planting an eagle totem pole after having experienced an eagle vision quest and protesting alone up a tree for two weeks at the Pollok. Burns then paralleled the culture of surrounding Pollock and Gowan, Gehan Brimmish’s peace protest insights from Faiziane etc., and identifies English road protesters such as the Douglas Tribe. Colin drew my attention to Burns’s remarkable call to restore the bardic basis of culture in The Vision. Here Burns is given a vision of the Irish/Celtic muse who appears to him in a female form. Her martial transformations to modern consumer/cultural icon is “To give my counsels all in one / Thy tuneful flame still careful fan / Preserve the dignity of Man / With soul erect and trust the Universal Plan / will all protect” This might which be taken as a new manifestation of Scottish education. It might entail a triple interface between the bardic schools, the monastic schools, and modern schools, especially those embodying feminist epistemology. Our Peoples Free University of Pollok, which taught “degrees in living” to striking school children and other M77 protesters, was one such experiment.

My reference to reverting the flight of the Irish earl should be taken as metaphorical. I mean that we need to replenish the psychic vacuum left when the traditional leadership took flight in Ireland’s “saddest day” not a wish to see restoration of the traditional patriarchal military leadership forms of the class of the Scots-Irish Gaelic continuum. Incidentally, it should be noted that that continuum was split as a result of deliberate colonial policy by King James VI and I who instituted the Plantation of Ulster, as well as the Statutes of Luna and the colonisation of the Eastern American seaboard. As Malcolm MacLean of the Gaelic Arts Project on Lewis says, the Irish peace process is also helping now to remake links between the Irish and Scottish identity (see also MacInnes, J., The Gaelic Continuum in Scotland, in O’Driscoll, R. (ed.), The Celtic Continuums, Canongate, Edinburgh, 1983). Many of us who grew up in Presbyterian homes on Lewis now deeply resent the conditioning then often imposed on us to the extent that the Irish (and Southern Scottish) are “Papist” and therefore “Antichrist worshippers.” It was a conditioning not just of ignorance, but of long-standing manipulation by internal British colonial policy that divided against our own people and contributed to a sublimate Anglophobia which we must also wrestle to overcome – especially as many English, themselves, wake up to what it means to honour soul and of pretending that it has no place in the brilliant rational techno-sunlight of modernity. I do not want such commentaries to be interpreted as a total refutation of the 20th Century. As Papua New Guineans recognise with their concept of the “Melanesian Way,” the future lies in us choosing what we want to mould from our own cultural and modernity. This means economy and technology serving community, and not vice versa. For me now is the one place where the state institutions derived from Bremton Woods (BM etc.) to which I earlier alluded. See Mcintosh, A., Journey to the Hebrides, Scottish Affairs, 6, 1994, 52-67; also my paper in a philosophical journal of environmental policy, The Emperor has no Clothes. Let us Paint our Loincloths Rainbow: A Classical and Feminist Critique of Contemporary Science Policy, Environmental Values, 5/1, 1996, 3-30.

3 Colin MacQueen of Barra is one of my inspirers in thinking about the bardic schools. Douglas Fraser interviewing him for The Scotsman (Weekend, 1-10-94, 2-3) quotes him as saying, “We all want the privilege of retaining poor and being crofter. Crofting is about poverty with dignity. If you stand on your own four or eight acres, you are monarch of all you survey, and it gives you a natural dignity which you are without the moment you walk on to the mainland.” ... but MacQueen has faced criticism for extending his views to education, for my heart’s delight, the Holy Spirit, which I am. And the Holy Spirit, which I am is divided against all the world 3. It is also in my heart’s delight, the Holy Spirit, which I am divided against all the world. I am divided against all the world, which I am is divided against all the world. It is also in my heart’s delight, the Holy Spirit, which I am divided against all the world.

4 Partly allusion to Burns’s Tree of Liberty; also Isaiah 61:3. Note that when Jesus launched his ministry in Luke 4 by reading from Isaiah 61 he stops and closes the book halfway through the quoted verse. Perhaps he is selective in his use of Scripture. He associates himself with the opening verse and the promise of the redeemed, he continues up to the point of proclaiming the “acceptable year of the Lord” – probably reference to the remarkable land ethic of Leviticus 25 wherein the land is rested every seventh year and every fiftieth year. The first seven years, all debts are cancelled and land that has been sold back to its owner is returned to the original owner. Jesus regularly re-established (though there is no actual historical record of this being carried out). What Jesus saw is to continue reading from the text. If he had, he would have gotten straight into the “day of vengeance of our God” and “the sons of the alien shall be your priest...” etc. As Carl Jung suggests in his brilliant Answer to Job, Old Testament and some New Testament scripture can be read as a process of God’s growing up into being humanised as God through interaction with humankind within the constraints of time, and not just the other way round. How else, Jung asks, do we account for a supposedly omniscient God’s infallible behaviour in making deals with the Devil to torment poor Job? Was incarnation not as much a necessity for God for humankind? And one might add, is not the reciprocal of being of a culture where mythopoeic narrative runs that we are made in God’s image, in that sense, God is also in our image? The profound implications of such “theory” are better illustrated from the insights of the Godman-Rahman metaphysics (i.e. individual soul is universal soul). However it is also present in Christian scripture. For instance, in Jesus’s parole of the vine, and most profoundly, in a text that converges, the metaphor of the vineyard is not found, because it fails to fit with the imagery of Jesus and the unique gift of God. John 15:1-8. Here Jesus drawn upon Psalms 82:6 for authority in claiming that, effectively, all who are Jesus and sons of God; indeed, all such are Gods. This might cast some light on the enigmatic partiality of the Godhead in the early chapters of Genesis.

5 Celtic messengers of the Holy Spirit, though when George MacLeod of the Iona Community was asked by his biographer, Ron Ferguson, what was his response, he replied, “I have no idea. I probably made it up” (pers. com.). As with all stones, any Christian critique of new found veneration for such "sacred sites" must start by taking account of what might be learned of their purpose from Scripture. As always, Scripture is deeply ambivalent on such matters (cf. smashing of standing stones in Exodus 34:10-15; note that the "sacred poles" denounced by the jealous patriarchal representation of God in this text were emblems of Asherah (Asshur, Ashteroth, Goddess of love and fecundity – Jerusalem Bible footnote). Nevertheless, we might reflect that the book of Job contains a “cleansing of Job’s cause” – and God allows a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us: for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.” – Joshua 24:26-27, Jacob, after his dream of a ladder reaching into heaven declared, “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.” – Genesis 28:16-17, the stone that had been his pillow saying, “And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house” – Genesis 28:19-22.

Cencrastus 14
To make a life worth living ...
To save this Earth ...
... And play from down the hollow hill¹
A hallowed music
Sacred dance
That is our soul ...
... our soil
Yours, for auld lang sine²

Beltane Full Moon Wolf Festival
Pollok Free State, Scotland, 3 May 1996
(narrated by Alastair McIntosh³)

Notes to the Text

These notes are provided to aid interpretation, provide acknowledgements and give background information that might interest the reader. However, there is also a political reason. The text has been written before the Isle of Harris proposed superquarry public inquiry decision has been made by the Secretary of State for Scotland. Pro-quarry forces are currently lobbying hard in an effort to reverse local opinion. Some are maintaining efforts to damage the character of prominent quarry opponents. Sir John Lister Kaye, former chair of Scottish Natural Heritage North West, lost his job it is thought partly because of his robust anti-quarry stance. Rev. Professor Donald MacLeod who gave evidence with Chief Stone Eagle and me at the public inquiry has undergone but survived a character assassination attempt through the courts, linked to his wider efforts to bring radical liberal reform to the Free Church. His quarry testimony and the platform he shared has been cited as part of “the problem” with him. And Edinburgh University are closing the Centre for Human Ecology where I work (see New Scientist editorial, 4 May 1996, A Narrow Kirk in Edinburgh), because of what the dean of science describes as problem of “control.” At least until after the quarry decision has been made, I need to protect this text being misunderstood and misled back home on Lewis. Accordingly, and at the regrettable risk of alienating some readers, I have therefore included footnotes to demonstrate compatibility with and to acknowledge imagery drawn from biblical sources, as well as to indicate sources which enable linkage with a pre-Christian continuum. This totalisity is the richness and hidden strength of our culture. It is a potent key in joining together deep cultural taproots of both social and ecological justice.

1 Again, there is possible contradiction but no necessary contradiction between such “pagan” imagery and Scotland’s Christian tradition. In tradition, the fairies are all parts of the realm of God. Gaelic Bible translator. The Rev. Robert Kirk of Aberfoyle, who in 1691 wrote the remarkable text, The Secret Commonwealth of Fairies, Fauns, and Faries, (see Stewart, R. J. Robert Kirk: Walker between Worlds, Element, 1990) gives extensive Scriptural analysis and justification of traditional beliefs. Walter Wink in a sense updates this in volume two of his powerful trilogy on naming, unmasking and engaging the powers in a world of domination (Unmasking the Powers, Fortress Press, USA, 1992.). In Dara Molloy of the Aran Islands sees pre-Christian beliefs as simply being “our Old Testament.” The centrality of forgiveness to Christianity at its best is of key concern to this piece on the Gaell-Goa. That is why, quite apart from defending myself from being discredited by superquarry supporters, I have made such a point of weaving together Christian and pre-Christian traditions in this text. I believe we must hold as a touchstone an understanding of forgiveness if we are to avoid falling into nationalistic fascism, if we are to be with MacChumad whilst not succumbing to his excesses, if we are to refute the use of Scottish warlike material in underpinning certain American (and Scottish) racist cults (cf. Scott, K, Marching as to War, The Herald, 19-9-96, 15). Forgiveness is simply acceptance – of others and, most importantly, of self. Only with such acceptance can the grip of the past release us into new growth; can the bonds of karma be broken to allow liberation from the potentially brutal cycle of cause and effect. It has been suggested that this is why our druidic tradition needed Christianity. But too often “Churchliness” has emphasised a transcendent otherworldly “pie in the sky when you die” type of Christianity. This has contributed towards the death of nature. Such travesty is violation of Luke 17:21, that the realm of God is here and now, and of the very concept of incarnation, metaphorical or otherwise. Many of the churches increasingly recognise this as they come to terms with “creation-centred” not “creation-subordinated” theology that expresses original blessing and not just original sin. Reconnection with our own “Old Testament” in Celtic spirituality offers restorations of the face of the Earth and good news to the poor.

2 “Old long ago” – for old time’s sake.

3 Teaching Director at the Centre for Human Ecology, University of Edinburgh. Let this work be my last published testimony before the University expel us and fire all staff because work such as this fails to fit their playing field of knowledge. The text grew out of many sessions round the fire at Pollok. Many events and people contributed which is why I would see myself as more narrator than solo-author. Events included at a formative stage the visit in November 1994 of superquarry campaigner Warrior Chief Sullivan Stone Eagle Herney, who helped to cement already strong Native American resonances and resulted in the Mi’Kmaq warrior chief declaring the Free State’s Colin MacLeod the first ever non-Mi’Kmaq war chief in recognition of his nonviolent-direct-action defence of nature and community. My thanks go out to all who have commented on this text, especially Tessa Ransford, Scottish Poetry Library. Contact address: Craigencall Farm, Kinghorn Loch, Fife, KY3 9YG, 01592 871829; alastair@gn.apc.org (version 24-7-96).

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1. Chief Sullivan Stone Eagle Herney, Mt Roineabhal, Harris, 1994 - Murdo Macleod
2. Tree telephone, Pollok Free State M77 motorway protest, Glasgow, c. 1994
3. Alastair McIntosh, Chief Stone Eagle & Mt Roineabhal, 1994 - Murdo Macleod

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