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CENCRASTUS

THE CURLY SNAKE No.56



Fight or Starve... wandering through the Thirties, 1985

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:
Ken Currie: Fight or Starve – wandering
through the Thirties (1985)

Inside Front Cover:
Sacred Peace Pipe Carrier Fulián 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)





The Gal-Gael Peoples of Scotland

Alastair McIntosh

Written at the request of and dedicated to Tawny, Colin and Gehan 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 (Folksongs 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
 crisis-torn homes
 of those of us in urban native reservation
 housing schemes
 (where TV up a tower block offers nature's
 only window²
 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
 embrace
 usurped to break the spirit
 take our land
 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 Owned 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
 disembedded 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
 thrashing around in usurious name of pax
 prosperity

- 1 The name, "Hebrides," probably results from scribal errors. The earliest reference was to "Ebudae." However, the sense of inferring "Bride's Isles" (i.e. Brigh, Bride, Bridey, Brigit) 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 MSc human ecology dissertation work of Tara O'Leary, *Nae fur the Likes O' Us: Poverty, Agenda 21 and Scotland's Non-Governmental Organisations*, at press, *Scottish Affairs*, summer 1996.
- 3 Mike Collard, *Future Forests*, Bantry, Ireland.
- 4 Edwin Muir, *One Foot in Eden*.
- 5 I.e. Kenneth White, *Scots born professor of 20th Century Poetics at the Sorbonne*. His work has greatly influenced this piece. Inspired partly by Walt Whitman, he proposes "poetics, geography – and a higher unity – geopoetics ..." (*Elements of Geopoetics*, *Edinburgh Review*, 88, 1992, 163-178). Through Tony McMahon, Kenneth alerted me to the shamanic nature of Burns's work; see *A Shaman Dancing on a Glacier: Burns, Beuys and Beyond*, *Supplement to ArtWork*, 50, 1991, 2-3, and *Tam O'Shanter: An Interpretation*, *Scottish Literary Journal*, 17:2, 1990, 5-14.
- 6 Frank Fraser-Darling, author of the famous study in human ecology, *West Highland Survey*.
- 7 Jane Middleton-Moz, 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.
- 8 Aotearoa – indigenous people's name for New Zealand.
- 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.

... Trashing all ... All ... but that Invincible
 prophetic Remnant of humanity¹
 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 pool²
 swept down of old on mighty streams of
 righteousness³
 but cast up fragile yet relentlessly on shore of
 modern times⁴
 there to wait reminding us, reminding us, re-
 minding 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 Lewisian Gneiss ...
 ... Druim Alban's kelson of the Baltic to
 Canadian Shield⁷

The superquarry threatened South Harris
 igneous complex
 (surveyed by supine Roineabhal
 beholding all Scarista's ancient parish of
 Kilbride⁸
 annunciating 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 legen'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 Ailsa Craig
 (where seventh century Irish shaman Sweeney
 roosted)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 revised biblical insight. The shamanic nature of this prophetic role is evident, prophets and shamans alike being people who step outside normal constructs of society in order, when 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 Elijah's mantle went to his head. His arrogance tragically resulted in forty-two children being torn apart by the bear accomplices (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 rewritten Numbers 11 as a metaphor for the work of anti-motorway protestors, likening them to a prophetic Remnant living off manna, speaking to the ills of our times, and holding out an alternative wholesome ecological vision ("MacMoses Motorway" in *Lady Godiva*, 97, Orkney, 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." (Refs: F. Marian McNeill, *The Silver Bough*, Canongate, Edinburgh, 1989, 74-75; W. B. Yeats, *The Song of Wandering Aengus*, (sung 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-eroded peat bank at a remote location on Great Bernera, Isle of Lewis. I was there with antiquarian 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 Sutras 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 Gaelic name going back to ancient times for "the spine of Britain" Highland massif.
- 8 Jim Crawford (note) has recently discovered foliated 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 (Cill(e) 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 Bridgit, Brigh originally represented the Celtic Goddess. Ancient Irish tracts associate her veneration not just with the cow and milk (thus with shieling transhumance), 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.
- 9 cf. Song of Songs, the femininity of Sophia (Wisdom), identified with the Holy Spirit in Proverbs 8-9, and reference to Creation pouring out of the womb of God in Job 38:8,29.
- 10 Rev. Alistair MacLean, *Hebridean Altars*, 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 let my earth-children see the power of my mind, in rock and mountain and tree and wind and flower. And I have shown them the likeness of my mind, for I have made them like my own. And I have shown them the love of my mind, for I have made them happy. But halt," says 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 a handful of jewels and opens a window in the sky and throws them down into the sea. And those jewels are the Hebrides. 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 Cattle" of Mull.
- 11 George MacLeod, Iona Community.
- 12 Seamus Heaney (trans.), *Sweeney Astray*, faber and faber, London, 1984.
- 13 The Royal High School, probable site for a future Scottish Parliament, lies on the side of Calton Hill known for the "Fairy Boy of Leith" legend – F. Marion McNeill, op. cit. note.

(resanctifying desecrated open-cast fields
ploughed of coal)¹
The cairns to poets and to the brave land raiders
The idle pebbles tossed
with cosmogenic tanka's spiral winkle shell²
tossed 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 hills³
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

(III) Re-mem-bering

Aye ...
and so we have united as strong women
resisting landlord's factor
non-lethal direct action Crofters' War, Timex
strike
We have united, men of gentleness
straining back temptation just to be like them
and bomb and bribe and blight
Turning instead the heartwood of their minds
by climbing threatened tree
or gently blocking course of Trident submarine
(seven-hundred two-score-ten Hiroshimas each
one)
Aye ... Aye and three times Aye
three times "yes" of Holy Trinity ... Father,
Child,

Sophia Woman Spirit Holy Spirit Rising⁴
Three times Aye the Triune Goddess
Maiden Mother Crone
Life Death Rebirth
Her mantle oh so green laid out each spring
to fill the world with milk and flowers
... Bri'gh! ... Bri'gh! ... Bri'gh! ...
of the oak Cill-Dara, of Iona and of Bethlehem⁵
And three-times-three – Aye
ring out nine blossom bells afresh from silver
bardic bough⁶
Restore once more a Politics of Poetry!
... for only such poetics can again renew the
face of Earth
inform our ancient people's highest aspiration
and like a rowan arch exclude
a waiting nation's re-awaiting parcelled rogues⁷
We must restore the schools and ways of
ancient learning
to stand them proud beside the richness of the
new
restore what Lord and Bishop wrecked – cruel
Statutes of Iona 1609⁸
... twelve most powerful Highland chiefs
... kidnapped ... imprisoned over winter ...
forced to forfeit friendship, tongue, and bard's
vocation
forced to put out culture's flames
(but done with sacred blessing's triple peat⁹
the embers only smooed so not to chill)
Aye Statues of an Iona cudgelled into modern
time by Whitby's Roman synod
Aye post-Culloden Proscription even of our
ancient spirit'ual dress

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 winkle 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, eg. faerie lore.
5 The Irish St Bride is said to have established her convent at Kildare (Cill-Dara/Doire – the church of the oak). The Scots equivalent was St. Bride of the Isles or Brigdhe-nam-Brat, Bride of the Mantles, or Plaid. Traditionally this was woven by Bride herself on Iona. There she lived (Fiona Macleod's perhaps inspired fiction suggesting that she learned from druids), until she was taken up in a dark blue mantle (the colour of her own eyes) by two angels and transported to Bethlehem to be foster-mother to the newborn Jesus – F. Marian McNeill (ed.), *An Iona Anthology*, Iona Community, 1990, 63-72; Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns & Incantations*, Floris, Edinburgh, 1992, 237-240. A splendid painting, *St Bride*, by John Duncan (1913), depicts her transportation. It rests in the National Gallery of Scotland at the Mound, Edinburgh.
6 The mantle plays a crucial role in shamanic practice. It can be seen to represent shape-shifting, consciousness change, transformation of the world and other aspects of liminality. In Celtic lore Bride rolls out her green mantle on Bride'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* (see below). Adamnan, Columba's biographer, recounts that between the conception and birth of St Columba of Iona an angel appeared to his mother in sleep with "a certain mantle of marvellous beauty, in which lovely colours of all flowers were depicted." As the vision drew to a close, "the woman saw the afore-mentioned mantle gradually receding from her in its flight, and increasing in size so as to exceed the width of the plains, and to overtop the mountains and forests" (extract in McNeill (ed.), 19, op. cit. note 33, translating Adamnan 3:1).
7 The gender construction of these Christian accounts is interesting. Woman is no longer Goddess, but nursemaid 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 hagiographers (see especially Condren, M., *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1989).
8 The Silver Bough (Celtic equivalent of the Golden Bough) is the bough of apple blossom gifted by the faeries as passport into the musical realms. The bard's bough with nine bells symbolised such connection – F. Marian McNeill op. cit. note, 105-106; W. Evans Wentz, *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, 1977 (1911), 336-344.
9 Burns dubbed the mercantile MPs who sold out Scotland's parliament in 1707, "Sic (such) a parcel o' rogues in a nation!"
8 For a summary of Scottish and some Irish history on this crucial period and its bardic tradition, see the introduction to O'Baoill, C., *Gair nan Clarsach, The Harp's Cry*, Birlinn, Edinburgh, 1994, 1-39. For discussion of bardic schools see Corkery, D., *The Hidden Ireland*, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 1967.
9 Alistair MacLean (op. cit. note, 142-143) describes how at night in the Isles the fire would be smooed with three peats in the name of the Holy Trinity and to the rune, "The Sacred Three, My fortress be, Encircling me. Come and be round, My hearth, my home ... Through mid of night, To light's release."

STOP THE DESTRUCTION
OF FINLAND'S FORESTS!

Does this sound like
sustainable forestry to you?

WHEN (H) they
arrive - CALL
041636



heart¹
 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 Scotland²
 Nature's death precursing culture's "thickest
 night"³
 Culloden – last battle mainland British soil 1746
 internal colonial conquest
 blood mingling inseparably soaked through
 moss Drumossie moor
 friend and foe and which is "us" and which is
 "them" now?
 Where the "Gaeltachd" wither "Gallachd"
 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,
 archaeological⁴
 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 unmasked hosts to our Diaspora⁵
 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."⁶
 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."⁷
 You, great teacher huntress Winona La Duke⁸
 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
 to any presumption
 of racial purity
 that violates sunlight's loving magic dance
 a dance insisting
 as it pleases, 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"⁹
 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

1 MacDiarmid – *The Little White Rose*. The Burnett rose (*Rosa spinosissima*) has been a totem for our original work with the Isle of Egg Trust. As Neil Gunn noted, it grows on (what is almost certainly from his description) Egg "in greater abundance than anywhere else I know. It is the genius 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 perforce 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 *colonia*.
 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 precognition statement.
 8 At International Transpersonal Association conference, Killarney, 1994.
 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!¹

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"²
in the Hebrides and south-west Scotland
giving Gall-oway its name
and Isle of Lewis, Harris – "Innse Gall" – the Isle
of Strangers³
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 congeal'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 people⁴
Let's call a spade a spade:
... too many of us languish lost
in concrete jungles'
post-indust'rial
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 ... "⁵
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 wonted work⁶

(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 letters from Shotts 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.

2 Smythe, A. D., *Warlords and Holy Men*, Edinburgh University Press, 1984, 156-157.

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-Gael" 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 Braendam 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 duth.

But belonging here, now
 here and now
 to and fro
 rocking ... rocking ... rocking
 Rolling into life and promised life abundant¹
 Cherishing and being cherished
 A native peoples
 We are indigenous!
 We stir our voice in singing back this place!

The song breaks out from deep within
 Strathallen's torrent roars anew
 The oak to triumph o'er war's din
 the world is with a friend now²

Aye Rabbie Burns – your passion's won
 two hundred years your Vision's come
 The bards like emerald earls returned³
 no more the people's soul be spurned

(VII) Homecoming

Dear fellow creatures

native brothers sisters children
 in other heartlands of the real, the reel
 We ask from you acceptance
 of our peoplehood
 We ask you weave our native threads
 to fabric of one scintillating cloth
 that is the mantle of the world
 We pledge to you support
 for all work sourced in love
 recovering right relation'ship your territories
 And ask from you forgiveness
 for past injustice, ignorance and spoils of
 fear or greed
 We need your help with Spirit's grace
 to find clear paths through tangled modern
 Waste Land tares
 to seed as oaks as Gods each one proclaiming
 Jubilee⁴
 To fly in fair formation as wild geese ...⁵
 To hear afresh that deep poetic story
 of magic set in time when place began ...

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 sees the wide world before him "but a world without a friend." In *The Tree O' Liberty* Burns uses the oak as a symbol national strength and freedom: "Wi' plenty o' sic trees I trow / the world would live in peace, Man / the sword would help to mak a plough / 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 with a copy of Burns. This then intermingled with the culture of surrounding Pollok and Govan, Gehan Ibrahim's peace protest insights from Faslane etc., and ideas from English road protestors such as the Dongas 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 quest by the Celtic muse who appears as a woman. Her mantle transforms to reveal the whole cosmos and sends Burns off into shamanic rapture. Her mission was: "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 which might be taken as a new manifesto for Scottish education. It might entail a tripple 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 protestors, was one such experiment.

My reference to reversing the flight of the Irish earls should be taken as metaphoric. 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 *per se* of the traditional patriarchal military leadership forms of the clans 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 Iona 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 Irish and Scottish identity (see also MacInnes, J., *The Gaelic Continuum in Scotland*, in O'Driscoll, R. (ed.), *The Celtic Consciousness*, Canongate, Edinburgh, 1981). Many of us who grew up in Presbyterian homes on Lewis now deeply resent the conditioning then often imposed on us to the effect that the Irish (and Southern Hebrideans) 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 us against our own people and contributed to a subtle Anglophobia which we must also wrestle to overcome – especially as many English, themselves, wake up to what it means to honour soul instead of pretending that it has no place in the brilliant rational techno-sunlight of modernity. I do not want such comments 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 meld from tradition and modernity. This means economy and technology serving community, and not vice versa as is the case with the triumvirate institutions derived from Bretton Woods (IMF 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.

Canon Angus 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, "All we want is the privilege of remaining poor and being crofters. 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 many Hebrideans, the only way out of poverty. Schools, he says, should be teaching them the bardic traditions of an oral culture, not encouraging them to leave the island for college. "Education now in the Hebrides is rubbish," says the Canon. "These schools should be in the middle of England. The 80% of them who want to be fishermen should be encouraged to do what they want. But the younger people now want to get on. Education has ruined them, and made parents ambitious for their children to get on, when they should be enjoying life. I don't blame them for wanting to get on, but I feel more at home with the lad or the girl who leaves school at 16 to become a fisherman or whatever. For those who have to go through the rough world of colleges and university, it's very unbalancing. So many of them are packing in half way through their courses. A Hebridean will find a quality of life, or else become an alcoholic or drug addict. He will leave in completely."

Having myself left Lewis to go to University and "get on and get out," I could not have appreciated the significance of Canon MacQueen's words until reflecting on my own background after serving as deputy-head of a school for "drop-out" children in Papua New Guinea, where the same issues apply.

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 half way through the second verse: i.e. he is selective in his use of Scripture. He associates himself with being in solidarity with the poor and freeing the oppressed, 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, i.e. after seven times seven, all debts are cancelled and land that has been traded is returned to its original owners. Social and ecological justice are thus regularly re-established (though there is no actual historical record of this being carried out). What Jesus avoids is to continue reading from the text. If he had, he would have got straight into "the day of vengeance of our God" and "the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen ..." 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 infantile behaviour in making pacts with the Devil to torment poor Job? Was incarnation not as much a necessity for God as for humankind? And one might add, is not the reciprocal of being of a culture where mythopoetic narrative runs that we are made in God's image that, in a sense, God is also in our image? The profound implications of such "heresy" are better understood from the insights of Hindu Atman-Brahman metaphysics (i.e. individual soul is universal soul). However it is also present in Christian scripture. For instance, in Jesus's parable of the vine, and most profoundly, in a text that conventional biblical commentaries and clergy generally overlook because it fails to fit with the dogma of Jesus being the *unique* son of God: John 10:34-36. Here Jesus draws upon Psalms 82:6 for authority in claiming that, effectively, all who heed God are sons and daughters of God; indeed, all such are Gods. This might cast some light on the enigmatic plurality of the Godhead in the early chapters of Genesis.

5 Celtic symbol of the Holy Spirit, though when George MacLeod of the Iona Community was asked by his biographer, Ron Fergusson, what was his source, he replied, "I have no idea. I probably made it up" (pers. com.).

As for standing 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 (Astarte, Ashteroth), Goddess of love and fecundity – Jerusalem Bible footnote). Nevertheless, we might reflect that the Book of Joshua closes by Joshua setting up a standing stone to mark the new-found monotheism of his people: "... and (Joshua) took 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 be therefore 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." He then erected the stone that had been his pillow saying, "And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house" – Genesis 29:11-22.

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 sine*²
 Beltane Full Moon Wolf Festival
 Pollok Free State, Scotland, 3 May 1996
 (narrated by Alastair McIntosh)³

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 against this text being misunderstood and misused 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 totality 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 faeries are all parts of the realms of God. Gaelic Bible translator, The Rev. Robert Kirk of Aberfoyle, who in 1691 wrote the remarkable text, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*, (see Stewart, R. J., *Robert Kirk: Walker Between Worlds*, Element, Longmead, 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.). Fr 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 Gal-Gael. 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 MacDiarmid whilst not succumbing to his excesses; if we are to refute the use of Scottish warriorship material in underpinning certain American (and Scottish) racist cults (cf. Scott, K, *Marching as to War*, *The Herald*, 19-4-96, 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 "Churchianity" 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 "creationist") theology that emphasises original blessing and not just original sin. Reconnection with our own "Old Testament" in Celtic spirituality offers restoration 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 expell 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 sole-author. Events included at a formative stage the visit in November 1994 of superquarry campaigner Warrior Chief Sulian Stone Eagle Herney, who helped to cement already strong Native American resonances and resulted in the Mi'Kmaq warrior chiefs 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: Craigencaft Farm, Kinghorn Loch, Fife, KY3 9YG, 01592 891829; alastair@gn.apc.org. (version 24-7-96).

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2. Tree telephone, Pollok Free State M77 motorway protest, Glasgow, c. 1994
3. Alastair McIntosh, Chief Stone Eagle & Mt Roineabhal, 1994 - Murdo Macleod
4. Jimmy Sweeney, Carhenge at Pollok Free State, c. 1994 - Drew Farrell



RUST IN PEACE

