



Università  
Ca' Foscari  
Venezia

**Master's Degree**

**In**

**EUROPEAN, AMERICAN AND POSTCOLONIAL LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

Final Thesis

**The Highland Clearances in Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean's Poetry**

**Supervisor**

Ch.Prof. Marco Fazzini

**Assistant supervisor**

Ch.Prof. Alessandro Scarsella

**Graduand**

Ali Abdul Rahman

Matriculation number

882218

**Academic Year**

2021/2022



## **Table of Content**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>p. 5</b>
<b>Chapter I <i>Colonialism and Scottish Renaissance Movement.</i></b>	<b>p. 7</b>
<b>1. English Colonisation in Scotland</b>	<b>p. 7</b>
<b>2. The Highland Clearances</b>	<b>p. 19</b>
<b>3. MacDiarmid / MacLean and the Movement</b>	<b>p. 26</b>
<b>Chapter II <i>History and Land.</i></b>	<b>p. 35</b>
<b>1. Awareness of History and its Significance</b>	<b>p. 35</b>
<b>2. Anger and the Clearances</b>	<b>p. 44</b>
<b>3. Nostalgia and the Clearances</b>	<b>p. 55</b>
<b>Chapter III: <i>Ideology/ies and Politics.</i></b>	<b>p. 64</b>
<b>1. The Identity and the Other</b>	<b>p. 64</b>
<b>2. Celtic Rhetoric Vs. Capitalism</b>	<b>p. 81</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>p. 87</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>p. 89</b>



## **Introduction:**

The aim of this dissertation is to study the importance of the Highland Clearances as a specific historical event that had a great impact on the collective Scottish memory and the future cultural production of that country. It is mainly focused on the poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean, showing the effect of the Highland Clearances on their poetry.

This dissertation mainly studies the early history of Scotland to underline the development of the Scottish nationalism and the impact of the English colonial rhetoric and politics against Scotland, highlighting some of the main historic events of Scotland such as the Union of the Scottish and English crowns with king James of 1603, the Union of Parliaments in 1707 and the Jacobite rebellions, also giving a boarder scope of Scottish conflict before the Clearances. It will be mainly concentrated on the events of the Highland Clearances through a postcolonial approach showing aspects of the English internal colonisation of the so-called United Kingdom and the Scottish gaze on this colonising politics.

This dissertation discusses the rise of the Scottish Renaissance Movement led by Hugh MacDiarmid in the 1920s, and the reasons that pushed for a cultural revival of a colonised nation. It demonstrates the difference between the Scottish Renaissance movement and previous cultural revival movements in their content and style of writing. Therefore, it presents biographical details about Hugh MacDiarmid as a leader of this revival and of his friend Sorley MacLean, following the development of a parallel Gaelic revival and the development of the poets' shared goals. This dissertation explains two different feelings presented by the two poets in their poetry about the Clearances, in particular a contradiction

of feelings of anger and nostalgia as presented in a distinct style and approach if confronted with previous writers.

Finally, it portrays the problematic conflict between nationalism and ideology as it is presented in Hugh MacDiarmid's poetry and life. This dissertation argues about the concept of nationalism and investigates how MacDiarmid and MacLean used their left-wing ideologies as a weapons against the capitalist control over their land, forces and politics that were responsible of most of the events of the Highland Clearances. I analyse how this approach made the two poets present the Celtic culture as an opponent to the capitalist culture.

## **Chapter I: Colonialism and Scottish Renaissance Movement.**

The first chapter follows the rise of the Scottish Renaissance Movement and its background. I discuss the reasons led to its rising by starting from the very beginning of the English colonization and the Scottish history. I highlight the historical events that made significant changes due to the English colonisation, shedding light on the impact of the English cultural colonisation and their results on the Scottish community and identity, till the events of the Highland Clearances.

### **1. English Colonisation in Scotland.**

It is important to offer here an exploratory overview of the Scottish history. It will be related to the understanding of the main issues discussed in this dissertation regarding Nationalism, the Highland Clearances and the development of contemporary politics. In this chapter, I will discuss the main historical events that led Scotland to be treated as an English colony which is the main element in the literature of the Scottish Renaissance of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

By looking at the History of the British Islands we see them as a disunited body with a constant clash against the unity of their parts. On the other hand, it can also be seen as a clash over power and resistance on the other hand.

Scotland as a unified nation and kingdom was being built when Kenneth Mac Alpin dissolved the Kingdoms of Picts and of the Scots to form the Kingdom of Alba in 843 AD.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Jenny Wormald. *Scotland: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 32.

However, during the 11th and 12th centuries, the troubles inside the Kingdom of Alba concerning the succession to the throne started to pave the way for the English to interfere. After the death of Malcolm III, the English were supporting Malcolm's sons, Duncan II along with Edgar for claiming the throne against Malcolm's brother Donald Bàn.

The reason behind this is the King of England's desire to make the Scottish throne a vassalage to his own by supporting the inauguration of the weak children of Malcolm III and this started a series of Scottish Kings under the influence of the English crown.

The first one, Duncan II, was grown up in the English court being anglicised and hence he would be an English vassal of England. Eventually, when he became as an English servant, he was killed by Donald Bàn. But once again, the English put another vassal, Edgar 1097–1107 by supporting him against his uncle. Then the third brother Alexander I 1107–1124, who was under the influence of the English King that he also married the illegitimate daughter of Henry I King of England, Sybilla of Normandy, plus gave his sister Matilda to marry the king of England.<sup>2</sup>

After that, the youngest son of Malcolm also became King, David I 1124-1153, where Henry I King of England gave his sister Maud of Huntington to marry David and thus he became the Earl of Huntington. By that, Henry made sure that he got his influence over David and during his reign Scotland witnessed systematic, cultural and socio-economic changes which resulted by making Scotland being more anglicised. Moreover, helping in influencing the feudal system that most of the knights and clergy were English-speakers.

---

<sup>2</sup> Rosalind Mitchison. *A History of Scotland*. New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 12-13.



King David I did all of that with the permission to establish the English superiority. This superiority was more assured during the reign of King of Scotland William I when he was forced to sign the treaty of Falaise 1174 to vow homage to Henry II King of England.<sup>3</sup>

A very important passage of English interference with the Scottish throne happened after the death of Alexander III in 1286 when with this interference the British Islands would witness a lot of pronounced consequences.

The death of Alexander III left the throne with no heir except for his granddaughter Margret who was not of age at that time. She could not solve this political crisis. Hence, the nobilities founded a Committee of Guardians (or Guardians of Scotland) to rule until the inauguration of a new ruler.

However, the Queen died after four years and once again the crisis began. Here begins the sparkle of what was called 'Wars of Independence'. According to the historian Rosalind Mitchison, she believes that despite that the national Scottish feeling was already existing, "the concept of patriotism was created by the war."<sup>4</sup>

Thirteen royals claimed their right to the throne, two of them were the Lord of Galloway John Balliol and the other was the Lord of Annandale Robert Bruce.

Considering the ineptitude of the Scottish nobles to solve the crisis, the English crown took the chance to interfere when it was King Edward I of England who did control the Scottish affairs even more deliberately than Henry II.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Wormald cit., p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Mitchison cit., p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Wormald cit., p. 47.

Because Bruce did not consent to Edward's condition of being loyal to the English crown, Balliol agreed to it and was made the King of Scotland. However, when he was asked by Edward for his support against the French, Balliol supported the French instead and the English king considered it as a betrayal. So, he decided to invade Scotland in 1296.

Scotland was defeated and Balliol was put into prison, therefore Scotland was independent no more, and it was under the English crown so “Edward treated Scotland as a conquered country”<sup>6</sup> followed by humiliation of Scottish symbols and nation. Moreover, Post-conquered Scotland started to systematically copy the English administration. Even the law system started to be a mix between Gaelic and English<sup>7</sup> which is an important point that powers the process of colonising and anglicising Scotland. That was going to develop over the years.

That resulted in a revolt led by the infamous Scottish knight William Wallace. Despite his success in defeating the English that made him the only guardian of Scotland in 1298, he was defeated after resignation. The war was mostly on the southwest castles and Bruce was made a Guardian and formed an alliance with another Guardian, John Comyn to fight for Independence. However, both of them wanted the throne and both believed that the other was conspiring with the English, so Bruce killed Comyn in 1306 and he was crowned king despite the fact that Balliol was still alive.<sup>8</sup>

By 1328 Bruce secured Scotland’s independence and freedom by signing the Treaty of Edinburgh–Northampton, also securing his position as King, putting an end to the first

---

<sup>6</sup> Mitchison cit., p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Lynch. *Scotland: A New History*. London: Pimlico, 1992, pp. 120-125.

independence war.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, after Bruce's death, the same scenario of having an underage ruler came again along with its consequences and problems.

David II was the King of Scotland in 1329 at the age of five, after the death of his father Robert the Bruce. This led to chaos for claiming the crown and again between the Bruces and the Balliols. In addition to that, of course, England interfered with supporting Edward Balliol (son of John Balliol) who was under the control of the English throne against King David.

Despite David was being defeated, he could recover and get the Scottish lands back with the support of his nephew Robert the Steward and Balliol lost his people's support to his cause of disinheritance. However, David decided to invade England and he was captured during the battle of Neville's Cross in 1346 for eleven years.

The war ended with the Treaty of Berwick 1357 that showed another face of English colonialism towards Scotland by agreeing to release the Scottish King in return for paying 100,000 merks. The money was of course coming from the taxes collected from the Scottish population.<sup>10</sup>

After the death of David II, his nephew Robert the Steward was King Robert II of Scotland in 1316. The Stuart family ruled for the following three hundred years that were not peaceful but witnessed for example the 'rough wooing' years 1543-1551 "proved as counter-productive as it was destructive...by the popular perception of Henry VIII as a brutal tyrant intent on subjecting Scottish right to English might"<sup>11</sup> where Henry VIII ordered Hertford to

---

<sup>9</sup> Mitchison cit., pp. 30-37.

<sup>10</sup> Mitchison cit., pp. 38-40.

<sup>11</sup> Wormald cit., p. 106.

even burn Edinburgh. It was followed after the English Reformation when Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church and also during the Hundred Years' War with France.

The English attack on Scotland was a response to the Scottish-French historical alliance. Another reason was also to force the marriage between Mary Queen of Scots to the English heir Edward son of Henry VIII.

Mary became the Queen after the death of her father, King James V, by the hands of the English army in the battle of Solway Moss. The battle was urged by Henry VIII King when James refused the English request to break from the Catholic Church as the English did.

However, it is fundamental here to highlight that during the period of Reformation, Protestantism was brought to Scotland by the reverent John Knox. Knox met with John Calvin in Geneva where he was taught by Calvin about the Reformed theology, so Knox tried to spread Calvinism in Scotland. This helped to increase the fight between Catholic France and Reformed England over Scottish Reformation.<sup>12</sup>

Moving to James VI, son of Mary of Scots, he was made King at the age of one because his mother Mary had to abandon the throne before her death in 1567. What is important here is that during the reign of James, Britain witnessed a major event in its history which is the Union of the Crowns between Scotland and England.

James was, different from his mother, a Protestant. In 1586 James, along with the English Queen Elizabeth I, had the Treaty of Berwick which is a peace agreement. In the treaty, James secured to be the heir of the childless Queen in case she would not have any heirs so James

---

<sup>12</sup> Mitchison cit., pp. 90-92.

would be the legitimate heir to the English throne by his great grandmother Margaret Tudor.<sup>13</sup>

However, after two years from the agreement, Elizabeth had executed James' mother Mary accusing her of treason and plotting to murder Elizabeth. But James gained what Mary wanted, James would be King of England and Ireland after Elizabeth's death. That caused what is now known as the Union of the Crowns in 1603. I will stop at some crucial events during the reign of James VI in Scotland before and after the Union.

in 1598 he published *The True Law of Free Monarchies* in which he argues about the totalitarian divine kingship because, as he claims, he wants to 'civilise' and to 'discipline' the local society in his kingdom by abolishing the semi-autonomous localities by having direct control over them out of fear of the extending of the local system of session and Presbytery courts (local church ministers) from the Highland till the Lowland society.<sup>14</sup>

James' idea of 'civilising' the Scottish, reminisces about the 'civilising missions' led by Western European countries onto non-European nations. King James used the same ideology justifying their colonisation overseas and applying it to their people which will lead to the creation of 'internal colonies' as we will discuss the case of the Highlands in the next chapter.

Another event I would like to highlight is that after the unification, James moved his court from Scotland to London and he did not visit Scotland but just once.

By analysing these two events, we can see that the period of more than five centuries of English attitude towards the Scottish, from their meddling in the internal Scottish affairs since the end of the reign of Malcolm III, created on the long term an inferior-superior relation

---

<sup>13</sup> Lynch cit., pp. 132-134.

<sup>14</sup> Wormald cit., p.121.

between the Scottish and the English which is also affirmed by Henry VIII when he argued, before his invasion of Scotland, about the feudal submission of Scotland which “had been affirmed uninterruptedly from the earliest times until the reign of the English king Henry VI”.<sup>15</sup>

These events can be read as the cause of James’ VI inferiority complex within himself by approximating and verging on the notion of ‘Internalised oppression’, where people of the marginalised group start viewing themselves, or the group they belong to, in an oppressive negative stereotypical way: “the problem also involves a devaluation or inferiorization of one’s self and one’s group”<sup>16</sup> which leads to internal discrimination.

This complex led him to handle Scotland as a foreign country of his and even look at his people, the Scottish, as he does at the indigenous people of his colonies. For example, James had an idea for the Island of Iona (Isle of the Hebrides) “to be granted for a rent to a band of Lowland colonists called the Fife Adventurers, headed nominally by the Duke of Lennox”.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, James established English education in the Lowland and later the government required the Highlanders to send their children for Lowland education. This was done by the School Establishment Act 1616 which shows systematic colonisation of the indigenous culture and nation of Scotland. The Act states that schools should promote Protestantism and English to be established in opposition to Gaelic because the Gaelic language, according to them, is somehow, the reason for barbarity and incivility.<sup>18</sup> This played a major role in penetrating the clan system of the Highlands and their clan chiefs starting from this point. We will have a

---

<sup>15</sup> David Armitage. *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp .37-38.

<sup>16</sup> David, E.J.R. *Internalized Oppression the Psychology of Marginalized Groups*. New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2014, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Mitchison cit., p. 131.

<sup>18</sup> "Scotch Laws Relating to Education". *Of the Education of the Poor*, London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1809, pp. 261-62.

broader view of the Highland and the Isles of Hebrides' history in the next chapter. Moreover, Scots started significantly losing its position as a prestige language with the Reformation and the publication of King James Version of the Bible 1611. The decline became quicker after the Act of Union 1707.

This abandonment of Gaelic culture was for the sake of building a new British identity after the Union of the crowns. However, having two separate parliaments was creating an ambiguous idea of what a true nation should be.

In 1607 James was arguing at the English parliament about the possibility of union, the Scottish parliament was arguing in opposition ardently about their concerns that Scotland to be put down as a province, because it "was now important to remind the king that Scotland was his 'ancient and native kingdom' which should not be 'disordered and made confused'".<sup>19</sup>

Moving to the 18th century and particularly to the year 1707 when the Acts of Union took place under the reign of Queen Anne. She shared with James VI the same mentality of anglicization and also worrying to conclude the union. However, Queen Anne faced many obstacles in order to complete that union.

The English desire to secure the throne to a non-Catholic but a Protestant heir, in particular the Hanoverian monarchy, was their direct motivation to complete this union. This is because the throne is reserved to a Protestant by the Act of Settlement 1701 by the English parliament but only in England and not in Scotland. This problem raised because Anne lost all her five children plus twelve miscarriages thus there were no heirs to the throne.

---

<sup>19</sup> Wormald cit., p.127.

The Scottish parliament responded to the English one with the 1704 Act of Security 1704 it required a Protestant heir but of Scottish descendant, trying to regain the Stuart monarchy.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the English responded with the 1705 Alien Act to force Scotland towards the union. In this Act, Scottish were threatened to be treated as foreign nationals, plus, economic sanctions on their export and import also of arms in order to prevent an invasion from Scotland and by that the Scots were made to accept the union “It was only in their anger that the Scots were united.”<sup>21</sup> The two parliaments passed the two Acts of Union to form the Treaty of Union in 1706 forming the Kingdom of Great Britain making Anne Queen of Great Britain and Ireland. Also both parliaments united forming the parliament of Great Britain and, surely, based in Westminster in London. The Scots had to send their Member of Parliament to Westminster but the ratio compared to the English one was quite unjust and a mean representation for the Scottish population. This made this parliament an enlarged English one.

For many Scots, the union was a surrender of the Scottish political and national independence and there were many immediate protests against the union in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Nonetheless, all of these problematic issues regarding the union were growing more to public frustration in Scotland. It led to the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745 to restore the throne to the Stuarts after the Hanoverian took it when George I came in 1714 after Anne’s death.

The Jacobite rebellion of 1715 was led by James Francis Edward Stuart, son of King James II. He attempted to regain the throne to his family claiming to be named James III. He was supported by the Jacobite army. Moreover, it is essential to highlight the fact that the Jacobite

---

<sup>20</sup> Jim Smyth. “Arguments for and against Union: Scotland and Ireland, 1700-2000.” *Ireland and Scotland: Culture and Society, 1700-2000*. Eds. Liam McIlvanney and Ray Ryan. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005. 23-37.

<sup>21</sup> Mitchison cit., pp.234-236.



rising was supported by the intellectual and educated Scots <sup>22</sup> hence Jacobitism was not merely a military movement, but it was a movement of resistance that is based on a local identity and aware of the past and successive consequences of Scotland's submission.

Despite the progress the Jacobites made, they were defeated in the Battle of Preston and it was the main reason for ending it. However, the Highland troop kept in rebellion because it was hard to be under English control<sup>23</sup> so the government passed the Disarming Act 1716 to diminish Highland clans of arms.

As for the second rebellion, the protagonist was the son of James Francis Edward Stuart, Charles Edward Stuart in 1745. The Highlanders played a major role in this rebellion since Charles raised it at Glenfinnan in the Highlands and they were composing the majority of the army.<sup>24</sup> The Jacobites seized Edinburgh marching till Derby where they decided to retreat back to Scotland. Finally, in 1746 they fought the Battle of Culloden where they were defeated by the British army. Moreover, the Crown knew that this rebellion was critical and threatening so the government took brutal actions against the Highlanders to prevent similar events in the future. Burning houses and crops in the Highland by the British army led to a famine for most of the Highland population. They imprisoned clansmen, "120 were executed, nearly a thousand transported to America".<sup>25</sup>

The English government passed Acts that changed the social and economic nature of the Highland aiming at sabotaging the clan system on this land.

---

<sup>22</sup> Kieran German. "Jacobite Politics in Aberdeen and the '15." *Loyalty and Identity: Jacobites at Home and Abroad*, by Monod Paul Kléber et al., London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp.82-83.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Szechi. "Retrieving Captain Le Cocq's Plunder: Plebeian Scots and the Aftermath of the 1715 Rebellion" *Loyalty and Identity: Jacobites at Home and Abroad*, by Monod Paul Kléber et al., London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.99.

<sup>24</sup> Mitchison cit., p. 263.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid p.265.

The Act of Proscription helped the English government not only to disarm the highlanders but also make it illegal to wear highland clothing. The Heritable Jurisdictions Act of 1746 is one of the most effective ones. According to this Act the British government abolished the juridical power held by the clan chiefs of the Highlands transforming them into landlords, playing a major role in the Highland clearances. These Acts show what plans the government had for the Highland after Culloden that will be erasing and changing its culture, system and at the end its own demography.

## 2. The Highland Clearances.

The Scottish collective memory is influenced by the events of the Highland Clearances. Many historians describe the Clearances as the most painful themes of modern Scottish history, becoming a symbol of Scottish suffering affecting future politics and cultural production.

Here, I will discuss the event of the Clearances relying on a postcolonial approach to show the Clearances' outcomes on Scottish culture and society and arguing about the motivations and reasons of that event which manifests only another facet of a systematic colonisation.

The Clearances are a long process of eviction of the Highland and Islands inhabitants which was synchronised with the Industrial Revolution. It is also called the 'Improvement' of the Highlands following the Jacobite rising when the Highland was looked at as an uncivilised isolated and dangerous place and the "change of the entire form of Highland society was forced faster by government fiat after the defeat of the Jacobite uprising"<sup>26</sup>. In fact, the Highland like all other areas, had to cope with the new age of industrialization; the penetration of the clan system by the English was accelerating the process of the 'modernization' of the Highland society. The English made the Highland landowners closer to the rest of the British aristocracy.<sup>27</sup>

They became anglicised, speaking English and followed the logic of the English market. However, the historian Eric Richards argues that landlords (chiefs) started to shift from their

---

<sup>26</sup> Eric Richards. *The Highland Clearances: People, Landlords, and Rural Turmoil*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2002. p.32.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Clyde. *From Rebel to Hero. The Image of the Highlander, 1745-1830*, East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998. p. 17.

traditional commitment to clanship towards “a more commercial use of the lands and the clans” even a century before Culloden.<sup>28</sup>

One of the fundamental aspects of the clan system is actually the bond between the clan chief and his tenants. To put it clearly, it is an exchange of loyalty to the chief in return for collective security so that, the chief is obliged to protect his tenants and the land itself. According to this system, the people should not be separated from their land, so that this connection to the land which is called ‘Dùthchas’ expresses their right to rent the land from the landowners. This system had a sense of social solidarity in the pre-industrial time when the relationship between the tenants and their leader was more resilient than following times.<sup>29</sup>

However, these landlords started to be more and more detached from their land also physically. In fact, most of them started to be in London and far from their tenants. Being commercialised, the landlords started to industrialise their estates being concerned about growing their resources to fulfil the needs of the marketplace. they introduced new means of production, starting to exclude agriculture which Highlanders entirely depended on and begin to see the land as a production place for the needs of the growing industrial cities.

Landlords started to invest in the cattle production to adjust to the southern market, and for that, they constructed new villages, therefore, resettled part of the population<sup>30</sup> (HC41-42) showing that the first phase of the Clearances started before the year of the sheep 1792. Hence, the Clearances did not happen on a particular date, it was a developing process. For example, by the year 1669 Argyle witnessed a mass eviction of inhabitants from the islands

---

<sup>28</sup> Richards cit., p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid p. 35.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid pp. 41-42.

of Shuna, Luing, Torosay and Seil due to the cattle production investments.<sup>31</sup> This led to a decrease in agricultural labour yet still not greatly affecting the whole agrarian life.

Nevertheless, investment shifted greatly to Cheviot clearly by the year 1792 because owners were persuaded by the profit they would get from this new breed's wool as it was already starting in the south. The investment required the reduction of tenants from their lands in favour of the increasing of a farm size economy. According to Richards, the driving force to the Clearances is the increasing price of the sheep of more than 400 percent during the first two decades of the 19th century compared to the price during the 1780s.<sup>32</sup>

It is inevitable here to highlight the importance of the growing population in the Highlands. It is a pivotal element to understand the politics of the Clearances. Between 1750 and 1831 birth rate increased, in some areas, more than 200% in less than a century which meant having "a large input of labour for a relatively small increase in production".<sup>33</sup> This was another reason for the Highlanders to migrate from the glens and straths to search for employment in the towns of central Scotland mainly on the coast to work in fishing or the kelp industry leaving behind them their land to be used for sheep farming as it was planned,<sup>34</sup> marking the first wave of clearances which is mainly inside Scotland itself.

This overpopulation was an obstacle to the landlords who wanted to raise their lease revenue or raise the conditions of their tenantry. They had "inevitably to reduce the pressure of population on the land" thus landlords started to increase the rent imposed upon their

---

<sup>31</sup> Richards, cit., p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid p.71.

<sup>33</sup> Rosalind Mitchison. "The Highland Clearances" *Scottish Economic & Social History*, 1981. 1:1, p.5

<sup>34</sup> Allan I. Macinnes. "Scottish Gaeldom: The First Phase of Clearance". In Devine, T M; Mitchison, Rosalind (eds.). *People and Society in Scotland, Volume 1, 1760–1830.*, 1988 Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd. p. 71.

tenants starting from the year 1780. That made living conditions even worse for the Scots and played a major role in their emigration. There was a contrast in this regard during that period because landlords were sometimes standing against the emigration and sometimes supporting it.

People who stayed and did not emigrate by themselves to the coastal areas were forced to be evicted. According to James Loch, who is an advocate contemporary and a witness of the Sutherland clearances, these “tenants added but little to the industry, and nothing to the wealth of the empire”<sup>35</sup>. This cruelty of applying capitalist economy controlling people destiny can be seen also by the writing of Patrick Sellar who was, as a factor, managing properties of Elizabeth Leveson-Gower, Duchess of Sutherland:

“Without such an effectual arrangement justice is not done either to the people who reside where they cant benefit Society, or the Country which by the presence of people where they should be absent, and by their absence where industry is required”<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, cruelty was in the way these people were evicted. Patrick Sellar was accused of burning people’s houses after they were evicted so they would never come back. It draws the image of the sheep colonisation over the people’s land, or in other words, the capitalist industrial colonisation of the people’s land. They were “in other words...to colonize at home”<sup>37</sup> as Sir John Sinclair says clearly in his own words.

---

<sup>35</sup> James Loch. *An Account of the Improvements on the Estates of the Marquess of Stafford*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown. 1820. p. 51.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Sellar. *The Sutherland Evictions of 1814*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883.

<sup>37</sup> John Sinclair. *General Report of the Agricultural State and Political Circumstances of Scotland Drawn up for the Consideration of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement*. Vol. I Edinburgh: Abernethy and Walker. 1841. p. 120.

What makes these actions frustrating for the Highlanders is that by these actions landlords broke the notion of Dùthchas and that represents the sense of betrayal Highlanders felt and suffered.

Sellar's brutality during his evictions resulted in death and injuries of the people with testimonies showing that it included pregnant women and elder people that Sellar knew and said they will not be removed from their land without endangering their lives <sup>38</sup>. However, the court found Sellar not guilty which gave the consent to the Sutherland clearances to continue so that "the landlord was entitled to clear the people, resettle them, and destroy their houses and barns". <sup>39</sup>

Karl Marx considers that the Highlands were depopulated in order to make way for the capitalist sheep grazing. He wrote about the events of the Clearances, as Davidson observes: "in 1853, Marx wrote several newspaper articles, some of which were later incorporated into *Capital*, attacking the treatment of the Highlanders during the Clearances"<sup>40</sup>. Moreover, Marx exploits the hypocrisy of the landlords who were opposing the North American slavery while they were evicting their own people from their lands. In addition, he compared the Highlanders to the Native Americans and the Indians under the British rule.

However, some landlords gave people the possibility to resettle on the fringe of the estate for fishing and kelp production, as mentioned before, and people had no other choice. This shows how landlords controlled and changed the Highland landscape according to their

---

<sup>38</sup> Richards, cit., p. 144.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid p. 148

<sup>40</sup> Neil Davidson. "Marx and Engels on the Scottish Highlands" *Science & Society*, Fall, 2001, Vol. 65, No. 3 p. 287.

benefit. They even made benefit out of the evicted people to work for their own new kind of investments.

Nonetheless, between the years 1815-20, landlords were facing an economic crisis due to the reality of the collapse of their investment in wool because of its decreasing prices. Moreover, the kelp industry, in which landlords pushed their people to work in it, also collapsed. This business failure made the investors (landlords) in debt. So, they started pushing people into outward emigration which was mainly to Canada and Australia in order to cut their losses by paying their tenants to emigrate. However, the conditions themselves along with the difficult circumstances were pushing the poorest to emigrate, even begging their landlords to help them to emigrate.<sup>41</sup>

The events happened with Clearances and their consequences are a perfect example of internal colonisation making the Highlands a domestic colony. Domestic colonisation “is the common ideology used to justify domestic colonies, rooted in three key principles—segregation, agrarian labour, and improvement”<sup>42</sup>. The elements of the seizure of resources, taking advantage of the evicted people for the sake of a capitalist investment led to the newly created industries, subverting the Celtic culture and society. All these elements go under the sphere of the colonial experience showing the English capitalist dominance in the Celtic periphery where ‘national development’ took place by dissolving the Celtic cultural identity (language, social system and local economy) to “begin to lose social significance, and become blurred” going along with the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two

---

<sup>41</sup> Eric Richards. *Debating the Highland Clearances*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. p. 61.

<sup>42</sup> Barbara Arneil. *Domestic Colonies: The Turn Inward to Colony*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. p. 4.



groups, widening the gap of the superior-inferior relation<sup>43</sup> and making the clearances itself part of the mechanism of the internal colonisation processing the English dominance over the Celtic periphery.

The Clearances left the Scots with a collective trauma that led to making it a symbol for their struggle. Transforming it into a Scottish cultural phenomenon, it got political implications since the rise of nationalism in the later part of the 20th century. Moreover, affecting the Scottish literary production at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of the Scottish Renaissance Movement, the Clearances represented a major theme for poetry and the expression of different emotions, ideologies and notions, transforming the Highlands as a metaphorical place representing Scotland as a whole with its history, people, culture and future.

---

<sup>43</sup> Michael Hechter. *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*. University of California Press, 1975. p. 5-10.

### 3. MacDiarmid / MacLean and the Movement.

Christopher Murray Grieve was born in Arkinholm Terrace in Langholm, a small textile town less than ten miles north of the English-Scottish border. Grieve's interest and appetite for reading started developing in his childhood due to the fact that his family lived above the town library where he had permanent access because his mother worked there.<sup>44</sup> Grieve's socialist tendencies can be traced since he was sixteen. In 1908 he was a student at Broughton Higher Grade School in Edinburgh where the socialist George Ogilvie taught Scottish literature and took particular attention to Grieve's potential that he invited Grieve for discussions on literature and politics. Grieve joined in the same year the Edinburgh University branch of the socialist and literary debating Fabian society.<sup>45</sup>

However, Grieve started his career as an editor in magazines and journals in the following year and started writing for a socialist newspaper in Wales reporting the riots of the coal miners developing, as he describes in a letter to Ogilvie, feelings of 'antipathy' towards the English resulting in writing, as he describes 'anti-English' verses "not dissimilar to certain products of Irish revival. More important is the way in which my attention for the first time turned to Scottish Nationalism"<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, at the outbreak of World War One, he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in Greece and France. We can see that political developments and events around him were stimulating his own political-ideological developments, starting with the Easter Rising for

---

<sup>44</sup> Gordon Wright. *MacDiarmid: an illustrated biography of Christopher Murray Grieve* (Hugh MacDiarmid) Edinburgh: Gordon Wright Publishing, 1977, p.23

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 25

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 28

independence in Ireland in 1916, the Russian Communist Revolution of 1917, and WWI itself. Being himself participating in WWI, "Grieve returned home armed from the war to challenge the idea of history as an imperial project of capitalist expansion"<sup>47</sup>. MacDiarmid's aim was for a political modernism taking imperialism as its main target and he saw the importance of Scottish history to rebuild the nation and its future against the English legacy and imperialism. As Lyall Scott mentions, WWI made MacDiarmid have a national identity crisis. The pointlessness of the war made him meditate, in a Scottish sense, on the notions "of patriotism, democracy and the imperial purpose of history"<sup>48</sup>. Moreover, nationalistic revolutions worldwide also stimulated his question. The 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland followed a poem by the Irish Literary Revival poet William Butler Yeats dedicated to that Irish uprising against British rule.

Hugh MacDiarmid's notions of Scottish literary revival during the 1920s in fact were not novel. In 1898 Thomas Finlayson Henderson published *Scottish Vernacular Literature* which highlights and reminds of the native Scottish literature's history, being unique and separate from the English one. Henderson stressed the importance of distinguishing between the Scottish vernacular production, not referring to vulgar but to national Scottish literature and the Anglo-Scottish literature (English as the medium of expression). However, what Henderson was doing is that preserving the traditional literature, thus there was not a contemporary literary production as Scottish modernism yet at that time. The period of post-World War I shows the significant influence of the war on the modernist style and way of expression. The war was a shock for the fact of the non-existence of a radiant

---

<sup>47</sup> Scott Lyall. *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place: Imagining a Scottish Republic*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, p. 24.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

world which led to cultural, social, and political implications of the post-1918 period. I would like to mention that this is expressed in the most influential modernist poem *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot being appreciated by contemporary readers as it reflects the collective hopelessness and negativity at that time<sup>49</sup>. In the post-war context, Scottish modernism was born in its ideological nature that was urged by Christopher Murray Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid) gathering intellectuals like Neil Gunn, Edwin Muir, and others to support his impulse of the revival. This revival modernist movement became known as the 'Scottish Renaissance'. However, the fact that the movement was essentially a nationalistic movement influenced mainly by the mid-19th century Irish Literary Revival makes some critics see the essential aspect of nationalism of the Scottish Renaissance movement opposed to modernity and its internationalism.<sup>50</sup>

Nonetheless, MacDiarmid began calling out for the Scottish revival in August 1922 in his literary journal *The Scottish Chapbook* where Edwin Muir was writing too. Also in other journals MacDiarmid was promoting for the Scottish Renaissance by publishing literary Scottish works where he was editing in 1923 the weekly *Scottish Nation* and the *Northern Review* in 1924 alongside writing for the *Glasgow Herald*, *Scots Observer* and the *Scots Magazine*.

Going back to *The Scottish Chapbook*, he used a quotation from the Italian poet, Giuseppe Giusti, on the front page of every issue of that journal that says: (Il fare un libro è meno che niente, se il libro fatto non rifà la gente 'to make a book is less than nothing unless the book,

---

<sup>49</sup> Margery McCulloch. *Scottish Modernism and Its Contexts 1918-1959 Literature, National Identity and Cultural Exchange*. Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

when made, makes people anew').<sup>51</sup> This expresses his aspiration and plan to significantly change the Scottish literary production into a new form and content that would affect and express the public opinion itself going into a socio-political confrontational approach. By founding *The Scottish Chapbook* literary journal, MacDiarmid gave the space for the inclined literary intellectuals to be heard and seen in their own style and language, thus creating a space for Scots to initiate putting Scots on the map of contemporary Scottish and European literature.

He manifested the journal's aims to bring Scottish literature closer to the contemporary European technique and invention "aligned with contemporary tendencies in European thought and expression"<sup>52</sup> while preserving and developing the distinctively Scottish scale of principles.

The journal's target, which is the Movement too, demonstrates its rootedness in the national soil and its international context at the same time which is also shown in MacDiarmid's political ideology and activity. Political internationalism is implied in most of the Movement's poets in their socialist republican ideology, most prominently in MacDiarmid's socialism.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, this contrast between nationalism and internationalism came up as a problem for him in his political activity. MacDiarmid co-founded the National Party of Scotland (NPS) with James Graham in 1928 which later became the Scottish National Party (SNP) in 1934. However, MacDiarmid was expelled from the NPS in 1933 for being radical in his nationalism and extremist. In the following year, he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB)

---

<sup>51</sup> Roderick Watson. "Scottish literary renaissance (act. c. 1920–1945)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 24. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.1.

<sup>52</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid. *Annals of the Five Senses: And Other Stories, Sketches and Plays*, eds Roderick Watson and Alan Riach, Manchester: Carcanet, 1999, p. 17.

<sup>53</sup> Alan Riach. *Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography: The Masks of the Modern Nation*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 127.

writing his poem 'First Hymn to Lenin' but still promoting his separatist ideas for Scotland.<sup>54</sup> And still, he was expelled from the CPGB in 1938 for his nationalist views. Nonetheless, for MacDiarmid, writing in Scots and the vernacular instead of English was an expression of artistic seriousness and according to him demonstrates nationalism in opposition to Scotland's distorted culture and language since the Reformation, the Acts of Union, and the birth of the Industrial Revolution.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, writing his poem 'A Drunk Man Looking at the Thistle' in 1926 was seen by many of his contemporaries as a manifesto of the Movement and a manifesto of his war against the Union itself in an experimental vernacular verse marking the deviation from the previous generations' poetry. For him, "Dialect is the language of the common people; in literature it denotes an almost overweening attempt to express the here-and-now"<sup>56</sup>.

Achieving the revival in Scots by MacDiarmid there was still the urge for a Gaelic Modernist production within the Movement which was achieved later by Sorley MacLean (Somhairle MacGill-Eain) who became one of the most important modern Scottish poets. Sorley MacLean was born in Òsgaig in the isle of Raasay (Ratharsair) a small island lying off the east coast of the Isle of Skye, on 26 October 1911. His birthplace and Skye play a major theme in his poetry. He grew up in a Gaelic-speaking family with his father who had a great "interest in all kinds of Gaelic poetry". MacLean mentions how his grandmother's Gaelic songs influenced his work<sup>57</sup> building on his rootedness in his land and culture.

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Lyall cit., p. 34.

<sup>56</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> Somhairle MacGill-Eain (Sorley MacLean), and Christopher Whyte. *Somhairle MacGill-Eain / Sorley MacLean / Dàin Do Eimhir / Poems to Eimhir*. Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2002, p.143.

Being brought up in Raasay engaged him in the Highland history and Gaelic culture. Nonetheless, his family was Free Presbyterian as Raasay was one of the Free Presbyterian centres. In an interview MacLean recalls later in his life how the Gaelic preaching he had heard in Raasay affected his poetry saying that “the long preachings and prayers in Gaelic at the Free Presbyterian Church and the Free Church, combined with our family’s richness in oral tradition on more than one side, had a very considerable effect on me”.<sup>58</sup> However, as MacLean says, at the age of twelve he gave up Secederism (the Free Presbyterian church) and became a Socialist<sup>59</sup> but he did not join the Communist party later in his life. However, his leftist ideology led him eventually to join the Scottish Labour Party saying in an interview that “the existence and the successes of the Scottish Nationalist Party are the great hope of Gaelic”<sup>60</sup>.

MacLean moved to Edinburgh at the age of eighteen to study English literature at the University of Edinburgh when he started writing poems in English and in Gaelic. One of his early Gaelic poem is ‘A’ Chorra-Gridheach’ which he wrote in 1931 and he says about this poem in the preface to *O Choille gu Bearradh* “I thought it better than any of my English stuff, and because of that – but also for patriotic reasons – I stopped writing verse in English and destroyed all the English stuff I could lay hands-on”.<sup>61</sup> These ‘patriotic’ feelings can be also traced during his years of study and the university where he joined the Edinburgh University Labour Club as a start for his political consciousness and identity which is formed by his Highland background and being influenced by the history of the Clearances.

---

<sup>58</sup> Donald Archie MacDonald. “Some Aspects of Family and Local Background: an Interview with Sorley MacLean” *Sorley MacLean Critical Essays*, ed. Raymond J. Ross and Joy Hendry. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1986, p. 216.

<sup>59</sup> MacLean and Whyte cit., p. 141-142.

<sup>60</sup> Angus Nicolson. “An Interview with Sorley MacLean,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* Vol. 14, 1979, p .35.

<sup>61</sup> Somhairle MacGill-Eain (MacLean Sorley). *O Choille gu Bearradh*. London: Vintage 1989: xiv.

During his last year at the University in 1933, MacLean was introduced to the works of Hugh MacDiarmid and after his graduation he went to study at Moray House Teachers' Training College in Edinburgh where he met with Hugh MacDiarmid where they began their acquaintance developing into a friendship<sup>62</sup>. However, after a year MacLean decided to go back to Skye as a teacher of English in a high school but to move again in 1937 to Mull which according to him despite being a beautiful place, going there was a traumatic experience for a Gael like him and because in Mull many MacLeans were evicted during the Highland Clearances and he saw there "the Clearances were written all over Mull".<sup>63</sup> This experience of going to Mull could be seen as a turning point in MacLean's consciousness and therefore his poetry. Mull was a stimulus for his anger and emotions towards the Clearances, his people, and culture resulting in charging his Socialism.

He wrote his poem "Ban-Ghàidheal" (A Highland Woman) during his stay in Mull and started writing one of his most important political poems "An Cuilithionn" but he had moved back to Edinburgh also as a teacher of English and continued working on this poem there to be published in 1939.

Moreover, his poetic maturity kept growing and he published in 1943 *Dàin do Eimhir/ Poems to Eimhir* marking a remarkable emergence of a new Gaelic poetry different from the one of the Celtic Twilight that MacLean describes as "a purely foreign non-Celtic development"<sup>64</sup>. MacLean succeeded in approaching the Gaelic culture in contemporary international events, primarily approximating the Spanish Civil War with the Highland Clearances.

---

<sup>62</sup> Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve): A Critical Biography*. London: John Murray, 1988, p. 323.

<sup>63</sup> Nicolson cit., p. 29.

<sup>64</sup> Somhairle MacGill-eain (Sorley MacLean), 'Realism in Gaelic Poetry'. *Ris a' Bhruthaich: The Criticism and Prose Writings of Sorley MacLean*. Stornoway: Acair, 1985 p.46



Between 1939 with the outbreak of WWII and 1942 he joined the Signal Corps and served in the North African Campaign where he was wounded and brought back and in 1943 he resumed his teaching career. In 1954 he published his poem “Hallaig” one of his central Clearances poems about the deserted town of Hallaig in Raasay.

The friendship between MacDiarmid and MacLean was flourishing over the years. When they first met in 1934, as mentioned before, MacDiarmid was sensing the urge for a Gaelic revival at that time proceeding from his cultural nationalistic ideology of the necessity of translating Gaelic poems into English or Scots which would be his later project of *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry*. MacDiarmid saw in MacLean a native Gaelic speaker who can be “an authority on the Gaelic tradition”<sup>65</sup>

Letters were the main form of contact between MacDiarmid and MacLean revolving from the usual inquiries about well-being to discussing literature and politics. The letters show how they developed each other’s literary perception and their collaboration with each other on *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* published in 1940.<sup>66</sup> MacLean provided his participation in this book by selecting the best representative poems of Scottish Gaelic poetry in addition to translating these poems into Scots and English. MacLean wrote on 27 July 1934 a letter to MacDiarmid, told him “You may be assured that I will be greatly delighted to do anything I can towards helping your work”<sup>67</sup> expressing his respect to be working with an already outstanding poet like MacDiarmid at that time. In addition to MacLean’s great concern of preserving and bring to life the Gaelic culture and language to all the Scottish

---

<sup>65</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid and Somhairle MacGill-Eain (Sorley MacLean). *The Correspondence between Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean*. Edited by Susan R. Wilson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, p. 11.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

people: “one of the hopes of Gaelic is the number of people in the Lowlands even without Highland background who are learning Gaelic, who are keen on Gaelic, who are prepared to see their children learn it in schools and so on”<sup>68</sup>

Nonetheless, this collaboration contributed to the launching of a new literary journal and literary essays and poetry like: *Stony Limits and Other Poems* (1934), *Scottish Scene, or the Intelligent Man’s Guide to Albyn* (1934), *At the Sign of the Thistle* (1934), *Five Bits of Miller* (1934), *Scottish Eccentrics* (1936), *Scotland and the Question of a Popul ar Front Against Fascism and War* (1938), *Direadh I* (1938), *The Islands of Scotland* (1939).

Both poets wrote about the tragic event of the Highland Clearances and we will depict their literary and political development and to some extent reveal their discussions about the Clearances and their views of writing on the Clearances. Their Clearances poems were revolving around different emotions from anger to nostalgia and lamentation while manifesting ideological and political messages in a new modern Scottish style, approach, and language.

---

<sup>68</sup> Nicolson cit., p. 36.

## **Chapter II: *History and Land.***

The second chapter explores how MacDiarmid and MacLean appropriated the history of their land and culture impacting their sense of nationalism. I highlight the importance of the notion of Dùthchas in the poets' poetry: it starts with depicting their active approach of using the history of their land in their poetry that will lead to two kinds of emotions, nostalgic idyllic pre-Clearances and furious melancholic post-Clearances with a feeling of loss.

### **1. Awareness of History and its Significance.**

Language is a fundamental element in a colonised country in demonstrating and depicting the extent of how much the indigenous culture of the colonised land is declining in favour of the coloniser's language. Both MacDiarmid and MacLean expressed their awareness regarding the decline of Scots and Gaelic language in Scotland.

Looking at Scotland during the 20<sup>th</sup> century we would see that the use of the Gaelic language for example shrunk to the frontiers of the Highlands sharing the same patterns of other Celtic colonised lands as Ireland and Wales. In this regard J. Derrick McClure says:

the linguistic history of Scotland presents a similar parallel to those of Ireland and Wales: a protracted conflict between a Celtic language and English, with the latter frustrated of complete victory by a sense of patriotic loyalty towards the indigenous tongue.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Derrick J. McClure. *Language, Poetry and Nationhood: Scots as a Poetic Language from 1878 to the Present*. Glasgow: Tuckwell Press, 2000, p. 2.

The conflict McClure is referring to is a cultural conflict between the colonised and the coloniser which springs from the colonised acknowledgment of its indigenous identity resulting in realising and appreciating its culture.

This recognition can be seen as a significant legacy from the writings of the Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759-1796) writing in Scots when it was highly considered an inferior language to English during a time when the anti-Scots pressures were dominant in the eighteenth century presenting a nationalistic expression<sup>70</sup> which shows Burns' awareness of the danger of declining the Celtic languages.

However, MacDiarmid's awareness of the importance of Scots and his use of Scots differs from Burns in the sense that MacDiarmid's use was experimental and presented Scots as a medium of expressing contemporary feelings in a modernist form. This fact was observed by MacDiarmid's contemporaries that the literary magazine *The Times Weekly Supplement* wrote in January 1926 in their review of MacDiarmid's *Sangschaw*: "Burns, by reinforcing traditional Scots...did in a sense create a new diction; but he did not apply it to new purposes; he only showed that Scots could do superbly what it had always done pretty well."<sup>71</sup> Moreover, MacDiarmid was aware of the importance of education in shaping the identity which was affected by the Anglicised education in Scotland. He believed in the urgency of teaching Scots and using Scots in children's books. He argues about that in an answer to his friend the poet William Soutar:

---

<sup>70</sup> Jennifer R. McDermott. 2007. 'Robert Burns the Scottish Bard: Prescriptivism, Poetic Primitivism, and the Status of Scots in the Eighteenth Century'. <http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~cpercy/courses/eng6365-mcdermott.htm>

<sup>71</sup> 'A Scottish Renaissance' in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 7 January 1926, p. 8.

Any revival of Scots among the people at large, in the schools, etc., has my strong support and I think that a re-vaccination of the children with it ... but when I write or speak about a revival of Scots I am usually not thinking about that, but about its effective resumption into literary practice and adaptation to the most modern expressive requirements<sup>72</sup>

In this quotation we can see how important for him not only the revival of Scots as a language but also the notion of bringing it as a medium for contemporary literary expression. The fact that the Scottish literature was produced dominantly in the English language giving English a superior position, made it one of the fundamental reasons for MacDiarmid to urge the Scottish revival. Moreover, believing in Scots' ability to convey the modernist thought in complex unique way, MacDiarmid sees that "The Scots Vernacular is a vast storehouse of just the very peculiar and subtle effects which modern European literature in general is assiduously seeking"<sup>73</sup>

Nonetheless, as we discussed in the previous chapter MacDiarmid's consciousness of the importance of the Gaelic language as the Scots too in a sense of a unifying Scottish/Celtic culture

A sense of continuity and tradition can only be recovered by 'connecting up' again with our lost Gaelic culture This is the background to which we must return if we are ever to establish a Scottish classical culture. Without realizing our relationship, however disguised linguistically, politically, and

---

<sup>72</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid. *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*. Ed. Bold Alan. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984, p. 143.

<sup>73</sup> *The Scottish Chapbook*. Ed. C.M. Grieve. Vol. 1, No.8, March 1923, p. 210.

otherwise, to the Gaelic traditions, we will be unable to rise into major forms.<sup>74</sup>

MacDiarmid was aware of the necessity of 'bridging' between Gaelic and Scots as they both were pulled down by shared conditions and situations<sup>75</sup>. Sorley MacLean also paid attention while writing in Gaelic to ensure its relevance to modernist literature. This was not an easy job since the language was with "no modern prose of any account, no philosophical or technical vocabulary to speak of, no correct usage ... full of English idiom ... all economic, social and political factors working against it, and, with that, the notorious, moral cowardice of the Highlanders themselves."<sup>76</sup>

since he grew up in a time Gaelic literary production was diminishing, still, in few years MacLean gave Gaelic poetry its "capacity and adaptability and a world-wide range of awareness"<sup>77</sup>.

Through the friendship between MacDiarmid and MacLean, MacDiarmid filled the gap he had regarding the Gaelic sphere that he started being aware of after achieving his goal in Scots.

We can see that clearly in his poem 'Direadh I':

And remembering my earlier poems in Scots

Full of awareness 'that language is one

Of the most cohesive or insulting of world forces

---

<sup>74</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid. *Selected Prose* ed. Riach, Alan. Manchester: Carcanet, 1992 p. 50.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 73.

<sup>76</sup> Somhairle MacGill-Eain (letters) personal correspondence to Douglas Young written by Somhairle MacGill-Eain / Sorley MacLean, 15 June 1943, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. Acc. 6419.

<sup>77</sup> Neil Ascherson. "Seven Poets." *Seven Poets: Hugh MacDiarmid, Norman MacCaig, Iain Crichton Smith, George Mackay Brown, Robert Garioch, Sorley MacLean, Edwin Morgan*. Glasgow: Third Eye Centre Ltd., 1981, p. 30.

And that dialect is always a bond of union,'

I covet the mystery of our Gaelic speech

In which *rugadh* was at once a blush,<sup>78</sup>

Besides the question of the languages, culture and history of Scotland were another element in which they were present in their poetry and stimulating it. "I regard the cultural question of supreme importance, and believe the function of Literature and the Arts to be the expansion of human consciousness"<sup>79</sup>

MacDiarmid had the desire to sabotage the Romantic image presented in the previous literary production; the Kailyard movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries communicated a highly romanticised image of the Scottish life. Whereas, the writers of the Renaissance movement had the consciousness of the actual brutal reality of the land history. Moreover, going back to the poet Robert Burns, also in terms of representing Scotland's culture, Scotland needed the rise of new contemporary voices speaking of its history in not only new form, also in a new modern thought.

Scottish writers have been terrified even to appear inconstant to established conventions . . . They have stood still and consequently been left behind in technique and ideation. Meanwhile the Scottish nation has been radically transformed in temperament and tendency; Scottish life has been given a drastic reorientation, with the result that the Scottish literature today is in no sense representative or adequate.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid. *Complete Poems*: Volume II ed. Michael Grieve & W. R. Aitken Manchester: Carcanet, 2000, p. 1191.

<sup>79</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid and Alan Norman Bold. *Aesthetics in Scotland / by Hugh MacDiarmid; Edited & Introduced by Alan Bold*. Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1984, xxvii.

<sup>80</sup> Riach cit., pp. 4-5.

MacDiarmid felt the need of presenting Scotland in a realistic manner being more true to the Scottish people and their history. In his 1927 essay "Towards Scottish Idea" he writes about the fundamentality of such awareness in the literature he aims for: "We must repair the fatal breach in continuity which has cut us off from our own roots. The literary aspect of this is our belated realisation of the dire lack of long-established, adequate, and native moulds in modern literatures"<sup>81</sup> expressing his anger towards the reality of the disconnection between the Scottish people and their land's history and culture.

The event of the Highland Clearances was one of the shared elements between the two poets, MacLean and MacDiarmid. The poets' approach towards the Clearances was of a conscious treatment of this historic event that involved sometimes in the same poem itself different feelings and also contrasted feelings toward the Clearances swinging between rage and nostalgia. Moreover, their Clearances poetry manifested their ideological perspective starting from their notion of identity and nationalism to their political and social views. Hence, in their Clearances poems, they see the Clearances as a representative symbol of Scotland and its history as a whole. Moreover, the poets present an awareness of the event's effects on the present and the future in which we will observe how this notion is manifested in their poetry. Both poets, as politically conscious poets, understood the important impact of the Clearances and the land tenure on the Scottish identity. Therefore, presenting an understanding of the history to include a reclamation of this history in their remodelling of the representation of Scotland and the Highlands in literature.

---

<sup>81</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid. *The Raucle Tongue: Hitherto Uncollected Prose*. vol II. Ed. Angus Calder, Glen Murray & Alan Riach. Manchester: Carcanet Press: 1996, p. 40.



In MacDiarmid's poem, "The Glen of Silence" we can see how the speaker in this poem has a realisation moment in a retrospective way of the Clearances and sensing the 'wrecker of homes' (as MacDiarmid uses Aeschylus' words) while standing on the glen in his present time. Moreover, linking the present silence of the glen around him to the silence of death: "Here is an identical silence picked out / By a bickering and a lone bird's wheeple / -The foetal death in this great 'cleared' glen / Where the *fear-tholladh nan tighean* has done its foul work / -The tragedy of an unevolved people!"<sup>82</sup>

The image of the foetus' death linked with the unevolved people speaks for the speaker's recognition of the everlasting 'tragic' effects of the Clearances on the upcoming generations of the evicted Highlanders, the death of their connectedness with their land, culture and history.

In MacLean's poem "An Cuilithionn", the speaker wonders in the hills of Cuillin of the Isle of Skye also seeing the present and the past of this land. Observing how the history of this land is still in existence of its present; the effect of the Highland Clearances on the present. "there rises before me the plight of my kindred / the woeful history of the lovely island"<sup>83</sup>. These lines demonstrate the connectedness between the history and future and how the past is vividly seen by the speaker in his present time showing awareness of the past. The Speaker addresses the land saying "Rocky terrible Cuillin, / you are with me in spite of life's horror."<sup>84</sup> portraying the land in a dangerous way.

---

<sup>82</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p.1310.

<sup>83</sup> Somhairle MacGill-Eain (Sorley MacLean), et al. *Hallaig Agus dàin Eile/Hallaig and Other Poems: Somhairle MacGill-Eain/Sorley MacLean: Taghadh De Dhàin/Selected Poems*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 2014, p. 84.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 86.

Then MacLean compares the Clearances as a 'savage' combat between a personified Cuillin "The sides and thighs of the Cuillin / stripped naked for the giant wrestling / with no flesh on them but the scree"<sup>85</sup>. However, despite all of that and "Beyond the lochs of the children of men ... / beyond poverty, consumption, fever, agony, / beyond hardship, wrong, tyranny, distress"<sup>86</sup> MacLean shifts Cuillin and presents it as a symbol of hope of the future to come even with the present consequences of the tragic history "heroic, the Cuillin is seen / rising on the other side of sorrow"<sup>87</sup>.

Regarding the issue of pessimism and optimism, optimism in both poets' poetry could be due to the fact that some Highlanders had succeeded in reclaiming their land after World War I as in Raasay, Skye and Coll.

However, I would like to shed light on the poem "An t-Eilean" where MacLean present a different conclusion in contrast to the "An Cuilithionn" poem. "An t-Eilean" is dedicated to Skye where he is addressing the island directly where he expresses his passion and love towards it, still presenting a pessimistic view of the future of "the Island of my heart and wound" saying that there is not recovery from the past as they will hunt the land forever: "it is not likely that the strife / and suffering of Braes will be seen requited"<sup>88</sup>. Presenting a contradicting point of view of the future of the land in comparison to his poem "An Cuilithionn".

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 88.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 90.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 90.

<sup>88</sup> Somhairle MacGill-Eain (Sorley MacLean). *Caoir Gheal Leumraich / White Leaping Flame. Sorley MacLean / Somhairle MacGill-Eain: Collected Poems*. Ed. Christopher Whyte and Emma Dymock. Edinburgh: Polygon, 2011, pp. 18-21.

This difference in approaching the Clearances; dealing with the event of the Clearances and the contradicting feelings towards it is not exclusive to pessimism and optimism but also to idyllic nostalgic feelings in opposition to furiousness, anger, and antagonism which will be discussed in the next two chapters.

## 2. Anger and the Clearances.

To get a better understanding of reading the feelings of anger and antagonism, it is essential to understand the notion of 'dùthchas' and its significance in the context of the Clearances poetry.

Dùthchas is a cultural concept that was central to the clan identity. The areas where the clan would settle were conceived as its collective identity, history, and heritage: "The terms dùthchas and dualchas are commonly used to discuss issues of heritage."<sup>89</sup>

Thus, the master of the clan would be getting a collective moral duties and responsibilities expected by his clansmen of protecting and defending the land as well as the people living on this land. It is not a legal concept rather than a traditional concept of the clan system and its customs. As the Royal Commission on Crofting Conditions in 1954 said regarding this:

they have the feeling that the croft, its land, its houses are their own. They have gathered its stones and reared its buildings and occupied it as their own all their days. They have received it from their ancestors who won it from the wilderness and they cherish the hope they will transmit it to the generations to come. Whatever the legal theory they feel it to be their own.<sup>90</sup>

The events of the Clearances came in sabotaging this collective local concept leaving the Highlanders disappointed and having a sense of betrayal by their landlords who were supposed to be protecting the land and the people. Instead, these landlords, they were

---

<sup>89</sup> Michael Newton. *Dùthchas Nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2006, p. xxvii.

<sup>90</sup> Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions, 1954.

helping and part of them participating with the dispossession of their tenants from their land and property.

Both poets, Sorley MacLean and Hugh MacDiarmid, attempt to disrupt and transform the traditional image of the Highlands as a serene peaceful place to its true reality and history.

Before going into the Clearances poems of MacLean, I would like to shed light on a poem about the battle of Culloden "Culloden 16.IV.1746" by Sorley MacLean. In the poem, he praises the "undenied heroism" of the Scottish soldiers on the battlefield despite their loss. The Gaels avoided the "disgrace" with their courageous resistant combat at Culloden thus "they are not blamed by history"<sup>91</sup>. MacLean claims that the battle was a turning point in the history of Gaeldom and the Gaels that had determined their doomed future: "...it was a breaking to / the race of the Gaels / and there grew on this slope / only the withered tree of misfortune".<sup>92</sup>

Moreover, MacLean meditating on the history, he connects the fall of Culloden with the eviction of the Highlanders realising that this lost cause of the Jacobite rising was the beginning of the direct persecution of the Gaels leading then to the Clearances:

Was it the loss at Culloden  
that brought the rotting in midwinter  
that left the Gaeldom of Scotland  
a home without people,  
fields hunted by ghosts,

---

<sup>91</sup> MacLean cit., p. 114.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

A pasture of sheep,<sup>93</sup> (p. 112)

MacLean's relationship with his land, as a highlander himself, brings the landscape itself in the symbolic mechanism of MacLean's poetry as he mentions: "my symbols came mostly from my immediate physical environment, because in many ways my immediate physical environment was very varied"<sup>94</sup>. Then he continues commenting on his poem "An Cuilithionn / The Cuillin" on how the place transformed spontaneously as a symbol of deprivation and struggling as opposed to the traditional image of the serene romantic Scottish Highlands: "The Cuillin naturally became a symbol of difficulty, hardship and heroic qualities as against, as it were, the softness and relative luxury of the woods of Raasay with all their contradictions"<sup>95</sup>. The poem was an attempt by MacLean of composing a long modernist poem which was inspired by MacDiarmid's "The Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle" that MacLean perceived it as "the greatest long poem of the century...it made me want to write a long medley with as many lyric peaks as might grow out of it."<sup>96</sup>.

"An Cuilithionn" was written while he was in Mull and he, a Highlander himself, was in a direct contact with the traces of history of the Clearances that is prominent in the poem. MacLean makes an allusion to Mary MacPherson in Part I of the poem saying that he shares her perspective of seeing the land. Mary was a poet from Skye who wrote about the Clearances and their history: "I see the noble island in its storm-showers / as Big Mary saw in her yearnings."<sup>97</sup>.

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p. 112.

<sup>94</sup> Donald Archie MacDonald. "Some Aspects of Family and Local Background: An Interview with Sorley MacLean." *Sorley MacLean: Critical Essays*, ed. Raymond J. Ross and Joy Hendry. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1986, p.219.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Sorley MacLean "My Relationship with the Muse," *Ris A' Bhruthaich: The Criticism and Prose Writings of Sorley MacLean*, ed. William Gillies. Stornoway: Acair, 1997, p. 11.

<sup>97</sup> MacLean cit., p. 84.

He presents the place in an eerie atmosphere with sublime images where the speaker is standing “standing on the high notched knife-edge, / looking down the Corrie of Solitude, / through the mist surging around me,”<sup>98</sup> Moreover, this place, which is the ‘sgurrs’ of Cuillin, is personified along with these sublime images, representing it in as a heroic powerful person: “its yawning mouths permanent in narrow chasms, / its spouting everlasting in each turret, / its swelling eternal in each sgurr,”.<sup>99</sup>

MacLean’s anger in this poem is translated in his vision of the sgurrs and how he sees them as angry warriors “I saw the horn of Sgurr Dearg / rising in furious challenge / in the haste of the skies; / and throwing the stars in spindrift”<sup>100</sup>.

Later in the poem the ‘furiousness’ is transformed into the speaker himself while he is recognising the absence of the Highlanders in their land: “multitude of springs and fewness of men / today, yesterday and last night keeping me awake, / the miserable loss of our country’s people, / clearing of peasants, exile, exploitation,”. The speaker is deprived from rest, while he stands on the peak of the sgurr and observes the traces of the Clearances seeing the deserted landscape.

However, in Part III, the image of the bog gets more immersed in the setting of the poem as well as the poem itself. The bog starches to cover the mountains, Cuillin and even Scotland and the whole world. The bog can be symbolising capitalism, lords and tyranny since it is opposed to the mountains representing liberation, communism and Lenin. Seeing the bog covering the world links the tragedy of the Clearances to all human tragedies, historical or contemporary, since MacLean approached the Spanish Civil War as similar to the Clearances

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 88.

referring to the Spanish tyranny and his tools: “Franco and his landowners and big capitalists and the Catholic church looked to me awful like the landlords of the Clearances and Church of Scotland at that time.”<sup>101</sup> As he said in his first recorded formal discussion of his work in conversation with Iain Crichton Smith, John MacInnes, Hamish Henderson and Donald MacAulay in Aberdeen in May 1970.

Moving to MacLean’s “Sgreapadal / Screapadal”. The poem was published in 1982 with little attention paid by the critics to this poem despite its importance that it can be compared to “Hallaig”. The poem is named after the cleared village Sgreapadal which is located on the east coast of Raasay. MacLean in this poem voices clearly his anger presenting plainly in the poem the reasons why the inhabitants of this land were evicted which he did not do the same in his other poem “Hallaig”:

and the Church of Falsehood in high water  
when the spring tide is at its height  
It was not its lies that betrayed the people  
in the time of the great pietist,  
Rainy, who cleared  
fourteen townships  
in the Island of the Big Men,  
Great Raasay of the MacLeods.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> Sorley MacLean “Poetry, Passion and Political Consciousness.” Interview with Sorley MacLean, also featuring John MacInnes, Hamish Henderson, Donald MacAulay and Iain Crichton Smith. *Scottish International* 10: May, 1970, p. 11.

<sup>102</sup> MacLean cit., p. 164.



Here we see how MacLean employs historical records in his poem. He highlights the eminent fact of the 'betrayal' of the clansmen alluding to the notion of dùthchas blaming George Rainy who cleared these towns for the benefit of building a sheep farm. "Rainy left Screapadal without people / with no houses or cattle, only sheep,"<sup>103</sup>. The first clearances took place under the MacLeods in 1843, but there were still people left in the township and the main clearances occurred between 1850 and 1854 by the hands of the merchant George Rainy who was the proprietor of the island<sup>104</sup> MacLean blames the greedy materialistic landlords not only for the tragic Clearances but also for leaving the Highlanders in famine and poverty:

Greed and social pride  
left Screapadal without people,  
and the iron band of laws  
that put a vice-like grip on the people,  
threatening to raise above them  
the black Carn-Mors of hunger  
and the Meircil rocks of famine  
on which grow the poisonous bracken  
from which come the deadly rocket,  
hydrogen and neutron bombs.<sup>105</sup>

Once again, MacLean compares the contemporary tragic events with historical Scottish events. He is described by Ronald Black as "radiating from the Highlands and taking in the

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Calum MacLeod. *Fàsachadh An-lochdmhor Ratharsair / The Cruel Clearance of Raasay*. Dunfermline: Clò Àrnais, 2007, p.12

<sup>105</sup> MacLean cit., p.168.

entire world”<sup>106</sup>. MacLean links the Scottish famine with the neutron bombs of WWII saying that they spring from the same sources and the same motivations. Moreover, he meditates on Clearances’ sufferings realising how violent people in power could destroy people’s lives and land: “that violence raised in the world: / the periscopes and sleek black sides / of the ships of death / that killed thousands of Nagasaki”<sup>107</sup>.

In his poem “Hallaig”, MacLean mentions Screapadal to demonstrate the notion of dùthchas giving an image of the rootedness of the people in their land as they have a strong connection between them and the land. Despite the land is abandoned, the speaker sees the children of the Highlanders transforming them in his vision into trees rooted inside the land: “In Screapadal of my people / Where Norman and Big Hector were, / Their daughters and their sons are a wood / Going up beside the stream.”<sup>108</sup> Hence, the poem is seen as a tragic poem of communicating the reality of time, of what happened in this particular place and inescapable history<sup>109</sup>

MacLean goes into developing the notion of dùthchas, taking it to a personal level. MacLean names the ancestors and locates them in the cleared village of Screapadal in order to place himself among his people which is an archetypical element of the Gaelic poetry that he deploys in this poem. Moreover, this portrays his awareness of the relationship between the family and the land which evokes the same awareness of the Highlanders themselves as well

---

<sup>106</sup> Ronald Black. “Introduction,” *An Tuil: Anthology of 20th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse*, ed. Ronald Black Edinburgh: Polygon, 1999, p. xxxv.

<sup>107</sup> MacLean cit., p.168

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p.118.

<sup>109</sup> John MacInnes. *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal. Collected Essays of Dr John MacInnes*, ed. Michael Newton. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006, p. 419.

as communicating it with the reader to translate the disappointment and the anger of the betrayed Highlanders.

On the contrary, MacDiarmid is not a Highlander as MacLean is. He has no actual connection to the Highland which makes MacDiarmid fall out of the conception of dùthchas. However, as his aim is to speak for Scotland as a whole with the Lowland and the Highland, MacDiarmid takes the Gaelic sphere as part of his duty as a Scottish poet as he writes in his poem "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle": "A Scottish poet maun assume / The burden o' his people's doom"<sup>110</sup>. He attacks the gap between the Gaels and the Scots which, as he says, is created by the English. This aspect is repeated in his poetry due to the fact that he believes that this gap is an obstacle in achieving a unified Scotland as he says in an interview in 1979 with Alexander Scott that he "never believed in a real gulf between Scots and Gaelic. I thought that had been accentuated for reasons of divide and conquer, you know--British imperialism."<sup>111</sup>

Thus, MacDiarmid presents a sort of a Gaelic persona being part of his collective Scottish identity which resulted in writing poetry on the events of the Clearances and their role in Scottish history and literature.

In his poem "I Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t'Saoir" the speaker is addressing the Gaelic poet Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t'Saoir (Duncan Ban MacIntyre) praising desolately the 'superb descriptions' he wrote during the Jacobite uprising and later the Clearances "When the English were still complaining / Of the 'frightful irregularity' of Highland mountains,"<sup>112</sup>.

---

<sup>110</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid. *Complete Poems of Hugh Macdiarmid*.:Volume I Penguin Books, 1985, p. 165.

<sup>111</sup> Alexander Scott. "An Interview with Hugh MacDiarmid," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 14: Iss. 1. 1979, p.13.

<sup>112</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 1100.

Subsequently, MacDiarmid expresses his distress about the fact of the existing created gap between the Gaels and the Lowlanders using rigid adjectives “In an age of brilliant Gaelic poetry, Scottish Lowlanders even / Regarded the Highlanders as illiterate savages”<sup>113</sup>. His anger at this image of ‘savagery’ is explained when he refers to the reason according to him: “And the sad history of Highland education / in the three centuries after 1560 / Reveals they did their best to make them so)”<sup>114</sup>. MacDiarmid ascribes the fall of the Gaelic language and culture to the collapse of the economy of the Highlands “The decline of the Gaelic is a consequence – not the cause – of the existing economic and political system”<sup>115</sup>. Moreover, in his poem “The Poet as Prophet” his distress towards the gap between the Lowlanders and the Highlanders is highlighted “A view in which alone the disastrous split / Between Highlander and Lowlander might be held”<sup>116</sup>, he believes that a “united Scotland” would rise when this dangerous break is treated for the benefit of “Gaelic independence and the Gaelic languages”<sup>117</sup> attributing this split to the to the English “But in Scotland under the blight / of the English influence / they have grown blind”<sup>118</sup>. Moreover, in his poem “The Highlanders are not a Sensitive People”, MacDiarmid once more reminds his people that the Gaelic culture is the essence of the Celtic Scottish culture even if they deny that “Breaks apart a piece of rock and you will find it / impregnated through and through with the smell of honey / So lies the Gaelic tradition in the lives / Of our dourest, most unconscious, and denying Scots”<sup>119</sup>.

---

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p.66.

<sup>116</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 1374

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 1376.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 1417.

Going back to his poem “The Glen of Silence”, the feeling of antagonism in this poem springs from the tragic atmosphere presented in it from the very beginning. This is highlighted by the fact that it opens with a quotation from the Greek tragedian Aeschylus which could be seen as the contemporaneity of human tragedy<sup>120</sup> drawing the relevance of Classical writings to our time and its universality which is part of his agenda of bringing Scottish literature into universal recognition. Hence, MacDiarmid presents a comparison between the situation of Spain and Scotland saying: “Whoever knows Spain, where the poverty’s far worse / Yet under it life still springs fresh and alert”<sup>121</sup>, the poem was written in 1938 which was during the Spanish civil war, yet MacDiarmid seems to be viewing Spain in an optimistic way despite the Spanish tragic situation in comparison to Scotland: “Whereas over Scotland an appalling weight hangs / And everything is morbid, hopeless, and inert”.<sup>122</sup> This comparison draws a sense of disappointment, ‘hopelessness’ and rage towards the ‘weight’ over Scotland which is its history that pulls Scotland down from moving forward. The speaker is viewing the abandoned glens and hills of the Highland driving the speaker to “cry again today” for recognizing the anguishing reality “My faith is in the Commons of Scotland’ / But alas! It is gone, it is a’ wede away”<sup>123</sup> (p. 1311).

Moreover, MacDiarmid mocks the archetypical romantic representation of the Highland as a peaceful place drawn by previous writers: “...and in its glens there is only peace – peace? / The peace indeed passeth understanding!” as the writers forgot about the actual disturbing past of this land. His hopelessness makes him see that Scottish people are doomed by their

---

<sup>120</sup> Alan Riach. *The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid*. Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1999, p.39.

<sup>121</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 1311.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

history: "And Alba produces a wretched alibi / At the bar of human history"<sup>124</sup>. In MacDiarmid's poem "The poet we hope for", he also sheds light again on the "English influence" on "The physical history of the Highlands of Scotland"<sup>125</sup> saying that Scotland had not developed allocating this to the fact that "...It was hypnotically controlled from London."<sup>126</sup> In his 1973 interview, he agrees that the punitive measures against Gaelic started with King James VI even before becoming James I in England saying "Political power and particularly the development of the capitalist system ensured that that would happen because centralization is essential to the capitalist system"<sup>127</sup>. He is conscious of the fact that James I made a turning point in the history of Scotland by radically changing Scottish society and education as discussed before. However, MacDiarmid's antagonism towards capitalism will be further discussed in chapter III.

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, p.1414.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, p.1416

<sup>127</sup> Alexander Scott. "An Interview with Hugh MacDiarmid," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 14: Iss. 1, 1979, p. 14.

### 3. Nostalgia and the Clearances.

Sorley MacLean and Hugh MacDiarmid present in their Clearances poetry, most of the time, a different feeling in the same poem itself jumping from anger to nostalgia. Their nostalgic feeling is portrayed in an idyllic image of the Highlands lamenting the loss of this balanced pastoral landscape. The natural landscape had been spoiled by the Clearances and the introduction of the industrialism “Poets who celebrated their homelands ... tended to look back longingly to a pre-clearance ideal when the natural rhythms of the community were positive and inclusive”<sup>128</sup>. However, the nostalgia they present in their literature is different from being a romantic unrealistic nostalgia. Instead, the nostalgic feelings are being detected by the poet or the speaker in the poem thus attaining the awareness of this nostalgic feeling. The pastoral landscape of the Highlands in MacLean’s poetry is not only a geographical signifier but also a socio-historical signifier<sup>129</sup>. His admiration and fascination with the landscape are vividly present in his poetry. His fascination is connected to his sense of nostalgia and the stories/history of the land. This can be detected in his poem “Hallaig”. As Peter MacKay says about this poem:

if “Hallaig” is taken to be representative of MacLean’s work then it is also representative of twentieth century Gaelic poetry as a whole. There are problems with this: if all you know is “Hallaig,” then Gaelic poetry as a whole is easily figured

---

<sup>128</sup> Donald E. Meek. *Caran An-t-Saoghail / The Wiles of the World: An Anthology of Nineteenth Century Gaelic Verse*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2003, p. xxxiii.

<sup>129</sup> Emma Dymock. “‘Cas agam anns a’ bhoglaich agus cas air a’ Chuilithionn’: Unstable Borders in the Poetry of Sorley MacLean,” *Lainnir a’ Bhùirn / The Gleaming Water: Essays on Modern Gaelic Literature*, ed. Emma Dymock and Wilson McLeod Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2011, p. 87.

or dismissed as nostalgic, spiritual, traditional, and tied to a culture inextricable from the landscape.<sup>130</sup>

Hallaig went under two major phases of clearances. The first phase was between 1842 and 1843 then the second phase, which was the main one, was during 1850 and 1854 under the hands of George Rainy<sup>131</sup>. By time Hallaig was deserted, left with no people at all, with just ruins of the places where its people used to live.

In the poem, the speaker is anticipating the landscape to be vivid again as it was in the past: “ ‘I will wait for the birch wood / until it comes up by the cairn’<sup>132</sup>. The ‘birch’ here could be referring to the repopulation of the cleared land. However, the nostalgic feelings of the speaker make him go to a point of a sort of denial, that he is aware of, by saying that if he did not see the birches covering the land, he would go to Hallaig, to the dead people of Hallaig: “They are still in Hallaig / MacLeans and MacLeods, / all who were there in the time of Mac Gille Chaluum: / the dead have been seen alive”<sup>133</sup>. The speaker’s denial could be springing from his inability to face and confront the brutal reality of the present. He goes on to describe the daily ‘idyllic’ pastoral life of the dead who are seen alive “The men lying on the green / At the end of every house that was, / The girls a wood of birches, / Straight their backs, bent their heads.”<sup>134</sup>. In these lines MacLean presents a portrayal of not only a harmony but also a unification between the people of Hallaig with nature in a glamorised way. As John MacInnes

---

<sup>130</sup> Peter MacKay. *Sorley MacLean*. Aberdeen: AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, 2010, p. 137.

<sup>131</sup> MacLeod, Calum cit., p. 12

<sup>132</sup> MacLean cit., p. 118

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, p. 120.



accounts on the poem: “the Gaelic sense of landscape, idealised in terms of society, and the Romantic sense of communion with Nature, merge in a single vision, a unified sensibility.”<sup>135</sup>.

The speaker’s awareness of his refusal of the present actuality is indicated with his use of the past tense in his description. Moreover, the usage of the past tense adds up to the communication of the bitterness the speaker has in his representation of the lost serenity. In these following lines: “and the girls in silent bands / go to Clachan as in the beginning”<sup>136</sup>. We can see how the distinction of time, of present and past, is further developed and stressed by differentiating between what was the ‘beginning’ and now. Nonetheless, the poem which first line was connecting time with deer “time, the deer”, in the final stanza of the poem MacLean brings back the image of the deer in a violent presentation to fix and suspend the time:

A vehement bullet will come from the gun of Love;

And will strike the deer that goes dizzily,

Sniffing at the grass-grown ruined homes;

His eye will freeze in the wood,

His blood will not be traced while I live.<sup>137</sup>

The bullet of ‘love’ is capable of sustaining the time when the speaker is fancying the pre-Clearances daily life. By that, the speaker accomplishes his aim of conserving his sense of place and belonging to his land.

The concept of the stolen happiness is also present in his poem “Glen Eyre”. The speaker in this poem is meditating upon an island describing it as ‘melancholic’ and far while he is alone

---

<sup>135</sup> John MacInnes. *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal. Collected Essays of Dr John MacInnes*. Ed, Michael Newton. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006, p. 420.

<sup>136</sup> MacLean cit., p. 120.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

on glen Eyre which is on the northern coast of Skye. Being on this glen, he realised how happiness was stolen from the Highlanders by erasing their pastoral life: "I realised the unhappy thing: that there was a wall between joy / and my harsh little croft / a boundary that would not be changed / to set joy free"<sup>138</sup>. the speaker, speaking for himself and the Highlanders, blames the landlords for his lost rightful 'pleasure' of being physically connected with his land alluding to the concept of dùthchas "that I would not get the thing I wanted / with the gift of my environment and heredity"<sup>139</sup>.

in MacLean's poem "A Girl and Old Songs", the speaker in the poem addresses a Gaelic girl perceiving her in a complex way since she, as all Gaels, carries with her a mixture of tranquillity and agony "that our people fashioned in obscurity / out of hardship and passion"<sup>140</sup> and the girl is transforming this mixture into her voice by singing. MacLean in an interview with Marco Fazzini says that his desire of becoming a writer is connected with his appeal towards the landscape of his home and the charm of girls: "This verse was normally generated by the attractiveness of girls or natural scenery, especially of woods, hills and mountains"<sup>141</sup>. Moreover, MacLean alludes to the Gaelic songs and music to be part of his willingness to be a poet since most of his family could sing them.

The speaker in the poem wishes that he could listen to her songs in the Highlands landscape as Highlanders used to sing in the pre-Clearances times, lamenting: "and though I cannot derive you / on mountain or shore or in wood, / as my people used to do / in Skye or in Mull, or in Raasay of the MacLeods". However, in the very next line MacLean mentions the

---

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p. 114.

<sup>141</sup> Marco Fazzini. *Conversations with Scottish Poets*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University, 2015, p. 11.

uprooting of the Highlanders after the Clearances with their diaspora: “or in Canada in exile”.<sup>142</sup>

Nonetheless, later in the poem the girl stimulates the nostalgic feeling in the speaker because he glimpses in her the serenity of the pre-Clearances as if she did not get affected by the tragic events or even history that she became as a survival and beyond time “You are as if there were no oppression / of time or distance on your druid band / as if you avoided the drowning wave / with which the unebbing sea strikes”<sup>143</sup>.

The reader of both poets might get a sense that MacDiarmid’s writings about the Highlands or the Gaels in general are, more or less, not that personal as compared to MacLean who is writing about his own environment. Surely his poetry does not carry the same familiarity of the land or attachment as MacLean’s poetry. Thus, we should take into account his ideology of nationalism and unity of Scotland as a whole, as discussed before, in order to understand how MacDiarmid would have these sentiments towards the Highlands and the Gaels that would push him in demonstrating nostalgic emotions for the pre-Clearances Highlands.

In “Dìreadh”, MacDiarmid names Highland villages and lands as Sutherland, Harris, Eigg, Perthshire and Coigeach in Wester Ross<sup>144</sup> where MacDiarmid spent his childhood holidays and later stayed there as a caretaker in 1920. “Many references in both his English and Scots poetry suggest that on his return to Rosshire in 1920 he was haunted by the emptiness of the

---

<sup>142</sup> MacLean cit., p. 116.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 1169.

landscape and by an awareness of the cultural death to which its ruined homesteads and inscrutable place-names bore witness.”<sup>145</sup>

The relationship between Man and his land is referred to in MacDiarmid’s poetry to be not only as a mere physical one, but as a relationship with another person in which one must be learning about his land and its characteristics in order to be brought closer to it and to nature. This concept is implied as a sort of Highland philosophy which is present in many of his poems. In “Direadh II” the speaker praises the idyllic relationship that existed between the true Highlanders and their land showing the harmony they had with their land as if they perceived their land as a living person: “... as often old gardeners and farm-hands / Understand the personality, as it were, / Of individual fields and gardens”<sup>146</sup>. However, he laments the loss of this connection “But this kind of knowledge / Scotland has lost almost altogether,”. This nostalgia for this philosophy and knowledge is also present in his poem “In Talk with Donnchadh B’an Mac an t’Saoir” where the speaker talks “of the time / When man’s affinity with nature was more strict / And his fellowship with every living thing more intimate and dear”<sup>147</sup>.

In his poem “Island Funeral”, MacDiarmid gives himself the ‘authority’ to speak for the Gaels themselves and he manifests that plainly in the poem where he repeats the line “And I can speak with authority”<sup>148</sup> twice. The poem is a narrative one with the speaker recounts a funeral in a Gaelic island. It opens in describing the island in a gloomy eerie atmosphere where everything is grey and ‘colourless’. However, the speaker shifts his focal point to the

---

<sup>145</sup> Patrick Crotty. “Like Pushkin, I?": Hugh MacDiarmid and Russia', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol.44, Iss.1, 2019, pp.47-89. See: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol44/iss1/7>

<sup>146</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 1183.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, p. 1099.

<sup>148</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 579

landscape itself instead of the funeral relating the condition of the island being almost deserted due to the Clearances “There are fewer and fewer people / On the island nowadays, / And there are more ruins of cottages / Than occupied homes”<sup>149</sup>. However, the speaker shows his intimate feelings towards the Gaels that makes him sense himself part of them. This feeling of belonging comes from not only his knowledge of this culture, but his connection with it: “I know all there is to know / About their traditional plenishing / And native arts and crafts,”<sup>150</sup> (579) Still, this intimacy is accompanied with his interest and curiosity “I love to go into these little houses / And see and touch the pieces of furniture”. Later, the speaker praises the people who had stayed and are still staying on this island “But they expected to stay / And they deserved to stay”<sup>151</sup>. Moreover, he draws an idyllic image of the pastoral life on the island in a nostalgic tone towards this life: “ ‘There is great beauty in harmony.’ / They lived as much like one another as possible / And they kept as free as they could of the world at large.”<sup>152</sup>. This nostalgia is developed further to be not only for the Gaelic pastoral daily life, but also for the Gaelic philosophy and approach towards life that, as the speaker believes, balanced life in a perfect way bringing ‘happiness’. The description by the speaker is given in the past tense hinting to the doom of this kind of life and philosophy thus giving it a sense of lamenting:

It is rather the happiness with which they held it,  
The light-heartedness with which they enslaved themselves  
to the various rituals it demanded,  
And also the circumstance that they were all

---

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p. 578.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, p. 579.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, p. 580.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

Poor people - whose notions of form  
Were both ancient and basic.  
They began with the barest patterns, the purest beginnings  
Of design, in their minds,<sup>153</sup>

MacDiarmid has a more or less similar vision for the Gaelic music to MacLean's in "A Girl and Old Songs". The speaker in MacDiarmid's poem "Lament for the Great Music" perceives how behind the Highlanders' songs and pibrochs there is a pain of a whole race "Behind these voices there are others crying / the entire race is on the wrong track..."<sup>154</sup>.

The poet is aware that it is inutile to mourn either the "romantic dreams" or the truth of the reality but instead to find a compromise, a "harmony", between them. However, in the following lines he starts lamenting the loss of the, sort of perfect, previous life of the Scots: "In the individual Scot as in his country / All fineness of living, all vitality, all art / Is necessarily lost. There is nothing but ruins;"<sup>155</sup>. Later in the poem, MacDiarmid makes an allusion to the Jacobite rising by mentioning the battle of Inverurie 1745 referring to it as the turning point of the absolute silencing of the Highland culture as the pipers went silent after the Jacobite loss: "Would I have loved to witness - after Inverurie / When Lord Louis Gordon's pipers kept silence"<sup>156</sup>.

MacDiarmid uses the image of the tree as MacLead does to evoke the sense of rootedness between the individual and his land as he clearly says "...My native land should be to me / As a root to a tree..."<sup>157</sup>. Still, the connection between the speaker and his homeland is difficult

---

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, p. 468.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p. 468.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, p. 470.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, p. 472.

to be obtained due to the disruption of the gap between the actuality of present Scotland which is an urbanised materialised Scotland, and the Scotland he knows or imagines that is pastoral idyllic land “This Scotland is not Scotland. How can I think of you / In these cities you never saw, a different world altogether”.

As shown by the poetry of both poets, MacLean and MacDiarmid, their approach to the past and history is not a ‘passive’ romantic one. It is not passive in the sense that they actively deployed and used the history of Scotland in translating their view of the present and most importantly their outlook for the future. This approach is different to the one of the Kailyardism that these poets were totally against. They were opposing the Kailyard tradition because its literature, as they view it, was sentimentalising the rural past without an awareness of the present or attention to the future thus lacking the realism. As Sorley MacLean points out that they were “at best a haze over the realities of the Clearances”<sup>158</sup>. It lacks realism because the writers were Lowlanders who wrote of the Highlands hence not native to the land or familiar to it and its tradition. Their lack of knowledge of the Highlands was present in their act of romanticising the Highlands and their people creating romantic stereotypes of the Highlands. That is exactly what the writers of the Scottish Renaissance Movement were trying to sabotage and change by presenting a realistic narrative of the history and closer to the actuality of the present and the people even in their ‘nostalgic’ expressions.

---

<sup>158</sup> Sorley MacLean. ‘Introduction’ *Ris a’ Bhruthaich*, ed. William Gillies Stornoway: Acair Ltd., 1985, p.3.

### **Chapter III: *Ideology/ies and Politics.***

The third chapter investigates how the poets were manifesting their socialist leftist ideology in opposition to the historical capitalist control on their land and its outcomes. I will depict the development of the postcolonial Scottish identity and the problematic notion of nationalism according to the poets.

I will highlight how Celticism is part of their identity and their development of a new Celtic rhetoric different from previous attempts by others. In this chapter I shed light on their portrayal of Celticism in their poems by exploring how they employed this Celtic rhetoric and putting it against the capitalist ideology. Moreover, I analyse their use of Celtic allusions and symbols in their poetry as a mean of expressing one's emotions and identity.

#### **1. The Identity and the Other.**

The varied expressions of the authors of the Scottish Renaissance of their nationalism depends on their own political ideologies. The writers of this movement had a shared interest in developing Scottish literature springing from their belief of the urgency for Scottish nationalism. However, not all of them shared the same outlook for the Scottish political life.

From this interplay between ideology and nationalism, it is necessary to explore the nationalistic development in Scotland to understand the ideology presented in the poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean. In addition, to acknowledge their attempt in making the Highland not only as a symbol of resistance but also as a symbol of a counter-discourse of capitalist ideology.



As Ernest Gellner defines nationalism: “Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.”<sup>159</sup> In fact, Ernest Gellner’s definition of nationalism explains more why there is a different way of expressing nationalism for each writer depending on each one’s political perspective.

Moreover, looking at Gellner’s explanation of the violation of nationalism, we can get a clear picture of the motives pushing the nationalistic movements in Scotland in the past till our present day:

there is one particular form of the violation of the nationalist principle to which nationalist sentiment is quite particularly sensitive: if the rulers of the political unit belong to a nation other than that of the majority of the ruled, this, for nationalists, constitutes a quite outstandingly intolerable breach of political propriety.<sup>160</sup>

Thus, historically, the majority of the Scottish people were feeling they were ruled by a foreigner (the English crown) projecting the English as the “other” according to the Scottish perspective. Hence, this violation pushed for political movements that some of them became military resistance, as the Jacobite risings for example. That is why the year of 1746 with the defeat of the Jacobites in the battle of Culloden can be seen as a defeat of the Scottish nationalistic identity. Its importance is reflected in the historic fiction of the 19<sup>th</sup> century literature. The remarkable work of Walter Scott, *Waverley*, presents many heroic Highlanders in the novel giving these characters legendary aspects. However, the Scottish identity presented by Scott is to preserve and highlight a certain time of the Scottish history, which made this identity unable to go beyond the past.

---

<sup>159</sup> Ernest Gellner. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 1.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid

Going back to the movements in Scotland. Some of them remained political, calling for Scottish independence from the foreign English rule. The National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights, founded in 1853, is seen as an early political expression for Scottish dissatisfaction with the union calling for Scottish rights within this union.<sup>161</sup>

This association made a provision for the modern Scottish nationalist movement when later, the SNL (Scots National League) was formed in 1920. The SNL was described by MacDiarmid as “the most promising nationalist movement to be formed in Scotland since the Union”.<sup>162</sup> Also, the Highland Land League presented an effective political pressure with Highlander crofters’ protests and strikes.

The SNL together with the Highland Land League helped later in forming the SNP (Scottish National Party) which calls for Scottish independence till our present day.

I would like to highlight the fact that most of the members of the SNL were Gaelic speakers with connections with the Highland Land League, being affected by the “Celtic Romanticism” when it was formed<sup>163</sup>. Which explains the great effect of Irish politics and nationalistic movements there on the Scottish one. One of the leaders of the SNL, Stuart R. Erskine, who was friends with Hugh MacDiarmid, was considering that the growing nationalism in Ireland could be responded to in the same way in Scotland.<sup>164</sup>

This reverberation of Irish politics on Scotland is mirrored also in the impact of the cultural revival in Ireland on the Scottish one as mentioned before in chapter three explaining the rise

---

<sup>161</sup> Duncan Glen. *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Renaissance*. Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers Ltd, 1964, p. 43.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45.

<sup>163</sup> Richard J. Finlay. *Independent and Free: Scottish Politics and the Origins of the Scottish National Party 1918-1945*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1994, p. 29.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

of the Scottish Renaissance. However, this turning point in Scottish culture in the 1920s was, in its source, a result of the quest for a political identity. It shows that the traumatic experiences for a nation make its people return to their own roots, heritage and culture because they feel they are being lost, thus leading to a revival. As Duncan Glen explains that the young Scots after returning from WWI, they were feeling the importance of not only a cultural revival but also a revival for Scotland as a nation in a time when Scotland was collapsing culturally, socially and economically and “swallowed economically and culturally by its larger and controlling partner.”<sup>165</sup>

MacDiarmid led Scotland in forming its cultural nationalist identity believing that to obtain independence, it should start with cultural independence, giving culture more value than politics: “political and economic independence is valueless unless it encourages the growth of a vigorous national culture.”<sup>166</sup> Moreover, MacDiarmid sees nationalism in Scotland strongly connected with culture, giving it a characteristic of an emotion. He believes that the need for a cultural revival even paves the way to build the foundations to build political nationalism:

Nationalism in Scotland has always existed as a sentiment, and because of this men have not felt the need of a cultural renaissance...The cultural renaissance – the struggle for national language, literature and religion - always precedes the national, although it is the consciousness of nationalism which makes the cultural renaissance possible.<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>165</sup> Glen cit., p. 52.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

The presence of a group of intellectuals like Hugh MacDiarmid was fundamental in promoting this identity culturally in favour of the national movement. The author and politician William Power, who was the leader of the SNP, views that the national movements are achieved by politicians however, “their work has been made possible by the ‘propaganda’, by literary dynamic, and by the existence of some distinctive sort of national ‘culture’.”<sup>168</sup>

Nonetheless, this involvement of the writers was, at a certain time, attacked by some Scottish politicians for having different ideological perspectives when they were trying to attract people with a less radical ideology, who were unionists. This was done by politicians in the NPS (National Party of Scotland) for example, which was trying to avoid the presence of the leftist writers, described as ‘colourful radicals’ by John MacCormick, in the party<sup>169</sup>. This resulted in the expulsion of Hugh MacDiarmid from the party for being an extreme leftist and separatist.

Furthermore, during this time, of the 1920s, socialism and leftist ideology were also emerging in Scotland along with the nationalistic one. However, after WWI, the government was afraid of what was happening in Russia. For example, the Glasgow workers made a strike in January 1918 because the Scottish Trade Union Congress demanded the government to oblige more working hours. The Secretary of State for Scotland, Robert Munro, was seriously concerned about the events that had happened in Russia, which made him afraid that the strike would lead to a Bolshevik rising in Scotland.<sup>170</sup>

---

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>169</sup> Finlay, cit., p. 157.

<sup>170</sup> Tom Steel. *Scotland's Story*. London: HarperCollins, 1994, pp. 344-345

In fact, the socialist leftist ideology was more spreading between university students during the 1930s. R.S. Silver recounts what he saw during the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s: “I had begun to notice, during my years from 1936 to 1939 at Ardeer, when much argument prevailed about the events in Spain, an at first-sight surprising tendency for the English public school-type to favour communism if they were leftist at all.”<sup>171</sup>. Actually, there were many communist students in Scotland who went to Spain to fight for the Republicans, that Sorley MacLean wanted to join them too.

Therefore, the rise of left-wing views can also explain the element of “internationalism” of the Scottish Renaissance movement, which is seen in the poetry of MacDiarmid and MacLean. Moreover, Silver describes how during the Spanish Civil War there were divisions between Scottish parties that shared more or less the same outlook, but the war made its influence on these parties in widening the gap between them: “during the years of the Spanish Civil War, there were deep and bitter divisions between not only the Labour Party and the extreme left, but also between the two main sections of the far left, the CP and the ILP.”<sup>172</sup>

In fact, looking at MacDiarmid’s poem “The Battle Continues”, we can see a more or less an aggressive attack from MacDiarmid to a fellow South-African of Scottish origins poet, Roy Campbell.

As a political poem, it has little in its poetic value, being more like a verse manifesto. MacDiarmid accuses Campbell in this poem of being a Fascist. The poem came as a response to Campbell’s involvement in the Spanish Civil War and his support to the dictator Franco. MacDiarmid’s anger sprung from Campbell’s attack on Marxism in his 1939 poem “Flowering

---

<sup>171</sup> R.S. Silver. ‘Student Culture in the 1930s and Acquaintance with C.M. Grieve’, *Edinburgh Review* 74, 1986, p. 70.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, p.70.

Riffle”.

The opening line of “The Battle Continues” is: “Anti-Fascism is a bit out of date, isn’t it?”.<sup>173</sup>

Actually this line could also be seen addressed to the politicians of the NPS (National Party of Scotland) taking into account their decision of expelling leftist intellectuals from the party as they did to him in 1933.

I would like to highlight here in this particular poem how the concept of nationalism and patriotism is problematised in the scope of ideology. MacDiarmid’s accusation goes far into accusing Campbell of

his ‘ill’ patriotism due to what MacDiarmid perceives as Fascism:

Such ‘Patriotism’

Is ‘the last refuge of the scoundrel’

And all the Right are just such scoundrels

Cheating the workers of the world

Like a military thug who rapes a girl

And having enjoyed her, gives her a Judas kiss

And plunges his bayonet into her guts.

That’s all your patriotism, your love of country,<sup>174</sup>

Therefore, MacDiarmid strips Campbell from his nationalism and patriotism because of his different ideological political views taking the conflict, or “the battle”, to another level. The

---

<sup>173</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 902.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p. 964.

concept of identity goes beyond of being Scottish. What brings the battle between two Scottish poets is the political identity. MacDiarmid perceives Campbell as totally different and strange of him bringing the ideological identity to a higher importance of the geographical or 'ethnic' identity.

In another poem of MacDiarmid, "Talking with Five People in Edinburgh", he makes a reference to Yevgeny Ivanovich Zamyatin by comparing himself to Zamyatin. Zamyatin who was a son of an Orthodox priest, broke from his religion and became a Bolshevik even before the Bolshevik revolution, breaking from the tradition he was brought up to and having another belief system and affiliation. Thus, MacDiarmid writing that he is similar to Zamyatin suggests that he is aware of his identity development that brought his ideological affiliation to a higher place than his religious background or even ethnic: "For I am like Zamyatin. I must be a Bolshevik / Before the Revolution, but I'll cease to be one quick / When Communism comes to rule the roost,"<sup>175</sup> Then he explains that the committed 'real' literature that it can be written only by leftist writers who are perceived as 'heretics' by the 'fascists', or rightists as the later politicians of the National Party of Scotland: "For real literature can exist only where it's produced / By madmen, hermits, heretics, / Dreamers, rebels, sceptics,"<sup>176</sup>

Duncan Glen highlights the fact that Hugh MacDiarmid is not a politician after all but he is a poet saying: "The real difference between MacDiarmid ... and other nationalists is that he is not a politician but 'primarily a poet' who, as we have seen, was more concerned with the 'national soul' than the 'national purse'".<sup>177</sup> In fact we can see MacDiarmid giving this fact as

---

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, p. 1158.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Glen cit., p. 323

a statement in one of his poems he wrote to Lenin (Three Hymns to Lenin). In his “Second Hymn to Lenin” he says:

Ah Lenin, you were richt. But I am a poet

(And you c’ud mak allowances for that!)

Aimin’ at mair than you aimed at

Tho’ yours comes first. I know it.<sup>178</sup>

In the line in parentheses we can see once again his criticism of the political reality where he lives that prevents him from expressing himself without consequences. The presence of Lenin in some of MacDiarmid’s poems speaks for the great influence of Lenin on him and expresses MacDiarmid’s appreciation and admiration for Lenin.

In fact, Lenin was involved in his support to the Irish people during the Easter Rising of 1916. He argues about the Marxist notion of ‘Internationalism’ in his thesis *The Right of the Nation to Self-Determination* in 1914. He explains Marx’s feeling of urgency for the independence of Ireland from the English rule because of his believe of ‘internationalism’ that the oppressive actions imposed by a certain nation to another nation, would result in an oppressive system inside the oppressive nation itself, as Lenin explains:

Marx, having in mind mainly the interests of the proletarian class struggle in the advanced countries, put into the forefront the fundamental principle of internationalism and socialism, viz., that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup> MacDiarmid cit., 323.

<sup>179</sup> Vladimir Il’ich Ulyanov. *Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions: three articles*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967, p. 10.



This could explain also the oppressive action that moved inside the United Kingdom taking the Highlands Clearances as an example of applying English colonialist procedures on British lands and people.

The writer Tamás Krausz sheds light on the importance of Lenin and his influence on the intellectuals regarding the colonial studies. In his book *Reconstructing Lenin: An Intellectual Biography*, Krausz writes:

Lenin was among the first of the Marxists and social democrats to come to an understanding of the real historic significance of the colonial question. His most important political conclusion was that colonial and national movements inevitably become intertwined – with each other and the European labor movement – if imperialist oppression creates common interests in the world system.<sup>180</sup>

Actually, we can find a similarity between Lenin's notions and post-colonial writers as Aimé Césaire for example. In Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* published in 1955 we notice a more or less similar expression of Lenin's idea of 'internationalism' when Césaire explains how the brutality of the coloniser turns to the coloniser himself and 'decivilises' him: "we must study how colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism".<sup>181</sup> Césaire goes on linking the "barbarism" of capitalism with Nazism and Hitler, who was responsible of the "crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied

---

<sup>180</sup> Tamás Krausz. *Reconstructing Lenin: An Intellectual Biography*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2015, p. 169.

<sup>181</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972, p. 13.

to Europe colonialist procedures”<sup>182</sup>. Césaire believes that capitalism will lead to this Nazism and “At the end of capitalism, which is eager to outlive its day, there is Hitler”<sup>183</sup>.

By that, we can understand more MacDiarmid’s motives when he attacked Roy Campbell for example. MacDiarmid was aware of the danger of Fascism on the nation itself, bringing the clash of ideology closer than the clash between two different nations.

However, as it was mentioned before, MacDiarmid himself stated that he is not a politician but rather a poet. In fact, he was expelled also from the Communist party for two times, in November 1936 and 1939<sup>184</sup> The reasons were ironic one of them is because they required him to submit for them any controversial materials before their publication and he was violating this term (Ibid). More ironically, the other reason for being expelled was due to his Nationalism (Ibid). The fact that he was expelled from the National party of Scotland because of his communism and then expelled from the communist party because of his nationalism. This makes it clear that MacDiarmid’s identity was an overlap between nationalism and communism at the same time, making it a combination of these both, being a leftist nationalist.

As a matter of fact, Duncan Glen explains that when MacDiarmid started losing faith in the nationalist politicians of the SNP because of their strong connections with the bourgeois<sup>185</sup> Thus, he did not totally agree with the ideological ‘atmosphere’ of the SNP. Moreover, when he joined the communist party he was perceived by the Scottish nationalist as a traitor to the nationalist movement despite the fact that he was one of the founders of the movement

---

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>184</sup> Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid the Man and his Work*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1984, p. 27.

<sup>185</sup> Duncan cit., p. 50.

itself. His attempts of being faithful to his own ideology and identity made him unfit in neither parties, in my opinion is due to his individuality.

However, after his expulsion from the communist party, MacDiarmid stayed communist in his ideological belief, convinced that it would be the salvation for the individual and individuality. He wrote in 1957:

I am a Communist because life is always, and has always been, individual. There is no question of a universal, because any attempt at definition of life must start out with the concept "individual", otherwise it would not be life. And Communism, I am convinced, is the only guarantee of individuality in the modern world...Socialist society alone offers a firm guarantee that the interests of the individual will be guaranteed. One must begin with the individual, whether the peculiar genius of a country or the peculiar genius of a man.<sup>186</sup>

The expression of individuality can be traced in MacDiarmid's poetry which can give a clearer image of the notion of identity in MacDiarmid's eyes. In his poem "If there are bounds to any man", argues about the absolute potential of individuality saying in the first stanza:

If there are bounds to any man  
Save those himself has set  
To far horizons they're postponed  
And none have reached them yet;<sup>187</sup>

---

<sup>186</sup> Ann Edwards Boutelle. *Thistle and Rose: A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry*. Loanhead: MacDoanld Publishers, 1980, p. 197.

<sup>187</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p.555

MacDiarmid then compares the 'unlimitedness' of the individual with the 'unlimitedness' of the nature by presenting natural images in the poem as a metaphor for individuality:

All Earth's high peaks are naked stone

And so must men forego

All they can shed – and that's all else! –

Proportionate heights to show<sup>188</sup>

We can say that due to MacDiarmid's individuality there was the Scots revival itself. This caused him another 'conflict' with another fellow poet, Edwin Muir, who was one of the poets of the Scottish Renaissance Movement. Still, this did not prevent the conflict between the two Scottish poets. This happened after Muir wrote his volume *Scott and Scotland* for MacDiarmid's series *Meanings for Scotland*, using Scots. Muir changed his mind about the utility of using Scots as a literary language that he also advised MacDiarmid of using English instead of Scots:

a Scottish writer who wishes to achieve some approximation to completeness has no choice except to absorb the English tradition, and that if he thoroughly does so his work belongs not merely to Scottish literature but to English literature as well. On the other hand, if he wishes to add to an indigenous Scottish literature, and roots himself deliberately in Scotland, he will find there, no matter how long he may search, neither an organic community to round off his conceptions, nor a major literary tradition to support him, nor even a faith among the people themselves that

---

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

a Scottish literature is possible or desirable, nor any opportunity, finally, of making a livelihood by his work . . . it cannot be solved by writing poems in Scots<sup>189</sup>

However, this did not prevent MacDiarmid from continuing his aim for the Scottish cultural revival as he planned it. This stubborn attitude shows his belief and confidence in his own identity, taking into consideration that this critical attack came from a fellow poet of the same literary movement.

Sorley MacLean wrote to MacDiarmid in 1940 appreciating MacDiarmid's work comparing him to Yeats and even prising his work more. In addition, MacLean was lamenting the situation in Scotland of how MacDiarmid was being treated by Scottish intellectuals:

Nowadays I am more and more worried and ashamed of the way Scotland has treated yourself whom, I at least, recognise as one of the great European poets of all time. I find that all the people whose opinions I value are now certain that this century has seen two major poets in the British Islands, yourself and Yeats, and they are all agreed that in lyric intensity your poetry is far above Yeats's. It is amazing to find how many subscribe to that view without doing anything about it in public.<sup>190</sup>

In fact, MacLean also shared with MacDiarmid the socialist ideology. MacLean's beliefs were resulted by a more direct way, affected by the fact that his family itself was resisting the clearances of Skye. His background of a working class ancestry that fought the capitalist presence in the Highlands gets MacLean closer, and in contact with, the sufferings of the working class, the crofting community for example. Joy Hendry writes:

---

<sup>189</sup> Glen cit., p. 141.

<sup>190</sup> MacDiarmid, MacLean cit., 179.

MacLean's belief in political systems may [have been] inhibited by profound skepticism, but his pride in his ancestry, and in the struggles on behalf of the crofting community ... Equally "native" to MacLean as a Scot, as a Gael, as a poet concerned with the culture of his country, Scottish Nationalism, which MacLean supported alongside his socialism<sup>191</sup>

For MacLean, his sense of nationalism is connected with socialism. Taking into account that his past (family), which assists in forming the identity, is based on the resistance of capitalist values. In other words, in MacLean's case, it is quite clear the self and the other relationship between him and capitalism since it was an existential threat for his ancestors, a threat for their land and culture which makes capitalism falls under the notion of being an enemy. This would explain his motives for his opposition with the extreme rightists and Fascists regimes too as he did want to join the Republicans in their fight with Franco's regime during the Spanish Civil War 1930s. In an interview with Joy Hendry, MacLean explains his concerns during the WWII as a Scottish citizen:

A lot of things were intensified and accelerated by the likelihood of war in the thirties. It wasn't so much the war I was afraid of, but of Europe being taken over by German fascism, German Nazism, and being a kind of pessimist, I fully expected that as things were going, it was likely that there would be a thousand years of Nazi domination, which was racist too, you know. And that worked in with my Scottish nationalism because the Nazis regarded the English as more Teutonic than the Scots. And that affected me very much.<sup>192</sup>

---

<sup>191</sup> Joy Hendry, "Sorley MacLean: The Man and His Work." *Sorley MacLean: Critical Essays*. Ed. Ross J. Raymond and Joy Hendry. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press Ltd., 1986, p. 19.

<sup>192</sup> Joy Hendry. "An Interview with Sorley MacLean." *Chapman* 66, Autumn 1991, p. 3.

In his interview with Angus Nicolson he mentions that his sense of politics when he was twelve years old was affected by his environment, the Highlands. Describing it as “left-wing radicalism”.<sup>193</sup> MacLean explains in this interview that this is why he was concerned and “obsessed” with the probability of a Fascist victory in Spain, which explains the interplay between nationalism and ideology: “although I was a Scottish Nationalist then, I thought that the immediate thing, the question of immediate importance, was the fight against Fascism, with Spain, the United Front, and all that.”<sup>194</sup>

In his poem “An Cuilithionn”, MacLean mentions Lenin several times. His presentation of Lenin shares some similarity with MacDiarmid’s presentation of Lenin in his three Hymns to Lenin. In “First Hymn to Lenin”, MacDiarmid portrays Lenin as a Christ figure as compared to other politicians:

Churchills, Locker-Lampsons, Beaverbrooks’ll be

In history’s perspective less to you

(And them!) than the Centurions to Christ

Of whom, as you, at least this muckle’s true

- ‘Tho’ pairtly wrang he cam’ to richt amang’s

Faur greater wrangs.’<sup>195</sup>

Whereas, MacLean in part seven of the poem, compares the sacrifice made by figures as Christ or Spartacus with the sufferings and sacrifice made by Lenin too for the people, the

---

<sup>193</sup> Nicolson cit., p. 29.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>195</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 297

poor people. Moreover, he presents the Highlands (The Cuillin) as the hope for the working class and for 'Lenin's intellect':

And her beauty cast a cloud  
over poverty and a bitter wound  
and over the world of Lenin's intellect,  
over his patience and anger.<sup>196</sup>

The cloud coming from the Cuillin hills could be a metaphor for the hope of salvation. He might be referring to the Highland Clearances by the "bitter wound".

The Highlands for MacLean is the place where both, Christ and Lenin can be in harmony:

The two may not be seen together  
for all the expanse of the morass  
they are not to be seen in one place  
except on the bare tops of the high mountains.

The image of these figures being on the top of the hills suggests the sacrifice and strength that puts them in a higher place. This gives a sense of how MacLean pictures them to be being beyond human nature.

---

<sup>196</sup> MacLean cit., p. 42.



## 2. Celtic Rhetoric Vs. Capitalism.

Celticism is a uniting aspect between the nations of the United Kingdom. Looking at the history of the United Kingdom, when Ireland was part of it until our present day, we can notice the great impact of Ireland on both Scottish and Welsh national consciousness. The Irish effects were not only political, but most importantly cultural. The Irish historian Owen Dudley Edwards writes in his essay in the book of *The Celtic Consciousness*: “The nationalism of Scotland and Wales, and indeed the minds of both countries in their totality, are far less historically-conscious than is the case with Ireland”.<sup>197</sup> The Irish experience was perceived as an exemplar for the success of preserving and rebuilding identity. The Irish literary revival in Ireland and its intellectuals were motivating and inspiring the rise of the Renaissance movement in Scotland to reclaim the Celtic identity in Scotland.

However, this Irish Celtic revival arrived to Scotland with Scottish writers such as William Sharp with the same kind of style and mentality that both Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean were disagreeing on. The revival movement of Scotland by MacDiarmid took a different methodology of presenting the Celtic culture. William Sharp writes in the introduction of the *Lyra Celtica* in a defeatist tone of the ‘lost Gaelic’ culture: “The history of the Celtic race itself is but a long comp plaint, the lament of exiles, the grief of despairing flights beyond the sea”<sup>198</sup> then the introduction is finished as: “The Celt falls, but his spirit rises in the heart and the brain of the Anglo-Celtic peoples, with whom are the destinies of

---

<sup>197</sup> Owen Dudley Edwards. ‘Ireland and Nationalism in Scotland and Wales’, *The Celtic Consciousness*. Ed. Robert O’Driscoll. New York: George Braziller Inc, 1982, p. 445.

<sup>198</sup> William Sharp. ‘Introduction’, *Lyra Celtica* Edinburgh: John Grant, 1932, p.xlix.

the generations to come.”<sup>199</sup> The Scottish Renaissance was exactly against such Anglo centric views believing that there would be no Celtic revival with English oriented minds.

Furthermore, the Celtic elements in MacDiarmid and MacLean’s poetry were not used to present gloomy images of this culture. What the Celtic revival writers were doing, according to MacDiarmid and MacLean, was presenting these defeatist melancholic images of Celtic ‘romantic’ environments. However, the aim of the Scottish Renaissance writers was to utilise Celticism as a source of power, not to be presented in a passive way but in an active way. In fact, observing the poetry of MacDiarmid and MacLean, we notice that both poets presented in many of their poems Celtic symbols and motifs to attack capitalism. They represent Celticism as counter-discourse of capitalism making it part of their ideological thought bringing Celticism and Celtic ‘lifestyle’ to, more or less, an ecological rhetoric.

MacDiarmid wrote a poem dedicated to Duncan Ban MacIntyre, “In Talk with Donnchadh B’an Mac an t’Saoi”, MacIntyre was a Highlander poet during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and fought for the Hanoverians during the Jacobite rising of 1745. MacDiarmid’s construction of the natural environment in the poem suggests his appreciation and respect for the traditions of the Gaels and their culture of the connectedness with the land which is a main element of the Celtic tradition: “of the time / When man’s affinity with nature was more strict / And his fellowship with every living thing more intimate and dear”.<sup>200</sup> MacDiarmid here imagines that the relationship between the Highlanders and their land is not ‘intimate’ as it was during the times of MacIntyre which was before the Clearances: “You were writing superb descriptions / Of wild scenery for its own sake / When the English were still complaining / Of the ‘frightful

---

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, p. xliii.

<sup>200</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 1099.

irregularity' of Highland mountains,"<sup>201</sup>. These lines shed the light on the link between freedom and Celtic creativity. In other words, MacDiarmid suggests that the claimed 'frightful irregularity' of the Highlanders, which is their connectedness with nature, stimulated Gaelic poets to write 'superb' poetry which was interrupted later by the English capitalism.

MacDiarmid in his poems mentions and pays attention to the decline of the economy of the Highland and its ecology due to the changes imposed on its demography and nature: "Under the old system the land was cultivated to its utmost extent, and it maintained a large and vigorous population equal to any other people in Europe"<sup>202</sup>. He writes in his poem "The Poet we Hope for" about the Gales who tried to recover the Clearances tragedy: "...They recited / The physical history of the Highlands of Scotland, Analysed its economic geography, Exposed in full the tragedy of its waste,"<sup>203</sup> MacDiarmid blames the landlords and give them the responsibility of the present reality of the Highlands which is due to "the arbitrary action of the landowners".<sup>204</sup> Moreover, MacDiarmid takes this Celtic rhetoric beyond geographical limitation connecting the Highlands with international matters. In his poem "Why", the speaker is arguing how his/her distress with the Highlands are driving him/her to believe that this land is in need for a figure as Ghandi for example: "Concerned as I am with the West Highlands and Hebrides / Instantly to my hand is the fact / That the two greatest social and religious reformers / Of modern India – Dayanandi and Ghandi –"<sup>205</sup> In another poem called "My Songs are Kandym in the Waste Land", he presents the internationalism of the problem

---

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p. 1100.

<sup>202</sup> MacDiarmid, Hugh. *The Raucle Tongue: Hitherto Uncollected Prose*. Vol III. Ed. Angus Calder, Glen Murray & Alan Riach. Manchester: Carcanet Press: 1996-98, p. 131.

<sup>203</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 1414.

<sup>204</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 131.

<sup>205</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 1141.

of capitalism and the shared grief of the people from the capitalist destruction of their lands and the nature of their lands around the world:

Capitalist culture to the great masses of mankind

Is like the exploitative handling in America

Of forest, grazing, and tilled lands

Which exaggerates floods and reduces

The dry-season flow of the rivers to almost nothing.

[...]

Forests slashed to the quick

And the ground burned over,

Grazing lands turned into desert,

The tragic upsetting of the hydrologic cycle<sup>206</sup>

The speaker demonstrates the catastrophic relationship between ecology and the capitalist culture which turns landscapes into deserts and 'waste lands' for its own benefits whether that is in Scotland or in America. MacDiarmid was ahead of his time to consider ecological issues in this manner and to consider earth as an entity in itself with a 'hydrologic cycle'.

Both MacDiarmid and MacLean portray the Celtic aspect of the closeness between man and his land which is beyond a physical connection, their concern about the past of the land and its future, and that is what brings their poetry to a be on ecological natural environmental

---

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, p. 1142.

issues. In this regard, MacDiarmid writes about MacLean's poem "The Cuillin" saying that MacLean:

sees the wild peaks of the Cuillin in terms of the endless struggles of mankind and is not only a magnificent evocation of the Hebridean landscape but of the whole tumult of history and human hope, for the poet sees not only the superficialities of the scene, and not only the local history of which these Skye hills have been the theatre, but the entire perspective of human history of which they provide such a tortured and towering symbol<sup>207</sup>

MacLean too goes in his poetry from local to international matters. He employs the Cuillin mountain as a 'native' symbol derived from Celtic geography and culture to be referring to the Clearances in the Highlands and also to the rest of the world:

It was in Mull in 1938 that I conceived the idea of writing a very long poem, 10,000 words or so, on the human condition, radiating from the history of Skye and the West Highlands to Europe and what I knew of the rest of the world. Its symbolism was to be, mostly, native symbolism.<sup>208</sup>

In the poem, we have a juxtaposition of the mountain and the bog. The mountain of Cuillin and its surroundings stand for the hope and liberation from the devastating reality created by capitalism. While, on the other hand, the bog stands for capitalism and corruption. Moreover, MacLean presents his awareness of the traditional Celtic legends as Goll and Fionn and using these references to create the image of the Cuillin as a strong mountain fighting for freedom:

---

<sup>207</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, *Selected Prose*. Ed. Alan Riach Manchester: Carcanet, 1992, p. 164-165.

<sup>208</sup> MacLean cit., p. 12.

Compared with the giant Son of Cuillin  
neither Goll nor Fionn nor monster  
devised by man's imagination  
was more than a louse on the beetle's back<sup>209</sup>

We can depict the same awareness in MacDiarmid's poem "Lament for the Great Music"  
making reference to An Barr Buadh which is the horn of Fionn used to call for his fighters:

To remember the great music and to look  
At Scotland and the world to-day is to hear  
An Barr Buadh again where there are none to answer.<sup>210</sup>

Both poets could find in Scotland a source of strength. That was what they wanted from the literature of the Celtic revival. Instead of presenting it as in a total pessimist, Anglo-centric tone, MacLean and MacDiarmid saw the Celtic culture as a source of power and hope.

---

<sup>209</sup> MacLean cit., p. 88.

<sup>210</sup> MacDiarmid cit., p. 463.

## **Conclusion:**

The investigation on the impact of the Highland Clearances on MacDiarmid's and MacLean's poetry has shown the fulfilment of the two poets' aims to present the Highlands from a different point of view from all the previous writers of their times. It has highlighted that this aim was achieved in different ways and was sometimes due to their literary collaboration and friendship. This dissertation has addressed this personal relationship also based on political and ideological aims, so showing aspects of their shared beliefs and outlook of their country.

As it was shown throughout the whole dissertation, the two poets made the Highland Clearances a symbol of power and hope for an independent Scotland by converting this collective traumatic experience into a uniting awakening experience.

Moreover, the experience of the Clearances was presented as not only exclusive to Highlanders. Instead, in MacDiarmid's case - the poet was not a Highlander himself - that experience was linked to contemporary and historical international events, so sharing what Sorley Maclean was doing for the Gaelic cause. This dissertation has investigated the importance of this attempt and showed how this is connected with both poets' leftist ideology and their poetic production.

All the issues here discussed are relevant and highly present in our contemporary time. Despite various clashes and delusions in the latest referendums, in several parts of Scotland there is the will to gain a political and economic independence in our present days. This is even stronger over the time with the new generations leaning to be independent

from London, having a clearer picture of their past and of the destructive presence London had for their ancestors, land and economy. For this reason, MacDiarmid's and MacLean's goal to educate the coming generations is being, more or less, fulfilled. This is mostly highlighted by the evolution of the reality of Scotland since the second half of the last century, and especially by the re-introduction of an independent parliament in 1999 and by the attempt of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. The SNP is trying now to get a second referendum which might change, with the independence of Scotland, the political geography we have known for several decades.



## Bibliography

- Allan I. MacInnes. "Scottish Gaeldom: The First Phase of Clearance". In Devine, T M; Mitchison, Rosalind (eds.). *People and Society in Scotland, Volume 1, 1760–1830.*, 1988 Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd.
- Armitage, David. *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Arneil, Barbara. *Domestic Colonies: The Turn Inward to Colony*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Ascherson, Neil. "Seven Poets." *Seven Poets: Hugh MacDiarmid, Norman MacCaig, Iain Crichton Smith, George Mackay Brown, Robert Garioch, Sorley MacLean, Edwin Morgan*. Glasgow: Third Eye Centre Ltd., 1981.
- Black, Ronald "Introduction," *An Tuil: Anthology of 20th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse*, ed. Ronald Black Edinburgh: Polygon, 1999.
- Bold, Alan. *MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve): A Critical Biography*. London: John Murray, 1988.
- Boutelle, Ann Edwards. *Thistle and Rose: A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry*. Loanhead: MacDoanld Publishers, 1980.
- Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- Clyde, Robert. *From Rebel to Hero. The Image of the Highlander, 1745-1830*, East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998.
- Crotty, Patrick. "‘Like Pushkin, I?’: Hugh MacDiarmid and Russia", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol.44, Iss.1, 2019. (<https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol44/iss1/7>).
- David, E J R. *Internalized Oppression the Psychology of Marginalized Groups*. Springer Publishing Company, 2014.
- Davidson, Neil. "Marx and Engels on the Scottish Highlands" *Science & Society*, Fall, Volume 65, 2001.
- Dymock, Emma. "‘Cas agam anns a’ bhoglaich agus cas air a’ Chuilithionn’: Unstable Borders in the Poetry of Sorley MacLean," *Lainnir a’ Bhùirn / The Gleaming Water: Essays on Modern Gaelic Literature*, ed. Emma Dymock and Wilson McLeod Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2011.
- Edwards, Dudley Owen. 'Ireland and Nationalism in Scotland and Wales', *The Celtic Consciousness*. Ed. Robert O'Driscoll. New York: George Braziller Inc, 1982.
- Fazzini, Marco. *Conversations with Scottish Poets*. Abardeen: Aberdeen University, 2015.

- Finlay, J. Richard. *Independent and Free: Scottish Politics and the Origins of the Scottish National Party 1918-1945*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1994.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.
- German, Kieran. "Jacobite Politics in Aberdeen and the '15." *Loyalty and Identity: Jacobites at Home and Abroad*, by Monod Paul Kléber et al., Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Gish, K. Nancy. *Hugh MacDiarmid the Man and his Work*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1984.
- Glen, Duncan. *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Renaissance*. Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers Ltd, 1964.
- Hechter, Michael. *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*. University of California Press, 1975.
- Hendry, Joy. "An Interview with Sorley MacLean." *Chapman* 66, Autumn 1991.
- Hendry, Joy. "Sorley MacLean: The Man and His Work." *Sorley MacLean: Critical Essays*. Ed. Ross J. Raymond and Joy Hendry. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press Ltd., 1986.
- Krausz, Tamás. *Reconstructing Lenin: An Intellectual Biography*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2015.
- Loch, James. *An Account of the Improvements on the Estates of the Marquess of Stafford*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown. 1820.
- Lyall, Scott. *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place: Imagining a Scottish Republic*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
- Lynch, Michael. *Scotland: A New History*. London: Pimlico, 1992.
- MacDiarmid, Hugh, and Alan Norman Bold. *Aesthetics in Scotland / by Hugh MacDiarmid; Edited & Introduced by Alan Bold*. Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1984.
- *Annals of the Five Senses: And Other Stories, Sketches and Plays*, eds Roderick Watson and Alan Riach, Manchester: Carcanet, 1999.
  - . *Complete Poems of Hugh Macdiarmid: Volume I*. Penguin Books, 1985.
  - . *Complete Poems: Volume II* ed. Michael Grieve & W. R. Aitken Manchester: Carcanet, 2000.
  - *Selected Prose* ed. Riach, Alan. Manchester: Carcanet, 1992.
  - *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*. Ed. Bold Alan. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984.

- *The Raucle Tongue: Hitherto Uncollected Prose*. vol II. eds. Angus Calder, Glen Murray & Alan Riach Manchester: Carcanet Press: 1996.
- MacDiarmid, Hugh, and MacGill-Eain, Somhairle (MacLean, Sorley). *The Correspondence between Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean*. Edited by Susan R. Wilson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.
- MacDonald, Donald Archie. “Some Aspects of Family and Local Background: an Interview with Sorley MacLean” *Sorley MacLean Critical Essays*, ed. Raymond J. Ross and Joy Hendry. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1986.
- MacGill-Eain, Somhairle (MacLean, Sorley). *Caoir Gheal Leumraich / White Leaping Flame. Sorley MacLean / Somhairle MacGill-Eain: Collected Poems*. Ed. Christopher Whyte and Emma Dymock. Edinburgh: Polygon, 2011.
- *Hallaig Agus dàin Eile = Hallaig and Other Poems: Somhairle MacGill-Eain = Sorley MacLean: Taghadh De Dhàin = Selected Poems*. Polygon, 2014.
- ‘Introduction’ *Ris a’ Bhruthaich*, ed. William Gillies Stornoway: Acair Ltd., 1985
- “My Relationship with the Muse,” *Ris A’ Bhruthaich: The Criticism and Prose Writings of Sorley MacLean*, ed. William Gillies. Stornoway: Acair, 1997.
- *Personal Correspondence to Douglas Young written by Somhairle MacGill-Eain / Sorley MacLean*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
- “Poetry, Passion and Political Consciousness.” Interview with Sorley MacLean, also featuring John MacInnes, Hamish Henderson, Donald MacAulay and Iain Crichton Smith. *Scottish International* 10: May, 1970.
- ‘Realism in Gaelic Poetry’. *Ris a’ Bhruthaich: The Criticism and Prose Writings of Sorley MacLean*. Stornoway: Acair, 1985.
- MacGill-Eain, Somhairle (MacLean, Sorley), and Whyte, Christopher. *Somhairle MacGill-Eain / Sorley MacLean / Dàin Do Eimhir / Poems to Eimhir*. Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2002.
- MacInnes, John. *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal. Collected Essays of Dr John MacInnes*, ed. Michael Newton. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006.
- MacKay, Peter. *Sorley MacLean*. Aberdeen: AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, 2010.
- MacLeod, Calum. *Fàsachadh An-Iochdmhor Ratharsair / The Cruel Clearance of Raasay*. Dunfermline: Clò Àrnais, 2007.
- McClure, J. Derrick. *Language, Poetry and Nationhood: Scots as a Poetic Language from 1878 to the Present*. Tuckwell Press, 2000
- McCulloch, Margery. *Scottish Modernism and Its Contexts 1918-1959 Literature, National Identity and Cultural Exchange*. Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

- McDermott, Jennifer R. 2007. 'Robert Burns the Scottish Bard: Prescriptivism, Poetic Primitivism, and the Status of Scots in the Eighteenth Century'. <http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~cpercy/courses/eng6365-mcdermott.htm>
- Meek, Donald E. *Caran An-t-Saoghail / The Wiles of the World: An Anthology of Nineteenth Century Gaelic Verse*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2003.
- Mitchison, Rosalind. *A History of Scotland*. Routledge, 2003.
- "The Highland Clearances" *Scottish Economic & Social History*, 1981 1:1.
- Newton, Michael. *Dùthchas Nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2006.
- Nicolson, Angus. "An Interview with Sorley MacLean," *Studies in Scottish Literature* Vol. 14, 1979.
- Riach, Alan. *Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography: The Masks of the Modern Nation*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- *The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid*. Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1999.
- Richards, Eric. *Debating the Highland Clearances*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- *The Highland Clearances: People, Landlords, and Rural Turmoil*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2002.
- Scott, Alexander. "An Interview with Hugh MacDiarmid," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 14: Iss. 1, 1979.
- "Scotch Laws Relating to Education." *Of the Education of the Poor*, London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1809.
- Sellar, Thomas. *The Sutherland Evictions of 1814*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883.
- Sinclair, John. *General Report of the Agricultural State and Political Circumstances of Scotland Drawn up for the Consideration of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement*. Vol. I Edinburgh: Abernethy and Walker. 1841.
- Sharp, William. 'Introduction', *Lyra Celtica* Edinburgh: John Grant, 1932.
- Silver, R.S., 'Student Culture in the 1930s and Acquaintance with C.M. Grieve', *Edinburgh Review* 74, 1986.
- Smyth, Jim. "Arguments for and against Union: Scotland and Ireland, 1700-2000." *Ireland and Scotland: Culture and Society, 1700-2000*, by Liam McIlvanney and Ray Ryan, Four Courts Press, 2005.
- Steel, Tom. *Scotland's Story*. London: HarperCollins, 1994.
- Szechi, Daniel. "Retrieving Captain Le Cocq's Plunder: Plebeian Scots and the Aftermath of the 1715 Rebellion" *Loyalty and Identity: Jacobites at Home and Abroad*, by Monod Paul Kléber et al., Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Ulyanov, Vladimir Il'ich. *Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions: three articles*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967.

Watson, Roderick. "Scottish literary renaissance (act. c. 1920–1945)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 24. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wormald, Jenny. *Scotland: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Wright, Gordon. *MacDiarmid: an illustrated biography of Christopher Murray Grieve* (Hugh MacDiarmid) Edinburgh: Gordon Wright Publishing, 1977.