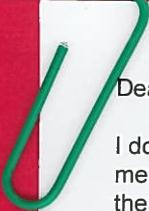




A PERSON IS NOT AN INDIVIDUAL

The School of Plural Futures



Dear Whom It May Concern,

I don't suppose you would understand the reasons behind me writing to you, nor do I think you'll understand them by the end of this letter, nor do I imagine you will ever be able to comprehend them. Not that I would wish these reasons upon anyone. Yet these reasons have been thrust upon us, by you.

You that have pockets that could house mountains and hearts that would barely house mice. You that create crevasses, that become cracks, that become irreparable chasms and canyons in our culture. You that lap up our views like a tired sheepdog to water for six months of the year, to then go and leave your homes as empty as you've left our villages. Our crofts. Our communities. Our hearts.

Like the cattle and the sheep that you have also robbed of homes, we have moved from grazing to grazing, been pushed further and further away to find our pastures of promise, until we cannot search anymore. We must stand firm in our final lands that we now must so desperately cling to. Hold them and protect them. Care for them as they once cared for us.

And now this will be forever, if we don't return to being children of the land. Our silence and forgiveness will not be bought.

Sincerely,

Anonymous

A PERSON IS NOT AN INDIVIDUAL

The School of Plural Futures

A PERSON IS NOT AN INDIVIDUAL

The School of Plural Futures Cohort:

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Heather Fulton
Sarah Macleod
Murdo MacGillivray
Isabel McLeish
Emmie McLuskey
Sara Oussaiden
Ainslie Roddick
Samir Sharif
Sebastian Taylor
Eilidh Towers
Grace Wright

Friends and Speakers:

Ari Borzea
Andrew Black
Maoilios Caimbeul
Cal Earl
Rufus Isabel Elliot
Ruth Little
Malcolm MacKenzie
Catherine MacPhee
Iain MacKinnon
Mairi McFadyen
Cheryl McIntyre
Liam Neupert
Rory Pilgrim
Raghnaid Sandilands
Lea Shaw
Matthew Arthur Williams
Jordan Young

LIST OF CONTENTS
CLÀR-INNSE

Something Else Is Here Now Tha Rudeigin Eile An Seo A-Nis	09
Kilmuir Village Hall Talla Chille Mhoire	11
Foreword Ro-Ràdh	13
Aquaculture Cradle Creathal Dualchas Uisgeach	16
when is a shell not a shell nuair nach eil slige slige	19
Dig Where We Stand Cladhaich Far a Bheil Sinn Nar Seasamh	22
a person is not an individual chan eil neach fa leth	25
At the Mart Aig a' Mharcaigh	34
AFFIRMATION under OATH 2201 DAINGNEACHADH fo MHIONNAN 2201	37
Women's Work Obair nam Ban	41

From Inside Bhon Taobh a-Staigh	46	Shetland Cow Bò Shealtainneach	95
Shell Slige	48	Skeabost Memorial Hall Talla-Chuimhneachain Sgeitheabost	96
The Undercurrent Am Fo-Shruth	51	List of Images Liosta Dhealbhan	98
Breakish Hall Talla Bhreacais	60	Programme Prògram	100
Clod. Clod.	63	Reading List Liosta Leughaidh	104
Resurfacing Ath-uachdaraich	65	Contributors' Biographies Sgeulan-Beatha na Luchd-Tabhartais	106
Swaying Trees Craobhan Turrabanaich	67	Colophon Fiosrachaidh Foillseachadh	114
The Voices NA GUTHAN	71		
Protest Poem Dàn Fianais	75		
The Stories We Tell Na Sgeulachdan a Bhios Sinn ag Innse	83		
Dig Where We Stand Cladhaich Far a Bheil Sinn Nar Seasamh	92		



SOMETHING

ELSE, IS HERE NOW



FOREWORD

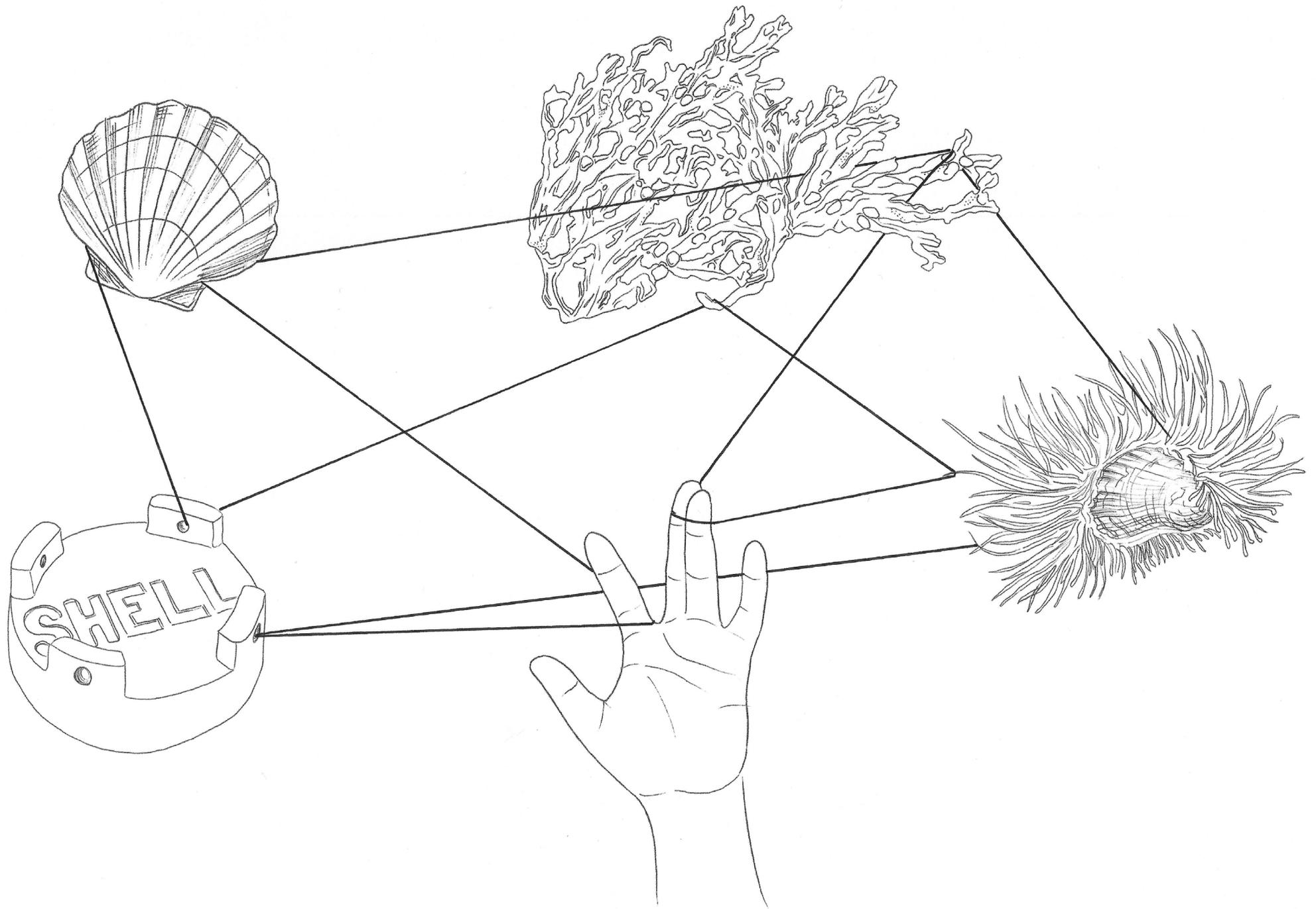
Emmie McLuskey

The School of Plural Futures began as an open call by ATLAS Arts to those aged between sixteen and twenty-five local to Skye and Lochalsh that were interested in talking about the reality and potential of life where they live. There was no required outcome or agenda but rather a commitment to spend time with this conversation and with others who are invested in having it. Since February 2021 we have met every six weeks online and in village halls throughout Skye and Lochalsh. Each session has dealt with topics spanning land, community organising, alternative history, soil, crofting, imperialism, legacies of empire, Gaelic, protest, the housing crisis, working with living systems, mental health and home. Through talking, thinking, making, experiencing and grieving these subjects, we have developed a community of people dedicated to working with each other and the land towards a more harmonious world. Solidarity and a hope for something better fuel our desire to keep being together with these questions. Multiplicity, nuance and friendship have and continue to guide us through difficult conversations and concerns, our strength as a group lying in our differences.

a person is not an individual is a quote taken from a conversation between artist Andrew Black and scholar Iain MacKinnon that is printed as part of this publication. The sentiment echoes our process and thoughts on future and comes from the idea that no highlander ever thought of themselves as an individual – they are always connected to those who came before and will come after them.

Held in the pages of this publication are a range of images, stories, quotations, essays, conversations and proposals for what we might want from a future and our process of unravelling as we get there. It centres collectivity and being together as integral to how we move forward. Our hope is to invite others who may be reading this into our discussions and to share some of what we have learned. I urge you to get in touch with us. This is the beginning of a conversation. It is what happens when you lead with curiosity and work with what is already there.

My huge thanks to Ailish, Eilidh, Grace, Isabel, Murdo, Sara, Sarah and Sebastian for guiding me through these discussions, being open with what they want, sharing their home with me and continuing to give me hope for the future; I am in awe of you all. My utmost respect to Ainslie, Heather, Katharine and Samir for knowing the value of what it means to host, trust and care. And my gratitude to Ari, Andrew, Maoilios, Cal, Rufus, Ruth, Catherine, Iain, Mairi, Cheryl, Raghnaid, Rory, Liam, Lea, Matthew and Jordan for their ongoing support and input in this project.



WHEN IS A SHELL NOT A SHELL

Isabel McLeish

*This text refers to the shell object depicted as part of “Aquaculture Cradle.”
The object was gifted to American artist Amy Balkin’s archive titled A People’s
Archive of Sinking and Melting, a collection of materials contributed by people
living in places that are affected by the physical, political and economic impacts
of climate change.*

Location: Reraig, Lochalsh, Highland

Lat/Long: 57.28195, -5.62763

Date Collected: 2nd April 2021: 4.05pm

I have lived in the village of Reraig my whole life and came across the ‘shell’ on the shore in front of my home during lockdown this year. ‘Reraig’ is an Old Norse-derived place name meaning ‘reed bay’ or ‘seaweed bay’.

The sea loch in front of my home is a marine protected area which hosts a variety of rich wildlife, including the largest seabed of brightly-coloured bivalve molluscs in Scotland, known as ‘flame shells’. I have witnessed the loch change as more salmon farms are introduced, but also as dredgers are encouraged to move away from this protected area. A huge volume of marine waste continues to wash up on the shore in Reraig and I worry about the impact of industrial fishing processes on local biodiversity.

While I was growing up, my family had a shellfish business of hand diving for scallops which is a more environmentally respectful method of fishing for shellfish as opposed to dredging. Dredging involves dragging large nets across the seabed which gathers all natural materials and sea life rather than being selective. For me, the word ‘shell’ on this object refers to this

personal family shellfish diving history as well as the fishing traditions and the history of the local area. The darker side to this object is the fact that it did wash up as rubbish on our shore and comes from a large multinational company that uses extractive processes with little environmental consideration. I do wonder about food security and what the future holds if destructive fishing and marine practices continue.

The sea levels rising will threaten homes and communities living close to the shore. Climate change will create warmer, wetter and wilder weather for local people. I wanted to contribute an object that has personal symbolic meaning as well as which speaks to global issues. I hope to encourage consideration of the environmental impact of the current intensive fishing industry and to encourage action to develop regenerative and respectful methods of food production and connection to place and ecology.

"TOOLS FOR CONVIVIALITY ARE THOSE WHICH GIVE EACH PERSON WHO USES THEM THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITY TO ENRICH THE ENVIRONMENT WITH THE FRUITS OF [THEIR] VISION" IVAN ILLICH, 1973

GEO-POETICS · WORLD-MAKING
A RE-MAPPING OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD...

KENNETH WHITE

"THE TERRITORY IS THE VITAL SPACE THAT ENSURES OUR SURVIVAL AS A LIVING CULTURE IN HARMONY WITH NATURE... THE TERRITORY IS OUR TRUE HISTORY BOOK, SINCE IT KEEPS ALIVE THE TRADITIONS OF THOSE WHO INHABIT IT (PLAN DE VIDA)"

MISAK PEOPLE, COLUMBIA

"IF ANY OF US DIG DEEP ENOUGH WHERE WE STAND, WE WILL FIND OURSELVES CONNECTED TO ALL OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD"

ALASTAIR MCINTOSH, "SOIL AND SOUL" 2004

"OUR WORLD IS A DIVERSE PLACE BRIMMING WITH IDEAS AND STORIES, BUT ISN'T IT STRANGE - WHEN IT COMES TO ECONOMICS, WE'VE ALL ENDED UP SETTLING FOR A SINGLE SYSTEM: CAPITALISM" THE RULES, 2018

"THE COMMODITY HAS NOW COLONIZED EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE, RENDERING WHAT WAS ONCE A CAPITALIST ECONOMY INTO A CAPITALIST CULTURE" MURRAY BOOKCHIN, 2006

"CLEARANCE, EMPIRE, PROFIT, EXPLOITATION. OUR WAY OF LIFE IS BESIEGED BY INTERNATIONAL BIG BUSINESS... THE INIQUITIES OF LAND OWNERSHIP, THE FAILURES AND UNCONCERN OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. OUR CULTURE VITIATED BY THE SENTIMENTALITY OF THOSE WHO HAVE GONE AWAY. WE HAVE, I THINK, A DEEP SENSE OF GENERATION AND COMMUNITY, BUT THIS HAS IN SO MANY WAYS BEEN BROKEN. WE HAVE A HISTORY OF RESISTANCE, BUT NOW MAINLY IN THE SONGS WE SING"

SORLEY MACLEAN, 1974

A PERSON IS NOT AN INDIVIDUAL

Andrew Black in conversation with Dr Iain MacKinnon

This piece is a short excerpt from a longer conversation between Andrew and Iain, conducted in August 2021 as part of the research for Andrew's film Dàn Fianais – Protest Poem, commissioned by ATLAS Arts and Skye Climate Action.

Andrew and Iain's contributions, ideas, ethos and friendship were and continue to be central to our thinking and learning as a group negotiating climate, land, home and the legacies of empire.

ANDREW: Can you talk about the ways that communities traditionally lived and worked together and with the land in the Gàidhealtachd?

IAIN: To take my own village, Camuscross, as an example, before 1800, before the enlightenment surveyors, the improvers came to the village, it was a baile, with a dozen or so houses in it. These were clustered around the house of the tacksman, who was a relative of Lord MacDonald, the chief of the clan as they were conceived of at that time. This tacksman was responsible for managing the resources in the locality. That included the arable ground, which was reapportioned among the families that were there; the use of peat, turf, wood, the taking of both food from the foreshore and fishing and also the use of seaweed as a fertiliser. All of that was managed and used collectively. It seems to have varied from area to area, but in many places the land was reapportioned either annually or after a number of years, and very often in ways that ensured that each family or household had a portion each of better ground and poorer ground. Beyond the head-dyke of the village, the kind of boundary-wall of the arable ground, was the fasach, which was again

managed collectively, and in the summer-time, parts of the community, mainly women and children, would go off to certain designated airigh. These were areas where they would look after the cattle for the summer, keeping the cattle away from the crops that were growing in the township and they would be milking the cattle, making butter and cheese, working on the production of clothes and generally having a good time. It was an enjoyable place. That function went on right up to the middle part of the 20th century in some areas.

ANDREW: And when did that start to change?

IAIN: It began to change in the 18th century, early 19th century. So again in Camuscross, there was a visit to Skye by a man called Blackadder, John Blackadder, who was a surveyor from the Borders. He had been contracted by Lord MacDonald to redraw the village, to redraw his whole estate, this included North Uist, parts of the North of Skye, Sleat and parts of Strath, along rational, enlightened agricultural principles, which involved individualising, as much as possible, the ground. After Blackadder had done his work there were no longer a dozen or so families in Camuschros, but 48 families, and living in a township whose boundaries he had reduced. Blackadder said in one of his surveys that ideally what you want to do is individualise everything but because of the nature of the terrain in this part of the world, it wouldn't be practical to individualise the large areas of commons. For these townships that remained while they individualised the arable ground and that was the creation of what today are called 'crofts'. The pastoral ground in those circumstances almost always remained in common. This is why you have crofting today as a hybrid system of tenure. It's to some degree individualised on the arable ground, the

in-bye ground, but the hill ground is generally held in common. And that's simply – in terms of the political economy of it – it's simply because of the way that the surveyors were regarding the topography of the Highlands at that time.

ANDREW: What were some of the reasons that they would have wanted to individualise it?

IAIN: The large, individual farms were created because it was believed that they would provide a larger economic return, particularly at that time through sheep – there was a good price for sheep and for wool at that time, and so by turning large areas of ground over to one individual user, often these were people coming in from the South who had experience of those forms of agriculture, that would be a higher return. On the other hand, many landlords at the beginning of the 19th Century wanted to keep populations because there was a lot of money to be made from kelp: during the Napoleonic War it was being used as a chemical because the cheaper foreign alternatives weren't available, meaning the landlords wanted to cash in on that, so they kept a lot of people in smaller individualised holdings on the coast where they could gather and process kelp. It was also a form of rationalisation so they could better control and understand the population on their land, and it was I think part of a general move towards, or an expression of the idea of, private property. Even though these people were never going to have property rights, the idea of landholding being on a private or individual basis was just the natural way for the surveyors to think, and there was a huge bias and prejudice against collective forms of tenure, which were seen as being 'primitive' or 'barbaric', and sort of inherently 'irrational'.

ANDREW: So there was a shift towards a more extractive view of the land and the people who inhabited and worked on it – to what extent was that tied into or influenced by the British imperial project?

IAIN: I think what we're beginning to appreciate is that it was pretty massively connected to it. And, I mean, my thoughts on this are evolving, but I'm beginning to consider that it's possible that money returning from empire really enabled much of this process to take place because the people who are coming back with loads of pre-accumulated capital from empire from slavery in the Caribbean or from India had reserves of capital or finance that they could use to firstly employ the surveyors, and then make the changes happen on the land over a set number of years where they might have a reduced rental, so that money was really necessary for that. Right from the outset, these changes were being financed by money from empire and certainly by the time the 19th Century comes along, most of the great landed families in the Highlands, who were clearing people from their land in ways that they thought were forms of 'improvement', were very much involved in different imperial projects. So there's a really strong connection. And for me, what's going on in the Highlands, particularly because there's a racial element to it, is – what's happening in the Highlands is that it's becoming a site of empire in itself, albeit a site of modern empire that's firmly located in the mother country, or the metropolis.

ANDREW: So how did the colonising mindset redefine the boundaries of how the Highlands were imagined at that time, and how does that live on today?

IAIN: I think it did so in a number of ways, and what I think of as processes of racialisation were key to that. So there was a strong view in the 19th Century that 'Celts', as Gaels were called almost uniformly by external observers at that time, were an inferior race and should be forced from the soil. That was certainly very prevalent in the 1840s and 1850s, around about the time of the Potato Famine, and could be seen as a very useful justification in the eyes of people who were adopting these policies for mass emigration from the land. There had been, particularly in the earlier period, more forceful views that these were people that should just be gotten rid of, in whatever way. That was one way in which Gaels were racialised. However another way in which Gaels were racialised, and I think perhaps the most – the one that may have had the most long-lasting or enduring influence, comes in following the '45, following Culloden, and it's sort of the rehabilitation of Gaels as being 'Highlanders' – and so someone like William Pitt, the Prime Minister, saying something along the lines of "when we needed soldiers for the empire we found in the North of the country a 'loyal', hardy and brave race." This is racialising Gaels as loyal to the empire, as being naturally warlike, and fit for service – for being subalterns. Certainly the kinds of ideas being promulgated by the likes of Sir Walter Scott in the early 19th Century romanticised that image, that sort of martial image, and it's a very, very strong trope in literature about Gaels during the 19th Century. I think that has affected our self-image very, very greatly.

ANDREW: Do you see your research as consciousness-raising? Where do you think points of solidarity could be formed in the Gàidhealtachd that address some of the very complicated issues that we are all contemplating at the moment to do with

legacies of empire, climate crisis and the interconnectedness of these issues?

IAIN: That's an absolute brute of a question!

ANDREW: [Laughing] Well, I guess I'm asking: what do you see your research as opening up? What are some of the things that motivate you in a hopeful direction?

IAIN: When I was about 30, I had an extended revelation about who I was, my place in the world, and the forces that created me as a person; it was a very personal experience. But I was also doing so in the context of trying to understand the culture that I belong to, with the understanding that, in that culture, a person is not an individual: they are fundamentally interconnected to the place that they grew up in, and the people they grew up with, including their ancestors. Most of what I've been doing over the last 15 years is deepening that understanding on a personal level and on a cultural level. So, for me, it's certainly about consciousness-changing; it's primarily about changing my own consciousness and that continues. I think it is part of a wider process where many of us are questioning the kinds of understandings and beliefs that we've inherited about ourselves as a result of all those complicated historical processes that we've been talking about. These include, on the one hand, forms of oppression, but on the other hand the enthusiastic participation in empire by many Gaels, and our acceptance of that as a culture. How that has also impacted on ideas of self-determination or autonomy, and different forms of prejudice that exist within our society today. I think our condition and our current position speaks to many of those issues because it involves the oppression of racialised others, which we've been responsible

for. Equally, and from my perspective primarily, what preceded and ran alongside that was forms of racialisation on us, or which caused us to come to understand ourselves differently, as a lesser 'race', in those terms. This process also involved the appropriation of territory and forms of exploitation of that territory through agriculture or extractive economies, that have led to ecological degradation, and have impacted on – you know, they are local impacts of the global climate crisis. So I think everything that we try to understand when we think about and reflect upon what's happened in this part of the world in the last four or five hundred years ties us into identity politics – both our own internal identity politics and our impact on the identities of others – and on the pressing geopolitical issues of resource overuse, commodification of nature and the unfolding climate crisis. So yes, our little story has something to say on all of those issues, as does the story of any place.

ANDREW: That's a very good concise answer to a very big question. It's something that everyone of this generation is really struggling with.

IAIN: I think it speaks to what you were saying to me previously about the conversations you've been having with others, that there is a growing sense, it's a consciousness-*shift*, again as to the need to do something radically different; a sense of political hopelessness because those wider political systems just grind on; and what can we do on the local level, to effect some sort of meaningful change – but also just to feel a sense of meaning in our own lives, in the face of these larger systems which still need to be confronted; and can we do something positive? And that both involves reconsidering our own identity as passive consumers of those larger systems, but also the material forces that

are round about us, and where their ownership is, and whether those distant forms of ownership are the right way to go around things. It's a big question in Skye, I think it's going to be a bigger question in Skye because so many of our neighbouring islands are really taking action on it. It's like a wildfire, but a regenerative wildfire going through the Outer Hebrides at the moment: there is community ownership, all kinds of forms of development coming out of that. You see it on Eigg, you see it in places on Mull; Skye is fairly inert to it at this stage. You know perhaps our understanding of our implicatedness in these global histories might cause – is causing – members of the younger generation to think: “hang on, what is our sense of belonging to this place, and how much responsibility and control for its future do we have? And what's standing in the way of that?” These large private estates, often owned by people who live very far away, are still engaging in extractive economies. To my mind, these are one of the biggest stumbling blocks to that, to those more regenerative economies and ecologies coming into being.

ANDREW: What do those more regenerative economies and ecologies have to learn from indigenous ways of being that are local to Skye?

IAIN: One of the things that I see among the older generation is a real sensitivity to cause and effect – and it means that the ground has to be in place first, before you start building anything on it; the foundations have to be strong. In our communities, the foundations are becoming weaker and weaker over generations because of depopulation; the younger generation who would have been the ones who would have acquired that sensitivity to forms of local governance – which is what it is, it's ways of managing, or working with nature in localities – have

not been being passed on. So I think one of the things that we can learn from the older generations is the importance of the foundations being strong before we start building our own castles in the air, or wind turbines in the air, or whatever it is that we're going to do. And that's certainly something that I understand from the older generations here. But also their deep sense of connectedness in simple ways to the wellbeing of others, and to the land round about them. Again, that's something that I think has been lost intergenerationally to a substantial degree. I think we're finding ways of recovering that now; there's an awareness of the importance of that. For me, one of the ways that I've learned about that is not simply to be with and sit with members of the older generation who are passing. I'm not getting any younger, I'm in my mid-40s now, I'm heading in that direction myself – so it's urgent, I think for younger folk to spend time with those older generations who have the lived experience of the communities here when they were stronger, but also to be learning from, and seeing the parallels, with other indigenous communities. A big part of my learning has been encountering the literature and the wisdom of, for instance, the Maori, and First Nations in Canada, and their lived experience in place and of struggling against imperial forces, trying to find ways to preserve something of themselves and their understandings of place and of nature as having not simply a kind of extractive or a commoditised value but an integral, even sacred, value. Those are qualities that I think we urgently need to re-evaluate in our own context. They're deeply here, they've just been covered over by other values that have come in over the past 50 years in particular.



Dingwall & Highland Marts Limited

11 h · 🌐

DINGWALL, Dingwall & Highland Marts Ltd., (August 26th) sold 7844 store lambs at their annual sale.

Cheviot wedder lambs (3,833) averaged £61.80 (+ £13.94 on the year) and sold to £100 gross from Carrol Farm, Brora.

Cheviot ewe lambs (250) averaged £61.71 (+ £14.03 on the year) and sold to £100 gross from Raasay Home Farm.

DINGWALL, Dingwall & Highland Marts Ltd., (September, 23th) sold 3,019 breeding and store sheep.

Breeding ewes (1,082) sold to £150 gross for a pen of Texel crosses from the Rowans, Brora.

Feeding ewes (594) sold to £100 gross for a pair of Suffolks from Pabbay Farm, Isle of Pabbay.

Gimmers (686) sold to £210 gross for a pen Cheviots mules from 1 Newmore, Muir of Ord.

Lambs (620) sold to £112 gross for Cheviot Mules from Wester Craiglands, Fortrose.

Rams and wedders (37) sold to £250 gross for a Beltex ram from Davidson croft, Heights of Fodderty.

"The first major cheviot breeding ewe sale kicked off with a bang with a packed ringside of buyers out in force. Correct ewes met a fierce enquiry which filtered down to the broken mouthed correct below ewes. Gimmers met a firm enquiry also, in particular for cheviot mules and many more of this commodity could easily have been sold. Feeding ewes cashed in at a comparable rate to those seen here on a Tuesday."

Other leading prices per head:

Ewes: Correct: TexX – The Rowans, £138, ½ of 29 Sconser, Isle Of Skye, £125, 1 Obbe road, Leverburgh, £90; **Chev** – The Rowans, £130, Bundalloch Sheep Stock Club, £122, Rhinamain, Bonar Bridge, £122 & £118, 145 Badnellan, Brora, £118, £112 & £99, Woodside, Elgin, £112, 283 Torboll, Dornoch, £110, 27 Portgower, Helmsdale, £110 & £105, North Talisker Sheep Stock Club, £108, Culmailly Farm, Golspie, £108, Cragganvallie, Abriachan, £105, 33 Portgower, £105, West Clyne, Brora, £102, 6/7 Borve, Isle Of Harris, £102, 1 Obbe Road, £102, 216 Clashmore, Stoer, £102, 168 West Helmsdale, £102, Struanmore, Isle of Skye, £102, Killin Farm, Garve, £99, Easter Oape Croft, Strathoykel, £98, Carnlaggie, Helmsdale, £98; **Cross** – 473 Fourpenny, Dornoch.

Feeding ewes: TexX – 37 Bank, Rogart, £97, West Clyne, £92, The Rowans, £85 & £86; **Chev** – Culmailly, £93, £85 & £83 (twice), Rhinamain, £88, 283 Torboll, £87, 83 Inchcape, £86, 1 Dounie, Edderton, £85, Struanmore, £82, 13 Lochside, Lairg, £82, North Talisker SSC, £80, West Clyne, £80.

Gimmers: CHM – 1 Newmore, £205, £200, (3 times), £198 (twice), £192, £188, (3 times) & £182, Hatton Cottage, Dallas, £170 & £168; **TexX**- 28 Selbo muir, Dornoch, £182; **LYN** – Woodside, Muir of Tarradale, £180; **Chev** – 12 Sconser, Isle of Skye, £175; **RGX** – Woodside, £170.

Lambs: CHM – Tombreck, Dallas, £108, £100 (twice), Craiglands, £107 & £102; **TexX** – Tombreck, £100, 37 Bank, £85, Carlee, Dornoch, £85 & £78.50, 30 Balallan, Lochs, £76, 34 Newmarket, Laxdale, £75, 3 Strond, Leverburgh, £75; **Chev** – Killin Farm, £95 & £75, 15 Vatisker, Back, £92, 9a Victoria Road, Brora, £76; **SuffX** – 34 Newmarket, £81 & £80.

◀ 🔍 Dingwall & Highland M... ▶

Photos Videos **Posts** Community Jobs

"A wide audience was in force eager to purchase sheep. Longer keep lambs in particular were dearer on the week whilst shorter keep sorts cashed in at comparable rates."

Other leading prices per head:

Cheviot wedder lambs – Raasay Home Farm, £100 & £80, 145 Badnellan, Brora, £94, Blingery Farm, Wick, £90 & £72, Carrol Farm, £80, Struie villa, Embo, £79 & £71, Muckernich Farm, £74, Easter Glackton, Gollanfield, £72.50, Kirkton Farm, Melvich, £72, 5 Harlosh, Dunvegan, £71.50, North Talisker Sheep Stock Club, £71.

Cheviot ewe lambs –The Square, Inverinate, £72.50, 12 Airdens, Bonar Bridge, £69.

Texel – 189 Fleucharry, Dornoch, £105, & £85, 12 Airdens, Bonar Bridge, £101, £100 & £79, Muckernich Farm, £94 & £86, Carlee, Dornoch, £94, £90, £80 & £79, Rowanlea, Bonar Bridge, £94 & £91 Dell Farm, Farr, £92, £87.80, £82 & £80.50,

Lamb prices held strong this year with a good sale for the North Talisker Sheep Stock Club. 290 wedders averaged £63 which was above the sale average on the day. We also got a shout out for having a pen of top draw lambs reaching £71/head

While the boys went off to market, the 250 girls (ewe-hoggs) stayed at home, ...well for now anyway – they'll be heading east to go to wintering where they'll stay on good pasture till the spring when they'll return to join the breeding flock.

Off wintering allows these girls to grow big and strong with no chance of accidentally getting pregnant. They are on better forage for their growing bodies and will return as fit gimmers, ready to be put to the tup at 18months old and acclimatise to the hill.

Another shout out from Dingwall Mart came today at the Cast Ewe sale where we reached one of the top prices of the day at £108 for a pen of correct ewes and again in a different category of feeding ewes at £80.

Good work again this year from Angus Morrison, head shepherd, bringing on the lambs and casts to fetch such strong prices. A healthy price too from our own David MacLean, committee member and shepherd, fetching £175/head for a pen of his gimmers.

AFFIRMATION UNDER OATH 2201

Rufus Isabel Elliot

s all true, alle trúa, i say it is, getha

• ur *soary* u say you're *sorry* you're *solitary*, so you will be, all
the years of your leaf • u *clad* getha you *crawled* getha crawled
away • u *spoke* you *troubled* you were •

oh baby, oh gorm,
ye so far from home

descend, now, like,
over there, down Abhainn nan Leac Butch

• ur silent *tynge* your silent *tongue* wet shaking kiss • mouth
open • what *story* can you *trouble* me then • go on what excuse
speak then thread me • or is it that silent stillness the *end* the
sex the *deith* • that breeze when it comes if *seet* is *fleet*, touches
your skin cums *suft* comes *hot* comes *fit* • an you hear the
music •

oh baby, oh gorm,
ye so far from home

you're so silent, so still,
when you play that song,
getha

• u there *sang* there *sing* the song • me silent still mouth closed
when you play the music when you sing the song • u *playing*
the music me *listening* there dead quiet • u saying will u *lay*
down that giotàr will you *sing* that refrain getha? • saying will
u *súpan* getha will you *open* your mouth getha will u look at
the ground at the ground now getha • *saying* open it wider
troubling open it wider • voicing that *silent* word that old *song*
getha •

oh baby, oh gorm,
ye so far from home

if i could steal
your feet from the land
the tips o your fingers, too

• and now aye i saw you over there you're saying • laying on
the *scabby hard rock* of our *hawit-dubh* laying on the *rough*
point of the *man-black* • aye now and *fear-dark* is telling you
is steppin badly getha • is *speeching* u is *telling* you how it is
going to be getha • tha no remorse, getha • and i then in dreid
• what will you say when the *deid* the *deed* is done • when the
music the *music* is made •

owhat will ye say
when the deed is done
when the deed is done

it's a true story, you know it is i'll play it again you hear me i'll
tell it again you hear me...



From Photo by D. Whyte, Inverness

A CHUIBHLE SHNIOMH.

WOMEN'S WORK

Grace Wright

Adapted from a longer piece of writing titled 'Positioning Sgitheanach Women in The Crofters' War: Agency, Identity and Land' that examines the intersections between protest, land, feminism and the Clearances.

Mary MacPherson, or Màiri Mhòr nan Òran, was a Skye bard and one of few women whose contribution to the Crofters' Wars of the 1880s has been treated with due diligence in history. Despite functioning within a literary canon that was generated by and for men, she resisted the trope of female bards as "singers of the praises" of their male counterparts by instead focussing her writing on the social and political upheaval of the time, documenting the injustices faced by her people.¹

Lesser known is her contribution to the world of textiles, where she repurposed traditional "women's work" to be read as a mode of testimony. An example of this can be seen embodied in a handmade suit gifted by MacPherson to the pro-crofting M.P Charles Fraser-Mackintosh in October 1882, consisting of a "bonnet, coat, vest, knickerbockers, stockings, and spats".²

1882 was a pivotal year for emerging crofting activism which called for fairer distribution of land. The suit gift was presented just six months after the infamous Battle of the Braes, when a violent confrontation between 50 policemen and the crofters of Ben Lee made headlines across Britain.³ Press coverage was

¹ Douglas Gifford and Dorothy MacMillan, "Introduction" in *A History of Women's Writing*, eds. Douglas Gifford and Dorothy MacMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997): xix.

² "Interesting Presentation to Mr Fraser Mackintosh", *Edinburgh Evening News*, 23 October 1883, accessed 11 October 2021, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000452/18821023/009/0002: 2>.

largely critical: crofters were accused of allowing their “zeal to outrun their discretion” by the *Inverness Courier*.⁴ In contrast, the *Glasgow Herald* appealed to an older tradition of resistance based on loyalty to a chief and described it as a “gathering of the clan.”⁵ Màiri Mhòr describes the Battle in “Òran Beinn Lì”:⁶

‘S na mnathan bu shuirce
 ‘S bu mhodhaile gluasad
 Chaidh an claignn a spuaiceadh
 Ann am bruachan Beinn Lì.⁷

Màiri Mhòr’s portrayal avoids the romanticisation indulged in by the *Glasgow Herald*, instead portraying the women of Braes as victims of police brutality by emphasising their usually gentle natures, generating sympathy that was not complicated by their transgressive willingness to use violence in their protest.

Through the production of Fraser-Mackintosh’s suit, Màiri Mhòr adopted a similar tactic: she placed the focus on the positive qualities she associated with her homeland and its

3 Priscilla Scott, “‘With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause’: Women in the Gaelic Movement, 1886-1914” (PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh, 2013): 218.

4 “The Land Agitation in Skye. Further Details. Visits to the Disaffected Districts.”, *Inverness Courier*, 22 April 1882, accessed 28 July 2021, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000446/18820422/021/0002:2>

5 “The Agitation in Skye. Attack at the Braes. Apprehension of Five Crofters.”, *Glasgow Herald*, 20 April 1882, accessed 10 October 2021, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000060/18820420/020/0005:5>.

6 “The Song of Ben Lee”; author translation.

7 “And the kindest woman
 of the most mannerly bearing.
 their skulls were split open
 on the banks of Ben Lee.”

Original: Dòmhnall Eachann Meek, ed., *Màiri Mhòr nan Òran: Taghadh de a h-Òrain le Eachdraidh a Beatha is Notaichean* (Gairm: Glaschu, 1977): 204.

Translation: Donald Meek, ed., *Tuath is Tighearna: Tenants and Landlords* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1995): 264.

population by her careful choice of Skye materials with which to make it. The cloth was woven at Borve and dyed with heather and lichen, or *crotal*. Màiri Mhòr spun worsted thread with the distaff and spindle that was then used to assemble the suit by a Portree tailor. The buttons were made from the branch of a tree found in Flora Macdonald’s garden at her Floddigarry house.⁸ The press described it as “permeated with the Celtic sentiment”, though it expressed its regrets about the design: “Why knickerbockers, Mrs Macpherson! As a representative Celt, would it not have been more appropriate to have clad the gallant Invernesian whom you have delighted to honor in the historic philibeg?”⁹

The gift spoke to another growing anxiety on the island: the economic system. Skye’s economy changed significantly over the course of the 19th century; the subdivision of tenanted lots meant that traditional forms of supplementing income were no longer available to crofters.¹⁰ John MacDonald, a crofter and tailor of Roshkill, described how when he was young clothes were made from, “webs of cloth – 20 yards to 27 – which had been manufactured by the women of the household.”¹¹ However by 1882, the lack of grazing meant that there was a “want of the mother of the wool”, meaning there was little cloth being woven on Skye.¹² Fabric that previously cost 1s. 6d. per yard to produce could cost as much as 4s. 6d. to buy.¹³ By using material produced in Skye, Màiri Mhòr drew attention to a failing industry, attempting to generate interest in the high-quality products of local, traditional manufacturing processes.

8 “Interesting Presentation”, *Edinburgh Evening News*, 23 October 1883: 2.

9 “Mr. Fraser-Mackintosh has just been...”, *Peterhead Sentinel and General Advertiser for Buchan District*, 25 October 1882, accessed 11 October 2021, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001469/18821025/055/0004:4>.

10 James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2010): 62.

In answer to the financial problems faced by the crofters, many travelled for seasonal work, including to fish and to do agricultural labour in the Lowlands. For women this often meant entering domestic service, which employed up to one in four of all Scottish women during the era.¹⁴ The increase in disposable income made it possible for them to earn their keep, bring home some money at the end of the season and, for the first time, buy themselves machine-made woollen and cotton clothing.¹⁵ The Napier Commission heard about this development from the horror-stricken Donald McPhee who was a mason in Dunvegan. He exclaimed that “each woman [was] imitating the fashions – the godless fashions of France!”¹⁶ This expression of anger is in reaction to the emergence of “fast fashion” as it is known today.

Màiri Mhòr's gifted her Skye suit to Fraser-Mackintosh in hope that, when worn by the respectable beneficiary, it would generate positive attention for the crofters of Skye during a time when they were receiving much negative attention in the press.¹⁷ It simultaneously represented the existential crisis faced by the islanders and their culture, and the quality and abundance of

their traditional manufacturing methods. Today, it speaks to us of the earliest example of craftivism and of the problems we are facing now: our addiction to fast fashion, the rife housing crisis and the resulting cultural degradation. Overall, this begs the question, what does today's “Skye suit” look like and what is it made of?

11 Interview of John MacDonald, *Evidence Taken by Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the Conditions of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland: Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty*, Vol. 1: 213. Available online at University of Highlands and Islands, accessed 20 July 2021, <https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/cultural/centre-forhistory/research/research-alliances/the-napier-commission/>.

12 Interview of John Macdonald, *Evidence*: 213; A.D. Cameron, *Go Listen to the Crofters: The Napier Commission and Crofting a Century Ago* (Stornoway: Acair Ltd., 1986): 85.

13 Cameron, *Go Listen*: 86; Interview of Murdo MacLeod, *Evidence*: 145.

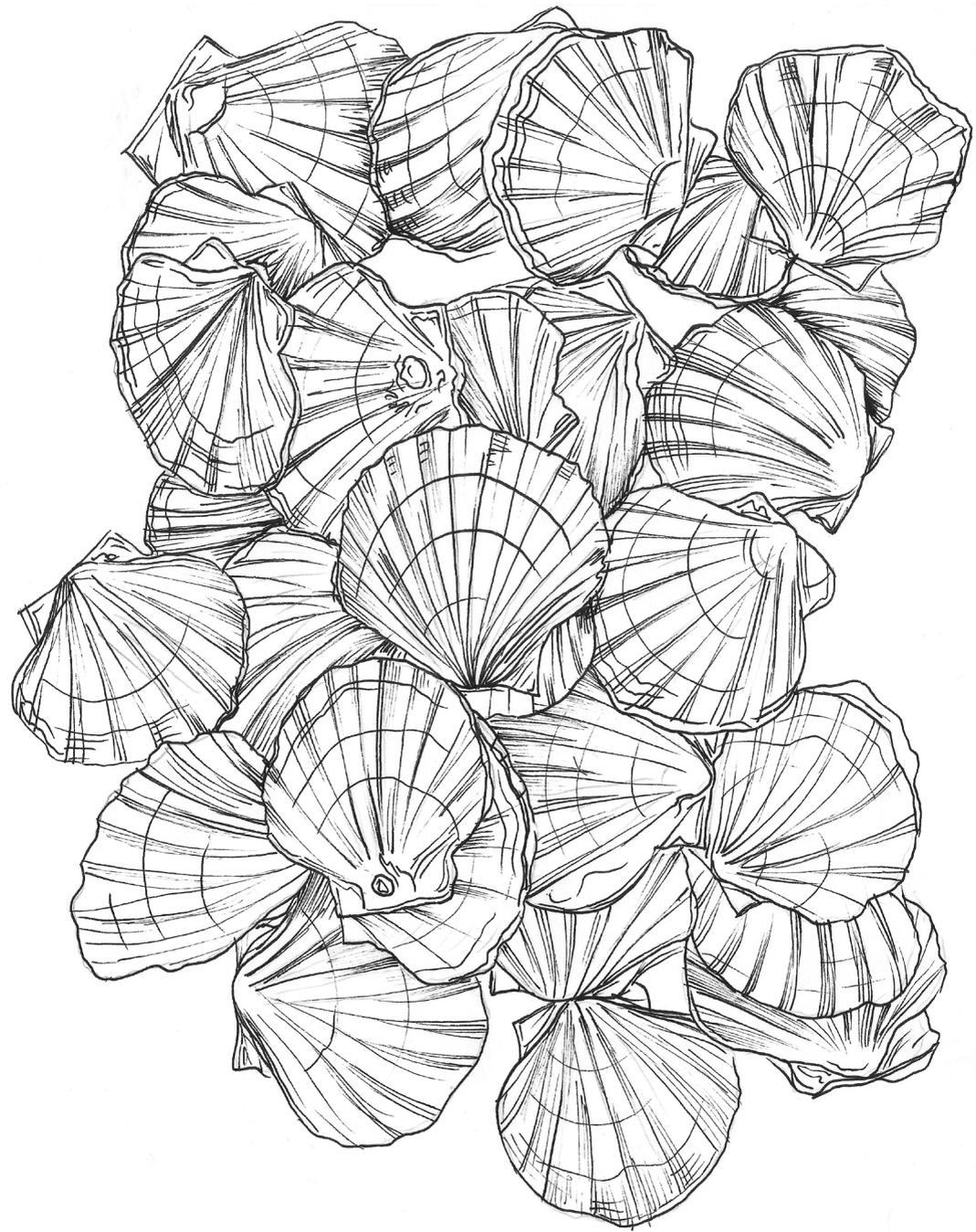
14 Hunter, *Making*: 159; Lynn Jamieson, “Rural and Urban Women in Domestic Service” in *The World is Ill-Divided: Women's work in Scotland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990): 137.

15 Cameron, *Go Listen*: 93.

16 Cameron, *Go Listen*: 93.

17 Priscilla Scott, “With Heart”: 218–219.





THE UNDERCURRENT

*The School of Plural Futures in conversation with Rory Pilgrim,
Ari Borzea, Cal Earl and Liam Neupert*

In July 2021 The School of Plural Futures met with artist Rory Pilgrim and youth activists and farmers Cal Earl, Ari Borzea and Liam Neupert to discuss farming, crofting, soil and activism. Rory, Cal, Ari and Liam came together in 2019 whilst filming Rory's film The Undercurrent set in Boise, Idaho, which asks how we deal with the overwhelmingly global issue of climate crisis on a deeply intimate and personal scale.

RORY: The film deals with the climate crisis but also how this interconnects with other aspects of our lives including family, difficulties with religion, friendship, fighting for gender equality and the essential need of a home. I was wondering what kind of conversations the film brought up for you? What kind of discussions did you end up having?

ISABEL: I was thinking a lot about interconnectedness. I was really struck by everyone holding hands in the film and being able to touch each other. When we watched the film, it was the first time since the pandemic began we could all be together as a group and it really struck a chord with me. I was thinking about ripples and how everything ripples outwards and how we are all connected here in Skye and Lochalsh by the coastline. I was thinking about my connection to nature and about tides, too.

RORY: Hmm, that's interesting. For me, what was so unique about Boise in Idaho was that it's the least connected city in the whole of the United States; it's the furthest away from another state capital. Being from Idaho, do you feel disconnected from a wider world?

ARI: Getting fresh food in Boise doesn't really happen because it's so disconnected, especially getting fresh meat. There is no fresh meat; it's not easily accessible. You definitely don't feel connected to the sea. You have to drive for eight hours to get to the sea. But I'd make that drive to see the sea.

LIAM: I was thinking about what you were saying about connectedness. I think in Idaho it's a really different thing because the state is so republican. Everyone is very individualist and really cares about themselves. I think that connection does not happen. You don't really find that. I feel like that comradeship that you get between communities and neighbours doesn't really happen. It's only recently in activist spaces that I've really felt community and a sense of connectedness in Idaho, especially in marginalised identities and having multiple intersections of my own person, that is something that is not widespread in Idaho. It's a white and very straight place, and so being able to find people who relate to you is where I have really realised how important community is to me and how hard it is to find here.

EMMIE: It's really interesting to hear that the Idaho group have worked on farms and have experience of growing. I'd love to hear from the group in Skye about their experience of living and working in crofting communities? I was wondering if you could explain to the Boise group what crofting is?

MURDO: Crofting is small self-sufficient farming; you only really find it on the West Coast of Scotland and the islands. It's a very, or used to be a very, community-based system. So everyone would help out, everything would be shared: sheep, fuel for the fires, cows, everything, the harvest was all shared. All the work was shared as well. So everyone would help each other and there

wasn't really much money. There wasn't a currency, really, back in the original times. It was just self-sufficient really. So yeah, maybe Grace has something else to add, you might know something more.

GRACE: Most of my frame of reference is about two hundred years ago because I'm a history student. I think a really major aspect of crofting is the cultural memory of the Clearances and how, during the Victorian era, landlords cleared the people and put sheep on the land because there was this idea that it was more profitable. So there's this kind of lasting attachment to the land in the sense that it could be lost again, and this need to claim it. Although, as Murdo says, in a very community-based way and a lot of the land here is common grazing which means that pretty much anyone who owns a croft has the right to use it; it's not divided up.

EMMIE: Murdo, I know that you are still quite involved in looking after the croft, I wonder if you could tell us about your day to day or what a year might look like for you?

MURDO: Yeah, so we have cows on our crofts, about twenty five or so Highland cows. Right now they are just grazing on the hill, not doing much. We grow potatoes, barley, and turnip or suedes. We cut peat on a small scale, so it's better than importing firewood from overseas. Yeah, just day to day things. Everyday is a bit different, but I'm happy to answer any questions.

ARI: I have a question for you, is crofting a good way of doing things? Is it fun? Do you think it should be adopted by other people?

MURDO: Well yeah I suppose you could adapt some of the original ideas to modern farming. But originally it wasn't a way to make money, it was just more sustainable, more self-sustaining. So it doesn't really apply to large scale farms. It's sustaining the community and the family, so I'm not too sure.

RORY: How does it compare to your experience of farming or the farm that you'd like to create, Ari?

ARI: Gosh, well, I guess what I'm hearing is that there's maybe too many people close together in the suburbs to have anything like crofting. It would have to be out somewhere more rural like Caldwell, or somewhere that is more sprawling and where there's more distance, is what it sounds like. But how it compares to what I'd like to do, I'd love to just share land and have something be sustainability-orientated because I'm extremely interested in using the land in a specific way that is beneficial to it. That's how the Native American traditions worked with the land, trying to support the land and not take from it. So yeah I think it might be pretty similar to what I want to do eventually, having a positive relationship with the land, not a negative one, I want to have a positive impact.

RORY: It raises an interesting question about environment, talking about two distinct places in the world and what works for one land and what might work for another. It makes me think of permaculture and maybe the first question is to look at what land you have and ask how you work with that particular ground. I am thinking about the farm you worked at, Cal. The soil was completely eroded and over a few years they were able to bring it back into a position where the soil was healthy but this took years.

CAL: This is something the farm I worked on was really passionate about; it's called carbon sequestration. I'm pretty sure it's basically a process of re-tilling the land and just giving it fertiliser, nutrients and water over the years, and then letting it sit and then re-tilling it. It absorbs a lot of carbon out of the atmosphere through this process. It's really good for filtering carbon into the soil. They had a lot of land and they didn't use pesticides or anything. For me, one of the problems of modernised westernised farming is that we grow a lot of plants but it doesn't feel like a natural act. When I see a lot of those scary greenhouse corporate farms that look dull and are filtered with all kinds of things that we don't know about and are producing for the masses, it feels like a lot of farms don't work with seasonal food. Grocery shops don't work with seasonal food and they import from all over. So yeah, I think eating seasonally and working both with the land and the time should be a bigger thing.

ARI: In my studies I had to actually take a pesticide training course to spray pesticides, so I had to read and learn all about them. Learning about soil sciences and about how pesticides affect soil health has really made me draw a connection between how important it is to protect the soil health and not using pesticides. You're right, Cal.

CAL: We'll start a farm one day, Ari, it's fine! When I'm older, I'm just going to farm. That's what I want to do.

RORY: The words going through my head are around information and knowledge. As you said, that process of where our food comes from is so disconnected from us; where is the information and knowledge about it? I wonder if the group from

Scotland have anything they'd like to respond to hearing about farming in the US?

HEATHER: I have a thought in response to the history of crofting and Ari's point around western practices of farming and our association with it. It's around ownership and western practices being focused on capitalist ways of producing. Something I've been learning about, and didn't really know much about before, is the relationship to working the land in crofting. You don't really own the land, but there's a requirement that you work it. So you can't have it as an asset and sit on it and profit from it in that sense. You have to be working it. That has led me to think, what does being on the land mean? There's this relationship that we often have where we need to own it as a financial asset and that's quite different to what crofting is about and to indigenous practices in America too. That is not how people survived and lived with ecosystems but it's something that western farming operates on and that's extraction.

GRACE: Crofting is such a cyclical process too, in terms of ownership and in terms of using the land. So crops and livestock are rotated which means the soil gets the chance to recover. Historically there was a runrig system which meant that families were rotated around different crofts. You didn't have your own croft, you had a series of crofts that you spent a certain amount of time on.

RORY: Thanks for sharing, it's fascinating to hear about the history and its relationship to ownership. In one of the last scenes of the film we made together we spent some time outside of Boise in an area called the Craters of the Moon, which is an old volcanic landscape. Whilst we were here we did these chants we

had developed in a workshop, one of them was, "we need laws and we need lawmakers." I was wondering how this relates in a different way to how we think about ownership. I know, Liam, you have directly engaged with lawmakers in Idaho and at times have not been listened to and you have spoken to very conservative representatives within the state capital. I wondered if we could have some thoughts on what law means to you in the context of land or the climate crisis in general.

LIAM: I have had multiple experiences with lawmakers whether it's through climate or I've done a lot with reproductive rights, which is another hot topic in Idaho. Just about a lot of different issues. I think the one thing that I've learned is that most of the time they don't really care to listen to you, and that there are a select few who do actually take the time and want to listen to what you have to say and put it into their own ideas and their own agenda. Specifically in Idaho, in my experience with lawmakers, often they dismiss the stories you have. I've been taught to tell your stories, to try to tug at their heartstrings and then maybe they might show a little bit of human emotion because they are quite ruthless. It's disheartening at times because they are supposed to be the ones who are representing you and your ideas but often they fall short of what is needed. I've found really inspiring spaces through community and activism and sharing similar experiences because often these experiences with lawmakers can be really hard on your soul. But going back to community and a group that are truly amazing is what keeps the activism going because they are able to feed you what you need and then you can give back a bit more.

RORY: How does law or knowledge intersect with crofting and ownership in your communities in Scotland?

EMMIE: It's such a shame Ailish from our group isn't here today as she is doing some amazing work at the intersections of these issues. Ailish and her friends launched a campaign recently about the lack of housing and jobs in Skye; there's a big issue with this due to the amount of tourism and second homeowners. There has been a lot of conversation around how to sustain living in Skye and those young people who want to stay having the infrastructure to do so. Ailish is an incredible public speaker and has spoken out on these issues and the group she is part of has gained a lot of attention in the media as there are a lot of people feeling similarly. I think that pressure of something being so successful can be overwhelming sometimes as it puts a lot of pressure on those people to be carrying all of these issues and continuously moving them forward. I think Ailish and her friends are now in a position where they have to decide which direction to take their activism in or what to do with this energy. I'd love to hear from Liam. How have you dealt with this attention and what's demanded of you when you start something? How you hold and carry that?

LIAM: When I started doing the climate strikes, it was a really small thing. It was my friend and I, we would go to the Capitol, it was part of the weekly strikes. As it ramped up there was a national one, then a global one. Honestly I can't quite remember how it evolved. But once we did those, people started coming and asking me, "what can I do? How can I help?" I was like, "ahhhhh I don't know what I'm doing..." This was my first experience in organising, it was a lot to handle. But as I've worked in different spheres and different spaces, I've found that it's really nice to just ask people, ask them what brings them here and what they want to contribute. Because it's one thing to say, "oh do this for me" and then rely on them to do this one thing, but

they won't do it. Whereas if you ask someone, "how do you want to contribute? How do you like contributing to things? Whether that be... Maybe you do want to be on the front line? Do you want to be the one screaming at the politicians or maybe they want to be in the background making the art or writing the emails or not even that, just being someone who can take notes and calls and absorb some of what's happening?" I found that being able to really ask what people want to do and how they want to contribute to their own space is much more regenerative. It helps people. It helps them have their own passion and their own drive to what they are doing. It also makes a much better end product and takes the stress off of one person who doesn't know what's happening and is trying to make things happen. I've found that it helps in trying to make a structure, because it is really challenging and, especially when I did my first one, there were things where I thought, "oh I should have done that different" and "we could have done that better." But honestly as a group and as a community we are learning together and figuring out how we can ask for this because it should be something that is fundamental to us all. It should be something that is easy. Our politicians and legislators should just be giving this to us without us asking because they are supposed to be representing us. To be able to finally stand up and fight for what you want and what you believe in and what you think, it takes a lot of loops and struggles and it's hard to speak in the way that they speak because there are so many different things that they say. Especially when you really get into it and you read the policies and you're like, "I have no idea what this means!" But yeah, really, the way that I found best is being able to ask people what they want to contribute and what they can contribute. Imposing tasks on people means you can't rely on people, and it dwindles the movement as a whole.



Talla
Bhreacais

Breakish Hall

CLOD

Samir Sharif

What is it worth
a clod of earth, I used to ask
if dooming to an ailed fate?
Taste fear in a plume of ash,
still human in a failed state
human, of the failed state.

Hands cupping rich fluid
of earth's ichor need no applause,
we ask for pause – gauze and effect.
Black decay tips the sprigs of rowan,
one arm, bowing, inverts
its reach for the sun, unbegun.

Unlike trees, we are free to move
to take root in any place
– the very place is the planet
though its margins fain to vanish.
Lifeless palms press my larynx
choking out a defiant breath:

*What is it worth
this clod of earth?*

The usurping worm sees the dirt
better than hands that stab it loose,
here lies truth. In an honest day's work
the sound of masquerade

SAMIR SHARIF

is to tear in two that
which bears you fruit.

We're so human – *adamah*.
Dust rusts in the marrow of bone,
a knot of bodies writhing for space
somehow still manage to stand alone.

So human in this failed state
human, of the failed state.



SWAYING TREES

Ainslie Roddick

When I was seven or eight, a frequent journey with my family would take me past the southern side of the Pollok Park estate in Glasgow, a thick woodland in the city's Southside where I would see people propped, perched and living on top.

In 1994, for around two years, this part of the park was occupied by a group of campaigners protesting against the proposed extension of the M77 motorway, which, when built, would block access to the park for local communities and result in the destruction of 5,000 trees. As with many cities, motorways and their access routes have historically torn through working class neighbourhoods and this road would be no different. What ensued, and what I was witnessing in those trees, was a joyful occupation driven by local people – a food-, music- and art-filled space for all – and a declaration of independence that became known as “Pollok Free State”.

Every time I am nearby, I remember those treehouses and banners. It is my first memory of protest, and the first image that comes to mind when I think of Glasgow, how it's changed and how I relate to it now. This picture returned to me again when Mairi McFadyen and Raghnaid Sandilands asked each of us taking part in The School of Plural Futures to think more deeply about our own personal geographies and experiences of place – urging us to take up Alastair McIntosh's invitation to “Dig Where You Stand”.¹

¹ Alastair McIntosh, “Dig Where You Stand” in *Soil and Soul: People Versus Corporate Power* (London: Aurum Press Ltd., 2001), named in reference to Sven Lindqvist, *Gräv där du står (Dig Where You Stand)* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1978).



I struggled with Mairi and Raghnaid’s question at first, not really knowing what place means to me. I feel very in between places, having moved to Skye in 2019 and not yet knowing if I can or should feel a sense of rootedness or belonging here. Throughout the pandemic, I’ve felt very far away from the friends, family and streets I know well, and the Southside of Glasgow where I grew up is already hugely changed, having experienced a rapid gentrification over the last few years. Feeling rootedness in both places and neither, I kept imagining my place somewhere in between. But this memory of Pollok Free State kept coming to mind, and so I went with it, re-remembering the history of that protest, who took part, and how far its roots and branches have now spread.

Through memories of occupying village halls with food, ceilihd and “good lighting”, Mairi and Raghnaid shared with us a vision of a critical and sensitive activism with creativity and joy at its heart – and a way of gathering and digging together that is radically local. I was not part of the Free State, but learning about it since I was a girl, it’s clear that a set of tools for conviviality – and a template for radical localism – was also in action. The space was shaped and led by those who understood what was at stake nearby, through music, cooking, wood carvings, installations, happenings and events which uplifted the message and the work of the collective. It was also radically welcoming – building community and holding space for learning and belonging in ways that would outlast its primary aim.

I never saw those folk in trees after 1996, when the Free State was dismantled. But the work did not end with the destruction of the camp; a broader objective and legacy emerged. Set up in its wake, I later learned, was The GalGael Trust: a now 25-year-old

boat-building community in Govan, Glasgow. GalGael describe their founding:

“We lost the campaign but learned many things about how to make community in a difficult space; how to take responsibility, articulate our concerns and find common purpose ... we see ourselves as a community of creative people, who come together to co-operatively meet some of our needs: our shared need for acceptance; to learn and contribute our creativity.”²

There was perhaps a serendipity in remembering those protestors high up in trees, whilst searching for a place I could dig in-between Glasgow and Skye. Ways of belonging differently in the forming of responses to social and climate injustice has been an undercurrent of many discussions of The School of Plural Futures. I remember someone from the group speaking of a Highland kin of many different people, that every generation before brings forth something multiple and new, whilst also calling forward stories, culture and learning from the past.

GaelGael’s philosophical grounding speaks to ideas of expanded belonging, of being across and plural. With Gal meaning foreign and Gael referring to the heartland people, their practice is in “re-rooting notions of identity and belonging in ways that are inclusive not exclusive – recognising there is both a bit of the stranger and a bit of the native in us all”.³ Belonging differently was a thread across our conversations on housing crises, the pressures of tourism, loss of Gaelic culture, climate action, crofting, and access to the land. We learned that acknowledging

2 “Our Story”, *GalGael*, last accessed 15 November 2021, <https://www.galgael.org/our-story>.

and knowing Highland colonial and imperial histories – digging where we stand in our own backyards and creating the spaces and conversations for this – is also necessary action in the creation of more hopeful futures.

There are further serendipities in this memory – as I later learned there were many personal links to the Hebrides among the protestors. Alistair MacIntosh happened to be one of them;⁴ Iain MacKinnon too. The Hebridean birlinn is GalGael’s emblem. I was remembering a digging that intrinsically connected the Hebrides with Glasgow, as well as a template for the collective creation of spaces for action that mimicked Mairi and Raghnaid’s work.

Seeing this space as a child, even from afar, had a huge impact on me, as did wondering what happened after the trees came down. The Free State was a space for the work of belonging, remembering, digging and healing in action – work that the late Colin MacLeod, one of GalGael’s founders described as “reconvening peoplehood”.⁵ Learning since, what grew from that action and the impact of it, reminds me of the far-reaching power of protest, creativity and small gatherings of people that can sometimes be easy to forget. Keeping faith with people, convening in multiple ways is what I take forward from this memory, with hope for more plural futures.

3 “Our Story”, *GalGael*; “What GalGael Means”, *GalGael*, last accessed 16 November 2021, <https://www.galgael.org/what-galgael-means>.

4 Whose book chapter “Digging Where You Stand”, Emmie, Mairi and Raghnaid were referring to in this session.

5 “Our Story”, *GalGael*.

NA GUTHAN

Maoilios Caimbeul

Thuir guth, A bheil àite ann
far an glèidh mi mo fhreumhan
far an leag mi mo cheann?
A bheil àite ann ris an can mi,
Seo ionad far an tog mi mo chlann?

Thuir guth, Tha àite againne
airson a-nochd. Cosgaidh e ceud not.
Thuir guth eile, Tha àite againne,
Airson seachdain,
Cosgaidh e mìle not.

Thuir guth, Tha mi ’g iarraidh fuireach
san eilean far an deach m’ àrach.
Dìreach àite far an leag mi mo cheann,
far an tog mi clann. Nach eil a leithid ann?
Thuir an guth, Tha na taighean gann.

Thàinig guthan leis a’ ghaoith,
thuir iad, Bha sinn ann,
ann am Boraraig is Suidhisnis,
gus an do sgapadh sinn
mar dhuilleagan anns an stoirm.
A bheil àite ann? Thuir am bàillidh,
Gheibh thu àiteigin far an leag thu do cheann.
Ach chan ann an seo. Nis togaibh oirbh!
fhreagair e tron cheò ann an Eilean a’ Cheò.

Tha am feur a' siosarnaich anns a' ghaoith,
na starragan geur-chuiseach ag amharc,
air na tobhtaichean fas, na clachan balbh.
Thuirt guth, A bheil àite ann
far an leag mi mo cheann?
Thàinig guthan air a' ghaoith ag ràdh,
Chan eil, chan eil aon àite ann;
thalla, dèan imrich, fàg an tobht' air do chùl.
'S i an nota an t-uachdaran san t-saoghal ùr.

Thuirt guth, A bheil àite ann
far an glèidh mi mo fhreumhan
far an leag mi mo cheann
far an slànaichear m' uireasbhaidh?
A bheil e ann ris an can mi,
Seo an taigh anns an tog mi clann?

THE VOICES

Myles Campbell

A voice said, Is there a place
where I can nurse my roots
where I can lay my head?
Is there a spot of which I could say,
This is it where I can raise my kids?

A voice said, We have a place
for tonight. It'll cost one hundred pounds.
Another voice said, We have a place,
an Airb&b for a week.
It'll cost a thousand pounds.

A voice said, I want to stay
in the island where I was reared.
Just a place where I can lay my head,
where I can raise my kids. Isn't there such a place?
The voice said, Houses are very scarce.

Voices came on the wind,
they said, We were there
in Boreraig and Suisnish,
until we were scattered
like leaves in the storm.
Is there a place? The baillie said,
You'll get a place where to lay your head.
But not here. Now, off this land, go!
he replied through the smoke of Eilean a' Cheò.
The grasses hiss in the wind,

MYLES CAMPBELL

the shrewd hoodies keep watch
on the desolate ruins, the dumb stones.
A voice said, Is there a place
where I can lay my head?
The voices in the wind said,
No, there isn't a single place;
go, move on, leave the ruins behind.
The pound is landlord in this new time and space.

A voice said, Is there a place
where I can nurse my roots
where I can lay my head
where I can salve my needs?
Does it exist to which I could say,
This is the house where I'll raise the kids?





THE STORIES WE TELL

Catherine MacPhee and Grace Wright in conversation

Adapted from a longer conversation, Grace and Catherine met earlier this year as part of The School of Plural Futures when Catherine presented the group with archival material relating to local protest and identity from The Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre, Portree. Bonding over a shared love of Skye history and a deep interest in the lack of local womens' stories, we see them discuss their research, the romanticisation of the highlands and prominent female figures.

EMMIE: Grace, I'm wondering when you first went into the archive, where did you start? Were there any central figures you were thinking about?

GRACE: I went in with the idea of looking at land agitation and the narrative around it, looking at it from an eco-critical perspective which probably would have involved quite a lot of Màiri Mhòr poetry and in the back of my mind, I did have this idea that women were never included. Catherine, you gave me some Kilmuir stuff. I was reading about the Garafad interdict and about how the community were grazing their cows on this land and Major Fraser decided he didn't want them doing that anymore so he got an interdict, a note that said they weren't allowed on the land anymore.¹ But they couldn't get their cows to water without crossing this land so they took the case to court and they took him to court, and got the interdict lifted. So he built a wall ... [laughs] to stop them crossing it and they knocked the wall down and just kept putting their cows to graze on it to get to water. All the local workmen were too scared of the community

¹ Major William Fraser was the notorious landlord of the Kilmuir Estate, which included some of the most fertile land on Skye. However, it was the site of some of the earliest and most sustained unrest of the Crofters' War (1882–1886).

to continue to rebuild the wall, even despite offers of money. And over and over again in the papers I was looking at, there were people saying, so and so's wife took the cows out or so-and-so's daughter took the cows out. And so I thought, right, so there are women there! And then one day Catherine gave me a stack of letters that were rent notices, that were marked as "refused by addressee" and I think I actually counted them. There was about a fifth of them addressed to women and about a fifth of them had been refused by women. So I went into the more general records and it was about equal to the amount of women who were renting land in their own name. And from there, I thought, right, they were there. There's records of them and there's this very obvious and tangible example of them taking their own agency over the situation by refusing this rent notice. I thought yeah, this can be researched, there's more here.

CATHERINE: There's loads. I think that's something that's definitely come up. I was really cautious that Grace had a deadline but I couldn't help it, I just kept saying. "look at this box! There's something in here that you need to find!" So it's obvious, there's definitely women here [in the archive]. It's just that the women that we know about from Skye are the big names, your Flora's or you know, Màiri Mhòr. There's the women of Braes, but interestingly no one really knows their names and you hear about these women at battles ... And so for me what was really exciting about having you come to the archive, Grace. You were looking at the women who don't really have names and don't really have big voices, who aren't really recorded in all the books as being active and playing their parts. So it's good that we are pulling them out, unfurling a ball-like thing, essentially. And as you say, there are loads of them in there, it's just about finding them. It makes me think, was it always like this for women in the

Gael society or did it shift at some point, where it became more patriarchal? Because you hear about women in power in various points in history and it seems to have got to this point where we aren't named, we are just "child of", "wife of", "daughter of". I think that's something quite frustrating about some modern literature on women in Skye particularly; it is so about the patriarchy around them, who their dad was, who their teachers were. It's like, aye, but they achieved so much on their own and that seems void in modern publications, even in family trees, people who are doing their genealogy follow the male line.

GRACE: Why? It's so frustrating.

CATHERINE: These are the kind of thoughts that come into my head when you start going through the collections; who were these women? You get these different names of people ... these women and children that come up and it seems to be that once their keepers, whether that's their uncle, brother or husband goes or deserts them, they are on their own and nobody's looking after them and it's quite frightening reading some of the cases. You see in the police records, we were looking at one the other day, and you see the crimes that women were getting charged with, it's really really strange.

GRACE: You literally could have written "being alive"...

EMMIE: What do you think the existing narrative of women in Skye is? What type of research or material would you like to see uncovered?

CATHERINE: I'd like to see un-romanticised stories. I want to hear more about the real women that were there, what their lives

were like, what they were involved in, because the reality was a lot of them were running the houses while maybe working as a housekeeper for somebody else. Especially in the likes of Kyleakin and Portree. I'd like to get more of these individual stories out that aren't romanticised around the Jacobites and even in a way around land agitation, it would be good just to get some folks' stories out about what they've done. This idea that these women were sat at spinning wheels all the time, even in Mairi Mor's images, there are a lot of her carding and sewing. Why don't we have any of her standing up, doing a performance? You see the pictures from the Glendale illustrations that were in the *London Illustrated News* and you see John Macpherson doing this talk to the crowd. You don't see any of Mairi Mor doing performances.

GRACE: I looked a bit into the portrayal of her doing women's work in her poetry books and the dominant argument is that's how she wanted to be portrayed.

CATHERINE: Oh wow, interesting.

GRACE: She organised those photography sessions herself and chose to dress that way and chose to be photographed doing women's work which is interesting. I think going back to the idea of dominant narratives, there is this idea of suffering in silence. Very dignified suffering. It's even there in Mairi Mor's poetry, all her portrayals of herself and of other highland women are of them being very dignified and just suffering silently. In the *Battle of the Braes* poem she talks about women of the kindest nature having their skulls broken by police but doesn't mention that they were fighting back. I find that's the dominant narrative in the clearances too. Even that statue we were talking about the other day feels like a good reference.

CATHERINE: Yeah, it's called the "Emigrants Monument" and it's up in Helmsdale. You've got the dad there in a kilt and bare-chested with a wee bit of cloth around his shoulders. He's what people think of when you say a highlander, a big strong guy. Then you have this wife wrapped up with a baby. It has a really strange plaque on it, it just seems completely void of truth for what actually happened.² So, it's described as a ten foot high bronze exile statue commemorating people who were cleared by landowners and left to begin new lives overseas. It says here, "this statue is a reminder of the men, women and children who left Scotland and took their skills, their strength, and their stories and shared them across the world."³ That core reason why they left is completely missing, what actually went on to make those people leave is completely missed, especially up in Helmsdale.

GRACE: It also completely missed what they were doing when they left. It poses it as this grand adventure, it doesn't acknowledge the fact that they were going and perpetuating this horrible colonial process overseas.

CATHERINE: Totally.

EMMIE: Catherine, I wonder if you can talk about some of the thinking behind the session you led with the School of Plural Futures on local protest and identity?

² The plaque reads: "The Emigrants commemorates the people of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland who, in the face of great adversity, sought freedom, hope and justice beyond these shores. They and their descendants went forth and explored continents, built great countries and cities and gave their enterprise and culture to the world. This is their legacy. Their voices will echo forever thro' the empty straths and glens of their homeland."

³ Alex Salmond, quoted in "Memorial statue marks Clearances", *BBC News*, last modified 23 July 2007, last accessed 15 November 2021, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/highlands_and_islands/6911340.stm.

CATHERINE: Yeah, we spoke about the two ideas of history and the two versions of the truth. Two recordings of events or two ideals of what people should be and we were talking about Flora MacDonald and Rachel Chisley or “Lady Grange” as she became known. I wasn’t sure how much contact the group would have had with archives and I wanted to show what an archive could be used for. So I showed the two images, portraits of Flora and Rachel, side by side. They were both women of wealth and women of higher status from different places and of different ages. When you look at pictures of them when they were young, they look almost identical but their paths would become very, very different, very quickly. I think for me I wanted to show you all these two photos, to demonstrate that everyone knows one name and one story. Everyone sees Flora MacDonald as the absolute heroine of the Jacobite cause because she was there at the last minute to take Charlie over on the boat but it got me thinking, there’s another woman here who’s got a tiny wee grave but she had a part and she had a story. It might not be that she did something classed as “brave”. I think it was pretty brave, but people might deem it as a negative because she was siding with the Hanoverians and she was going to call her husband out. And she was also drunk in the streets of Edinburgh, shouting at her husband and calling him out for having an affair. History has portrayed her in this negative light but, for me, she did a lot. The fact that she was with this guy when she fell pregnant and they weren’t married, but she made sure he married her, even if it was by gunpoint, you know she did it ... [laughs] And then when he was having an affair she went and told everyone he was siding with the Jacobites so he had her kidnapped and whisked away. I guess this story is largely untold, but it was a good way for me to talk to you about how two people alive at the same time fighting for different things can have very different

legacies. Some of the women fighting before the whole Flora MacDonald element have no legacy. Nothing is remembered and nobody talks about them. There was a fleet of women in the early Jacobite cause. Did you know much about Lady Grange from school, is this something you studied?

GRACE: No, I hadn’t studied her, I knew vaguely that she had been sent to St Kilda, but every time I’ve come across her before it’s always been a very romanticised, tragic heroine portrayal of her. I didn’t know any of the stuff she did before that and that she forced her husband to marry her. I think it’s really interesting as well because it shows how much the domestic plays in wider political events and the fact that in especially Victorian and Georgian history it is portrayed as really divided; women are in the domestic and the men are in the political and the public. But her husband had an affair which is very much domestic and private and she was going to take it to the public and political stage. As a woman, that’s really interesting.

EMMIE: It’s interesting that you bring up this link between the private and the domestic alongside the political because this is something that comes up in your writing about Màiri Mhòr. Can you talk about how this features in her work?

GRACE: Yeah, it’s something I explore quite a lot in my writing because it is such a trope of the history in that period and it’s not at all true and it’s especially not true in Skye. People don’t have the luxury of having separate private and public lives; the boundaries had to be permeable for the domestic economy to work. Women had to bring in work from outside the home: they weaved and did clothing repairs and took in other people’s laundry, and they had to go out and work on the land which

would have been considered the public sphere which is portrayed as really male-dominated. Women were the embodiment of the idea of the *tuath*⁴. The men were away for a lot of the year, working and fishing, particularly. Women did go and work in domestic work, but it was mostly the men that went away. So their presence on the crofts, which was the basis of the idea of having a right to the land, of *tuath*, was embodied by women who were there year round, as opposed to men who had to leave to make money. It's something that completely breaks down that idea of the separate domestic and public spheres.

CATHERINE: You can imagine these women would have really been holding their own. Their voices often haven't been recorded in history. The knowledge that these women had of crofting, of planting, of seasonality has probably gone as well as things changed. I think the romanticisation of highland women as being pretty but not too pretty, as being brave, it has romanticised what they did as something really strong. What Flora did was mad really, a young woman who was told by her stepdad to get in this boat with this guy. That was really risky for her; it was probably absolutely terrifying and quite brave. In her diaries and the memoirs that we have in the archive, ones that were collated by her granddaughter and probably her daughter too, she says, when traveling back from London to stay at her house in Skye, that she couldn't understand the obsession with the Jacobite cause. So even after the event she was still trying to process what the addiction was, and was probably unaware of what her fate was going to be. It must have been a lot to juggle.

⁴ Tuath: "a word which can describe both a place as well as that place's inhabitants". Iain MacKinnon, "The Invention of the Crofting Community: Scottish History's Elision of Indigenous Identity, Ideology and Agency in Accounts of Land Struggle in the Modern Gàidhealtachd", *The Scottish Historical Review* 98:1 (2019): 84.

Then you have the opposite with Lady Grange who was fighting for what she wanted. With her household, her relationship, her kids and her standing in society as a woman. From what I understand, he held a funeral for her in Edinburgh even though she was still alive and, by this point, she was out in St Kilda. She was essentially blocked in an old shieling, with no one. She didn't speak the same language, probably didn't know how to work the croft or plant vegetables. And she suffered there until she got taken back to Skye and she's buried up a Waternish. It's just a really stark contrast to what happened with Flora getting put on a pedestal. I mean, did she want it? Maybe not...

GRACE: I think the thing that strikes me in the comparison is the positioning of agency in that Flora MacDonald was doing what she was told basically. Of course, it was a terrifying thing to do, even making the crossing in a little boat today would be a terrifying thing to do on your own, but Lady Grange was obviously doing what she wanted to do and looking for the power to do that.

CATHERINE: I think with female participation of any kind in activism and protest there is always one character that gets romanticised over everyone that was there.

GRACE: In land agitation, it's Màiri Mhòr. [laughs]

"DEGROWTH EMBODIES THE VISION
OF A RADICAL TRANSFORMATION
TOWARDS A JUST, SUSTAINABLE
AND CONVIVIAL SOCIETY"

FADA (FEMINIST AND
DEGROWTH ALLIANCE)
2020

CARE · CONVIVIALITY · SOLIDARITY ·
STEWARDSHIP · COMMONS · EQUITY ·
HOSPITALITY · RECIPROCITY · LOCAL ·
HUMAN FLOURISHING · LIFE ·

"DEGROWTH CAN BE A PART OF A
TRULY INTERCULTURAL REVOLUTION,
HELPING TO BUILD A CONVIVIAL
PLURIVERSE, IN WHICH NOT ONE BUT
MANY WORLDS ARE SUSTAINED"

AURORA &
STIRLING 2021

"UN MUNDO DONDE QUEPAN
MUCHOS MUNDOS"

"A WORLD IN WHICH MANY WORLDS FIT"

ZAPATISTAS, CHIAPAS, MEXICO

"YA BASTA! ENOUGH!"

DIG WHERE YOU STAND
GRÄV DÄR DU STÅR

SVEN LINDQVIST, 1978

RE-MEMBER REVISION RECLAIM

ALASTAIR M'INTOSH

"CHANGE IN COMMUNITIES
COMES FROM 'CRITICAL YEAST'
NOT CRITICAL MASS; PEOPLE WHO
HAVE IMAGINED A DIFFERENT
FUTURE + BECOME CHANGE-MAKERS"

JOHN PAUL LEDERACH

"NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL
GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL,
COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN
CHANGE THE WORLD, INDEED
IT IS THE ONLY THING
THAT EVER HAS"

MARGARET MEAD





SKEABOST MEMORIAL HALL

WALL'S

LIST OF IMAGES

Front Cover; Polaroid photography by Murdo MacGillivray one off editions selected by the reader, taken in Aberdeen and Skye. Murdo has taken these photographs where he now lives and where he calls home.

Something Else Is Here Now
Tha Rudeigin Eile An Seo A-Nis
Painting by Katharine Barrington 2021

Kilmuir Village Hall
Talla Chille Mhoire
Drawing by Heather Fulton 2021

Aquaculture Cradle
Creathal Dualchas Uisgeach
Drawing by Isabel McLeish 2021
Inspired by Nasser Mufti's drawing "Multispecies Cat's Cradle" (2011) in Donna Haraway's book *Staying with The Trouble*, (2016)

Dig Where We Stand
Cladhaich Far a Bheil Sinn Nar Seasamh
Signage by Mairi McFayden and Raighnaid Sandilands 2021

At the Mart
Aig a' Mharcaigh
Posts courtesy of Cheryl McIntyre and North Talisker Common Grazings 2021

Breakish Hall
Talla Bhreacais
Drawing by Heather Fulton 2021

The Spinning Wheel
A Chuibhle Shniomh
Image from *Dàin agus Òrain Ghàidhlig* by Mary Macpherson 1891

From Inside
Bhon Taobh a-Staigh
Image of mask made for *From Inside*, a mixed media interactive installation by Sara Oussaiden rooted in raising awareness of mental health and supported by Highland Youth Arts Hub (HYAH)

Shell/Slige
Left: Shell object gifted to Amy Balkin's archive *A People's Archive of Sinking and Melting* by Isabel McLeish
Right: 'Scallops' drawing by Isabel McLeish 2021

Resurfacing
Ath-uachdaraich
Photos taken by Matthew Arthur Williams 2021

Dàn Fianais in "Stills from Potest Poem" (2021)
Stills from *Protest Poem* (2021) by Andrew Black

Dig Where We Stand
Cladhaich Far a Bheil Sinn Nar Seasamh
Signage by Mairi McFadyen and Raghnaid Sandilands 2021

Shetland Cow
Bò Shealtainneach
Wall painting by Katharine Barrington 2021

Skeabost Memorial Hall
Talla-Chuimhneachain Sgeitheabost
Drawing by Heather Fulton 2021

THE SCHOOL OF PLURAL FUTURES PROGRAMME
FEBRUARY – AUGUST 2021

May 2021 – Resurfacing

February 2021 – Learning Through the Land

This Changes Everything 2015

directed by Avi Lewis, starring Naomi Klein, Vanessa Braided Hair, Crystal Lameman. Film Club and group discussion with Emmie McLuskey
ONLINE

Emplacement and Fantasy

Film screening, discussion and workshop with Andrew Black
ONLINE

Alternative Histories of Skye, Lochalsh and the Highlands

Talk with Catherine MacPhee
ONLINE

Reworking/ Reclaiming

Collage workshop with Emmie McLuskey
ONLINE

March 2021 – Finding Your Voice

The Secret Path 2016

Directed by Gord Downie and Jeff Lemire. Film Club and group discussion with Sebastian Taylor
ONLINE

Finding Your Voice

Vocal workshop with Rufus Isabel Elliot and Lea Shaw
ONLINE

Wild Work

Talk with Ruth Little
ONLINE

Iomairt an Eilein

Talk with Ailish Culbertson
BROADFORD HALL

Mapping

Collective writing exercises with Emmie McLuskey
BROADFORD HALL

The Undercurrent 2019

Directed by Rory Pilgrim. Film Screening
BROADFORD HALL

North Talisker

Site visit, talk and activities with Cheryl McIntyre
NORTH TALISKER COMMON GRAZINGS AND TALISKER BAY

June 2021, Two Sides of the Pass

The Undercurrent

Presentation, workshop and discussion with Rory Pilgrim, Ari Borzea, Cal Earl and Liam Neupert
ONLINE

Protest Poem

Filmmaking workshop with Andrew Black, Emmie McLuskey and Malcolm Mackenzie
SKEABOST HALL

Donna Haraway – *Storytelling for Earthly Survival* 2017
directed by Fabrizio Terranova
Film club with Heather Fulton and Isabel McLeish
SKEABOST HALL

Two Sides of the Pass
Poetry and walking with Maoilios Caimbeul
FLODIGARRY

Making Publics Press
Bookbinding and publishing session with Ainslie Roddick and
Emmie McLuskey
KILMUIR HALL

Dig Where We Stand
Mapping, storytelling and activism with Mairi McFayden and
Raghnaid Sandilands
BROADFORD HALL

August 2021, Dig Where You Stand and The Journey

From Inside
Talk with Sara Oussaiden
DUNVEGAN HALL

**Archive for Sinking and Melting, Amy Balkin and Talbot Rice
Gallery**
Curating activity and discussion with Heather Fulton
DUNVEGAN HALL

Printing
Mono-printing workshop with Emmie McLuskey
DUNVEGAN HALL

Imperialism and the Gàidhealtachd: history and experience
Presentation and discussion with Iain MacKinnon
TALLA BHREACAIS

An Sithean
Site visit and conversation with Iain MacKinnon
AN SITHEAN NEAR BEINN NA CAILLICH

**Preserving Fruit, Can the Sun Lie, from the forest to the
concrete (to the forest) and Bridgit**
By artists Cal Mac, Susan Schuppli, Alberta Whittle and
Charlotte Prodger. Film club and discussion with Emmie
McLuskey
SKYE BRIDGE STUDIOS, KYLE OF LOCHALSH

Cat's Cradle
Workshop with Isabel McLeish
KYLE OF LOCHALSH

Reflections
Group discussion
OYSTER TABLE, PORTREE

READING LIST

This list has been compiled by The School of Plural Futures, speakers and friends who all hold close their commitment to living with the land, not against it. This list has contributed to our learning and understanding of our environment and how this intersects with issues of social justice, both locally and globally.

Black, Andrew. "Eternity Knocker, As Discussed..." Interview by Calum Sutherland. *Map Magazine*, August 2019. <https://mapmagazine.co.uk/eternity-knocker-as-discussed>.

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Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew, ed. *Eating Chilli Crab in the Anthropocene*. Singapore: Ethos Books, 2020.

CONTRIBUTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

KATHARINE BARRINGTON is from Ardvassar and works for ATLAS Arts. She has her own artistic practice, writes short stories, makes posters and drawings and runs a small stall outside her house. She moved back home in 2019 and is enjoying looking after the animals and building sheds on the croft where she grew up.

ANDREW BLACK is an artist and filmmaker who has been meeting with the school regularly whilst in Skye producing a new ATLAS commissioned film. With the group he has been considering the island's histories and mythologies of activism, migration, oral history, storytelling, land struggle and colonial wealth on the island alongside others. His film *Dàn Fianais – Protest Poem* premiered on Skye in September 2021.

ARI BORZEA joined the school in June 2021 to speak about her involvement in Rory Pilgrim's work *The Undercurrent*. Ari spoke about her interest and passion for farming, soil, plants and animals. Ari is a 20-year-old college student studying Botany. She lives in Boise, Idaho.

MYLES CAMPBELL is a writer and poet who lives in Flodigarry on the Isle of Skye. He has published nine collections or booklets of poetry, two of them co-authored, and eight children's novels. He wrote the book *Island Conversion* with his wife, Margaret, telling how he came to the Christian faith. His poetry has won many awards, including the Dunleary Féile Filiochta cup, 1998, and the Gaelic Wigtown Prize, 2008. A collection of his short stories, *Dòrlach Sìl*, is expected from Luath Press later this year. Myles worked with The School of Plural Futures in June 2021, leading the group on a walk and readings in Flodigarry.

AILISH CULBERTSON grew up in the Isle of Skye and feels extremely proud to be able to call it home. She works locally in childrens' education and is interested in local activism. She is a part of Iomairt an Eilein, a campaign and activist group focused on amplifying the voices of young people on Skye – advocating for change around the housing crisis, Gaelic language and culture and opportunities for young people to stay on the island. She has been part of The School of Plural Futures group since February 2021.

CALCIFER EARL joined the school in June 2021 to speak about their involvement in Rory Pilgrim's work *The Undercurrent*. Cal spoke about their interest and passion for farming, soil, animation and directing. Cal is 17 and lives in Idaho.

HEATHER FULTON lives in Camustianavaig, Braes, and works as the Producer at ATLAS Arts. She likes listening to stories, and is interested in how art can create shared experiences and foster understanding between people and the environments they inhabit.

RUFUS ISABEL ELLIOT is a composer and musician from Tower Hamlets, living here and there. Rufus has written funerary music for doomed spaceships and orchestral music about rotting seaweed. It cares about honesty and openness. Its work is concerned with testimony, the conditions in which one speaks out, and how those stories are passed on. Rufus worked with The School of Plural Futures in June 2021 alongside Lea Shaw to facilitate a workshop about finding your voice.

RUTH LITTLE joined the school to talk about her work as a writer, dramaturg and thinker in relation to making work in collaboration with living systems, as well as speaking about a project she co-directed called Cape Farewell, where she led expeditions with artists and scientists around the Scottish Highlands and Islands and the Arctic.

MURDO MACGILLIVRAY lives in Skye and is a photographer and filmmaker. He enjoys sports like cycling and hill walking. Living on a croft his whole life has meant he has always loved being outdoors. He is a Gaelic learner, and is interested in how Gaelic can be more accessible to learn and how there can be less of a stigma around speaking it in public. He has been part of The School of Plural Futures group since February 2021.

SARAH MACLEOD lives in Portree and has a passion for art, bees and video games. They work locally and have enjoyed working as part of The School of Plural Futures group to meet like-minded people in Skye and Lochalsh. They have been part of The School of Plural Futures group since February 2021.

CATHERINE MACPHEE is an archivist who grew up on the Isle of Skye, using her strong knowledge and deep cultural connections to Skye she engages with community groups across Skye and Lochalsh. Preserving and protecting the culture for current and future generations. Currently she is studying for her MLitt in Archives and Records Management with Dundee University. Catherine worked with The School of Plural Futures in February 2021 and has continued to participate in conversations since then.

IAIN MACKINNON belongs to the crofting township of Camuscross in south Skye and works for the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience at Coventry University. His research uncovers colonial relations involving Scottish Gaels and seeks to recover Gaels' sense of being indigenous to place. He has recently returned to Skye after several years away and is enjoying reconnecting with the island, returning to old friends and making new ones.

MAIRI MCFADYEN is a freelance researcher, educator, writer, facilitator and activist organiser, now living in Abriachan near Inverness. She has a background in academic research and teaching in the fields of ethnology, cultural anthropology and human ecology. Since moving north from Edinburgh, she has been exploring the contours of a criticality and practice rooted in a creative ethnology, engaging with themes connecting across heritage and tradition, music, land, geopoetics, alternative economies and hopeful futures. Her most recent work has been as a member of the Enough! collective, exploring ideas and action around degrowth and climate justice.

CHERYL MCINTYRE lives and works on Skye but was born and grew up in Glasgow. She works as an Agricultural Officer for the Scottish Government and is also a lecturer on the Rural Skills Course with the University of the Highlands and Islands. She runs her own croft and is the Clerk for the North Talisker Sheep Stock Club, Common Grazings, and Hydro Company. She has previously worked in the third sector as a project officer and enjoys a good funding application. A lover of the outdoors, she is often off in search of a trig point or interesting feature.

ISABEL MCLEISH lives in Balmacara, Lochalsh and is a post-graduate student doing an MA in Art and Social Practice with the Centre for Island Creativity at UHI. Her work explores the entanglements of people, objects and place and is informed by personal experiences of immersion in landscapes, the history, language and ecology of the Highlands and the rhythms intrinsic to the planet. She has been part of The School of Plural Futures group since February 2021.

EMMIE MCLUSKEY is an artist who lives in Glasgow, Scotland. She works across the roles of artist, producer and facilitator. She is the lead artist for The School of Plural Futures. Emmie's work privileges the visual, haptic and auditory intelligences as a way of opening up and challenging how we attribute value under capitalism.

LIAM NEUPERT joined the school in June 2021 to speak about their involvement in Rory Pilgrim's work *The Undercurrent*. Liam spoke about their work in the Fridays for Future movement, activism and the importance of working intersectionally. Liam is a 19-year-old student/artist/activist based in New York. Liam's passions lie in crafting storytelling experiences, whether through imagery or word, in the hopes to inspire others to share their story and build community.

SARA OUSSAIDEN is a student and artist who has just started her first year at Duncan of Jordanston College of Art. She creates fine art in a mix of mediums and has completed work in the past with ATLAS Arts, Sky Arts and the Scottish Book Trust. She has been part of The School of Plural Futures group since February 2021.

RORY PILGRIM works in a wide range of media including song-writing, composing music, film, music video, text, drawing and live performances. Centred on emancipatory concerns, Pilgrim aims to challenge the nature of how we come together, speak, listen and strive for social change through sharing and voicing personal experience. Rory worked with The School of Plural Futures in June 2021 around their film *The Undercurrent*.

AINSLIE RODDICK lives in Kingsburgh and is the Director of ATLAS Arts. She loves making books and together with the team set up The Making Publics Press at ATLAS. She is the founder of The Glasgow Seed Library and co-founder of open source publishing space Publication Studio Glasgow.

RAGHNAID SANDILANDS is a Gaelic speaker who grew up in Lochalsh. She lives today in Strathnairn, at the same latitude, at least, as her first home. She has a background in teaching and worked for several years as a curator of Gaelic manuscripts at the National Library. She is involved in several community groups – Farr Conversations, a conversation series that aims to ‘oil the wheels of engagement with issues affecting Scotland by hosting lively nights in a Highland hall’, the local Fèis and an allotment project. She has been exploring and researching her new home for several years and documents some of this work in her blog.

LEA SHAW is an award-winning Mezzo soprano from the Rocky Mountains of Denver, Colorado. Now based in Scotland, she graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2021 with a BMus first class honours, a Masters of Music and a Masters of Opera. Lea worked with The School of Plural Futures in June 2021 alongside Rufus Isabel Elliot to facilitate a workshop about finding your voice.

SAMIR SHARIF lives in Skye and has been a part of the School of Plural Futures throughout its first year in his work with ATLAS Arts. He often finds himself on the interstice between places, and thinks too much; writing, sometimes, about those thoughts in the form of poetry.

SEBASTIAN TAYLOR was raised in New England by English parents, but they never quite meshed with either country. They are currently part of the MLitt in Curatorial Practice for Contemporary Art at the Glasgow School of Art their work focuses on queering spaces and bodies. They have been part of The School of Plural Futures group since February 2021.

EILIDH TOWERS grew up in Carbost, Skye. She has a science background with a First Class Degree (Hons) in Earth Science from the University of Glasgow. She loves the Earth, the rocks, the ocean, and is fascinated by all the intricate chemical, physical and biological connections sculpting the vastly different landscapes that this planet cradles. She has been part of The School of Plural Futures group since February 2021.

MATTHEW ARTHUR WILLIAMS is a visual & sound artist, freelance photographer and DJ who lives in Glasgow. As a DJ Matthew has coordinated multiple night spaces in the Glasgow and is a regular host on Glasgow-based radio station, Clydebuilt Radio. Matthew is interested in archival material and the documentation of black existence and resistance, he works across mediums to encourage different narratives. Matthew worked with The School of Plural Futures to document and take portraits of the group whilst also taking part and deepening the conversation over the weekend.

GRACE WRIGHT lives in Edinbane, where she spends most of her time sewing and reading. She is currently working on a master's degree in Victorian history and literature, researching land agitation in Skye in the 1880s. She has been part of The School of Plural Futures group since February 2021.

JORDAN YOUNG is an outdoor guide and photographer. He is often found in peculiar places, camera in hand, staring at seemingly nothing. He has been a professional photographer for over 10 years and specialises in quietly capturing organic moments as they happen. Jordan worked with the school to document and participate in its activities.

THE SCHOOL OF
PLURAL FUTURES
a person is not an individual

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