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Place and Exile: Imperialism, Development and Environment in Gaelic Ireland and Scotland

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**Place and Exile: Imperialism, Development and Environment
in Gaelic Ireland and Scotland**

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Abstract

This paper explores environment, development and sustainability from the perspective of Gaelic communities on the west coasts of Ireland and Scotland. The themes of place and exile are distilled from Gaelic history and culture and explored further through the Gaelic (Scottish and Irish) concepts of *dùthchas* and *deoraíocht*. Three contemporary environment and development case studies show that although exile and place emerged over hundreds of years they continue to be important today. Further discussion suggests that place and exile become particularly meaningful in the context of imperialism and analysis of the case studies implies three ways of linking imperialism and sustainability: (i) imperialism as a cause of unsustainable development; (ii) sustainable development as imperialism; (iii) the possibility of sustainability beyond imperialism or post-imperial sustainability. Land buy-outs by crofting communities in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland are discussed as an example of the third category. The paper draws on Postcolonial Studies research and illustrates how history and culture can inform an understanding of sustainable development.

Key words: place, exile, dùthchas, deoraíocht', imperialism, sustainability

About the Author

Joseph Murphy is RCUK Academic Fellow in Social Response to Environmental Change in the Sustainability Research Institute at the University of Leeds. He has published widely on environmental issues including *Regulatory Realities: The Implementation and Impact of Industrial Environmental Regulation* (Gouldson and Murphy, 1998), *Exploring Sustainable Consumption* (Cohen and Murphy (eds), 2001), *Governing the Transatlantic Conflict over Agricultural Biotechnology* (Murphy, 2006) and *Governing Technology for Sustainability* (Murphy (ed.), (2007). *At the Edge: Walking the Atlantic Coast of Ireland and Scotland* is his most recent book (2009).

A Note on Language

Gaelic (Irish and Scottish) is an important part of this paper. Although the text is in English I try to give the language its rightful place. Where literature and poetry are quoted the originals are given first and English translations follow. Gaelic place names are preferred. To make it easier for the reader all Gaelic words are given in italics. I place anglicised versions of Gaelic words in brackets and translations between apostrophes e.g. *Earra-Ghàidheal* (Argyll) or 'the coastland of the Gaels'. When referring to *dùthchas* and *deoraíocht*, or 'place' and 'exile', I use Scottish Gaelic for the first and Irish Gaelic for the second.

1 Introduction

In 2006 I walked from *Cathair Saidhbhín* (Cahersiveen) in the southwest corner of Ireland to *Nis* (Ness) in the northwest corner of Scotland. From the beginning of June to the end of August, following the Atlantic coast all the way, I covered 1500 kilometres on foot, passing through *An Mhumhain* (Munster), *Connacht* (Connaught), *Ulaidh* (Ulster), *A' Ghàidhealtachd* (the Highlands) and *Innse Gall* (Hebrides). The journey was motivated by a desire to understand more about Gaelic history and culture and to explore the meaning of sustainable development for small communities on this coastline. After completing the walk I wrote *At the Edge: Walking the Atlantic Coast of Ireland and Scotland* (Murphy, 2009). In this paper I draw out and extend some of the arguments in that book.

During the walk and the time spent writing the book, *dùthchas* and *deoraíocht* emerged as key themes in. These Gaelic concepts can be translated as 'place' and 'exile', or, more accurately 'being in place' and 'being in exile'. In this paper I show how they can help us to understand the meaning of (un)sustainable development in this context. Unlike more conventional approaches to sustainability, which focus on generic social, economic and ecological criteria, they give us a way of understanding sustainability that is rooted in the experiences of Gaelic people. One of the objectives of this paper is to show that history and culture can be used in this way.

I begin with an overview of Gaelic history and culture. In Section 2 I develop the key themes of *dùthchas* and *deoraíocht* and explore them through the poetry and prose of George Campbell Hay (*Deòrsa Mac Iain Dheòrsa*) and *Pádraig Ó Conaire*. The middle sections of the paper extend the discussion and bring it up to date by exploring *dùthchas* and *deoraíocht* in the context of contemporary environment and development conflicts. My case studies are the Corrib gas terminal in northwest Mayo (Ireland), a large wind farm on Lewis (Scotland) and the community buy-out of the Galson estate, also on Lewis. These case studies show that *dùthchas* and *deoraíocht* continue to be important today.

In the final section of the paper (Section 5) I show that imperialism, from colonisation to globalisation, is the context within which *dùthchas* and *deoraíocht* are meaningful. I develop this argument with the help of literature from Postcolonial Studies, including the concept of 'internal colonialism' and the debate over 'ecological imperialism'. Further analysis of the case studies leads to three ways of linking imperialism and sustainability, which I set out in the conclusion: (i) imperialism as a cause of

unsustainable development; (ii) sustainable development as imperialism; (iii) the possibility of sustainability beyond imperialism or post-imperial sustainability.

Before beginning it is appropriate to say a few words about method. The experience of walking 1500 kilometres from Kerry to Lewis and observations made along the way underpin this paper. It has, therefore, anthropological/ethnographic aspects. Also, I emphasise the importance of the Gaelic language and draw extensively on poetry and literature. This is essential because, as Campbell (2006: p. xiv) remarks, in many ways 'the gates of *dùthchas*' are the language itself'. Poetry is particularly important because it is the pre-eminent Gaelic literary form and it holds within it a native view of history and society (MacInnes, 2006a). As MacInnes (2006d: 178) says elsewhere: '... it is true to say that the main thrust of Gaelic genius has been in poetry, not in drama nor in prose'.

2 Gaeldom

Successive waves of Celtic tribes migrated from Europe to Ireland between 700 and 300 BC, mixing with and displacing people who settled there from the Neolithic period onwards. Celtic tribes speaking a language similar to modern Gaelic arrived some time around 100 BC and by 500 AD Gaelic culture had spread across most of Ireland. Around this time it also emerged on the west coast of Scotland. There is no agreement on how this happened but some Gaels certainly left Antrim and crossed *Sruth na Maoile* (The Sea of Moyle) to re-establish themselves in *Earra-Ghàidheal* (Argyll) – 'the coastland of the Gaels' – before helping to spread Gaelic culture and language spread throughout the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Today, however, the language is largely restricted to a small number of communities on the Atlantic seaboard of Ireland and Scotland.

2.1 Expansion

The period over which Gaelic culture and society flourished is disputed. Restricted accounts focus on the 'Golden Age' from the beginning of the 6th century to arrival of the Vikings at the end of the 8th century, a period during which Celtic Christian monks created some of Europe's most remarkable cultural artefacts. Others extend the era of prosperity as far as the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland from 1169-70. My outline considers a slightly longer period in order to include pre-Christian folklore, the Gaelicisation of the Normans, and the emergence of the semi-independent Lordship of Isles on the west coast of Scotland.

Folklore and the oral tradition is undoubtedly one of the great treasures of Gaelic history and culture. Stories collected in Ireland and Scotland make up a body of literature which is as extensive and important as any in Europe. In addition to countless local tales, four or five great cycles are known thanks to the *seanchaíthe* – 'storytellers' –, medieval monks and modern folklore collectors. The Mythological Cycle includes stories of the magical *Tuatha Dé Danann* and the Ulster Cycle includes the epic *Táin Bó Cúailnge* or 'Cattle Raid of Cooley'. The *Fianna* stories, found throughout Gaelic Ireland and Scotland, recall the exploits of an ancient warrior band including the heroes *Fionn mac Cumhaill* and *Oisín* (Ó Cadhlaigh, 1938). Many place names have folklore origins. In southwest Kerry, for example, you can stand on *Bealach Oisín* – 'Oisin's Pass' –, the place where he arrived back in Ireland after

spending 300 years in *Tír na nÓg* or the 'Land of Eternal Youth'. Similarly, in Glen Coe in Scotland you can stand on *Sgorr nam Fiannaidh* or 'the peak of the heroes', which is a reference to the same warrior band.

Folklore is important but for many people Gaelic history and culture is synonymous with Celtic Christianity, the unique interpretation of the Christian tradition which flourished in Ireland and Scotland from the 5th century. The early period in particular featured remarkable asceticism, with monks forming small communities in isolated places like *Sceilg Mhichíl* (Skellig Michael) off the southwest corner of Ireland and *Rònaigh* (Rona) off the northwest corner of Scotland (Horn et al., 1990; Moorhouse, 1997). Their intention was to follow the example set by the Desert Fathers in the Middle East in the 1st and 2nd centuries. As Moffat (2002: 110) describes:

> Adapting to western geography, Celtic monks let salt water take the place of the sand and they favoured places dominated by the wastes of the sea. In this way their lonely hermitages, like Skellig Michael, followed the example of the spiritual brothers in the Near East.

The 8th century *Céili Dé* or 'Client of God' reform movement is also important because of its celebration of nature. Whilst mainstream Christianity and other European cultures were finding reasons to fear and subdue wilderness, monks along the west coasts of Ireland and Scotland were marvelling and recording their joy in Gaelic poems. As one of the early translators of this verse says:

> ... these poems occupy a unique position in the literature of the world. To seek out and watch and love nature, in its tiniest phenomenon as in its grandest, was given to no people so early and so fully as to the Celt. (Meyer, 1913/1994: xii, see also Flower, 1948: 42)

Gaelic monks from Ireland and Scotland spread out across Europe, often reintroducing Christianity to places where it had been abandoned after the retreat of the Roman Empire. They also created great illuminated gospels in the scriptoriums of Iona and Lindasfarne. In stone they left behind the High Crosses which are a feature of the material culture of Ireland and Scotland. After continental orders of monks arrived there were more great achievements, particularly the compilation of Annals in which history and folklore were recorded.

Throughout this period of expansion Ireland and Scotland were governed through independent and semi-independent kingdoms, each one associated with a clan and overseen by a Chieftain. Clan MacCarthy, for example, was synonymous with the southwest Munster, O'Malley dominated around Clew Bay in Connaught and O'Neil held sway across much of Ulster. One of the most important and celebrated of these kingdoms was the Lordship of the Isles on the west coast of Scotland (Paterson, 2001). From its foundation in the 12th century to the beginning of its decline in the 15th century it was responsible for a remarkable period of stability. Culture flourished under Clan MacDonald with the obvious signs today being poetry and the medieval carved stones which are found throughout Argyle and the Western Isles. As MacInnes (2006a: 9) remarks, '... it is as if Gaelic Alba had been reaffirmed and re-created within narrower territorial limits.

2.2 Collapse

Great disruptions such as the Viking raids from the end of the 8th century and the Anglo-Norman Conquest at the end of the 12th century were important but they did result in the long-term decline of Gaelic culture in Ireland or Scotland. Indeed, they often enriched it. Decline really began to gather momentum in the 17th century, particularly with the growing power of England. It is impossible to explore all the important events and processes involved but the Jacobite Wars, the Penal laws, the Famine in Ireland and the Clearances in Scotland were particularly consequential and help to explain how Gaelic culture was undermined to the point where it almost entirely collapsed.

When James II became the Catholic King of England, Ireland and Scotland in 1685 there was considerable nervousness amongst Protestants. This grew over the next few years as a more pro-Catholic policy seemed to emerge particularly in Ireland. The birth of an heir in June 1688 alarmed the political elite in England and they invited James' son-in-law William of Orange to take the English throne. When William arrived James fled to France and the Jacobite cause was born. What became known as the Williamite War in Ireland was the first significant encounter between the two sides with the Jacobite army being defeated at the battle of the Boyne in 1690.

The Jacobite cause dominated politics in Ireland and Scotland for the next 50 years and reached its climax in Gaelic Scotland when Prince Charles Edward Stuart landed in *na h-Eileanan A-muigh* (The Outer Hebrides) on 2 August 1745. He raised his flag at *Gleann Fhionghain* on 19 August and asked the Scottish clans to fight for him, thus setting in motion Scotland's second major Jacobite rebellion. Although Charles arrived empty handed – without troops or munitions – many Highlanders agreed to join him and the army made it as far south as Derby. After that it was forced to retreat and suffered a catastrophic defeat at Culloden in April 1746. The Prince escaped to Europe and although there were rumours of rebellion for many years the Jacobite cause was over.

The impacts of these events on Gaelic society in Ireland and Scotland can be found in the poetry of *Aogán Ó Rathaile* (?-1729), *Giolla Coluim Mac an Ollaimh* and *Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair* (1698-1770). Ó Tuama, S. and Kinsella, T. (1981: xxi) describe *Ó Rathaile* as 'the greatest of Irish poets, writing in Irish or English, between the seventeenth century and the twentieth.' He is famous particularly for his vision poems, in which Ireland appears as a woman in distress, but *Cabhair ní Ghairfead* – 'No Help I'll Call' – is more interesting in the context of this paper. It describes the decline of Clan McCarthy and the aristocratic Irish Gaelic tradition and draws attention to the plundering of local resources. [1]

Cabhair ní Ghairfead

Do thonnchrith m'inchinn, d'imigh mo phríomhdhóchas,
poll im ionathar, biora nimhe trím dhrólainn,
ár bhfonn, ár bhfothain, ár monga 's ár mínchóngair
i ngeall le pinginn ag foirinn ó chrích Dhóbhair.

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[1] See Ó Tuama and Kinsella (1981: 164-167). I reproduce verses 2 and 7 of 7.

Stadfadsa feasta – is gar dom éag gan mhoill
ó treascradh dragain Leamhan, Léin is Laoi;
rachad 'na bhfasc le searc na laoch don chill,
na flatha fá raibh mo shean roimh éag do Chríost.

Aogán Ó Rathaile

No Help I'll Call

Wave-shaken is my brain, my chief hope gone.
There's a hole in my gut, there are foul spikes through my bowels.
Our land, our shelter, our woods and our level ways
are pawned for a penny by a crew from the land of Dover.

I will stop now – my death is hurrying near
now the dragons of the Leamhan, Loch Léin and the Laoi are destroyed.
In the grave with this cherished chief I'll join those kings
my people served before the death of Christ.

Egan O'Rahilly

In many ways the poem *Ní h-Éibhneas gan Chlainn Domhnaill* or 'There is no Joy without Clann Domhnaill' by Scottish Gaelic poet *Giolla Coluim Mac an Ollaimh* is similar. This poem was written around 1493 and it mourns the loss of the west coast Gaelic kingdom known as the Lordship of the Isles.[2] Whereas *Aogán Ó Rathaile* mourned the passing of Clan McCarthy and the decline of aristocratic Gaelic Ireland, *Giolla Coluim Mac an Ollaimh* mourned the loss of Clan MacDonald and the decline of aristocratic Gaelic Scotland.[3]

Ní h-Éibhneas gan Chlainn Domhnaill

Ní h-éibhneas gan Chlainn Domhnaill,
ní comhnairt bheith 'na n-éagmhais;
an chlann dob fhearr san gcruinne:
gur dhíobh gach duine céatach.

Uaithne ána Alban uaine,
clann as cruaidhe ghabh bhaisteadh:
'gá roibh treas gacha tíre,
seabhaig Íle ar ghaisgeadh.

Ar bhrón agus ar thuirse
do thréigeas tuigse is foghlaim;
gach aoinní ortha thréigeas:

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[2] In 1462 the Lordship of the Isles agreed the ill-advised Treaty of Ardtornish-Westminster with Edward IV of England. Its contents were supposed to remain secret but they were revealed years later giving James III of Scotland an excuse to dismantle the Lordship of Isles and the powerbase of Clan MacDonald.

[3] See McLeod and Bateman (2007: 180-185). I reproduce verses 1, 5 and 14 of 17.

ní h-éibhneas gan Chlainn Domhnaill.

Giolla Coluim mac an Ollaimh

There is No Joy Without Clann Domhnaill

There is no joy without Clann Domhnaill,
there is no support without them;
the best people in the whole world,
to them every good person is related.

Noble pillars of green Scotland,
the hardiest of people who received baptism,
who won victory over every country,
for heroism they were hawks of Islay.

Out of sorrow and sadness
I've forsaken wisdom and learning;
owing to them have I all things abandoned:
there is no joy without Clann Domhnaill.

Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair (1698-1770) also helps us to understand the decline of Gaelic Scotland. He spent most of his life on the west coast of Scotland around Ardnamurchan and Moidart and many of his poems are about this area, including his most famous composition *Òran an t-Samhraidh* or 'The Song of the Summer' (see Black, 1986; Thomson, 1996). *Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's* life changed dramatically in 1745 when he joined the Jacobite rebellion as a captain. Some say he taught Prince Charles Edward Stuart Gaelic to help him address the clans at *Gleann Fhionghain*. He was not necessarily motivated by the desire to restore a Catholic Stuart royal line, however. It seems likely that he supported the Prince as a way of delivering Gaelic people and their culture from the forces that were oppressing them at the time. As Hunter (1995: 72) puts it:

> Charles, to Alasdair, was more, much more, than Stuart claimant to the British throne then occupied by the Hanoverian King George II. The Jacobite prince's real significance, from Alasdair's point of view, was largely Highland – Charles's role in his poetry being that of a messiah come to deliver Highlanders from forces which, by Alasdair's time, were already imperilling the existence both of the Highland clans and of the traditional Gaelic culture with which clanship was so inextricably bound up.

Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair fought through the whole of the 1745 campaign and witnessed the destruction that followed. After Culloden the Highland clans were persecuted by the Redcoats under the direction of the Duke of Cumberland who was determined to destroy the threat of rebellion forever. Gaelic Scotland was left in a worse position than it had been before 1745 and the poet descended into deep melancholy for at least two years.

Fear of Catholic uprisings continued for years and led to numerous efforts to weaken Catholic power particularly in Ireland. Usually, because being Catholic also meant being Gaelic, related schemes also undermined the indigenous culture. The Penal Laws are one of the most obvious examples. These were passed to weaken the power of Irish Catholics by enhancing the power of adherents to the Protestant Church of Ireland. The rules covered many aspects of life. They formalised exclusion from the political process by denying the vote, made it illegal for Catholics to keep weapons or horses fit for military purposes, and forbid them from maintaining schools or sending children abroad to be educated. The Penal Laws remained in place in Ireland until Daniel O'Connell won emancipation for Catholics in Ireland in 1829.

The 19th century was bleak for Gaelic Ireland and Scotland, despite positive developments like emancipation for Catholics. The Clearances, which began in Scotland at the end of the 1700s, gathered pace. In Ireland an already impoverished agricultural class was decimated by the Famine. In both Ireland and Scotland eviction and emigration became signature experiences. Very few accounts of eviction are available in Gaelic but *Colm Ó Gaora* (1943: 17-18) provides one in his autobiography *Mise* or 'Myself'. It recalls the eviction of a family in *Conamara* (Connemara) in the second half of the 19th century. [4]

> *Chonaic mé féin dhá theach dá gcaitheadh amach ar bhaile an Turlaigh agus mé imo ghasúr. Bhí na póilíos, an siarram, agus báillí an tiarna bailithe thart ar an teach – fáinne déanta acu air. Tháinig oifigeach na bpóilíos go dtí an doras, agus d'fhiafruigh in áird a chin isteach uaidh, a raibh muintir an tí réidh? Bhí gíománach an tiarna tamaillín amach ó'n oifigeach ina bhogha mhór, agus é ag méirínteacht páipéir, agus san am céanna ag saighdiú a chuid leiciméaraí a theacht níos goire agus a bheith faoi réir a dhá luas is d'fhógróchadh seisean. Feicim an biorr a bhí ina dhá shúilsean inniu chomh maith leis an lá úd. Bhí gaimh ina ghlór, agus cáir ar an gcab a bhi air a bhí a'cur níos mó den mhísg agus den ollbhéas le n- bhrútúlacht. Ní mba luaithe a bhí an duine deireannach de mhuintir an tí amuigh thar doras ná chuaigh na báillí i mbun a ngnotha. Níor fhágadar fuithnín taobh istigh gan caitheadh amach. Annsin chuir lucht na ngróite a gcuid neart ina gcuid oibre agus thosuigh a'leagan. Ar fheiceál seo do bhean a'tí chuir sí a dhá bois ar a súile agus chuir uaill aiste. Thosuigh na páistí ag screadach a rachadh thrí chlár daraí. Bhí fear a'tí ag breathnú ar dhrithfísg an chineadh daonna úd faoi n-a gcuid alluis agus iad a'cur brúisg i ndiaidh brúisge den cheann agus den bhalla sin don tallamh. Le gach brúisg ghníodh an fear bocht cnead, agus thagadh trua chráidhte ina shúile ar fheiceál an dí-cheannadh seo ar an teaichín ar chaith sé a shaol agus a shláinte leis dhá dhéanamh agus a'cur feabhais air. Ba mhór an t-uafás a bheith a bhreathnú ar an bhfeic úd.*

> I myself saw two houses being laid waste in the townland of Turly and me just a boy. The police, the sheriff and the landlord's bailiffs were gathered round the house, making a ring round it. A police man went to the door and called to those inside at the top of his voice; were they ready? A landlord's lacky was standing close by, fingering a piece of paper, at the same time egging the officers on to draw closer and to be ready as soon as he would give the

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[4] See Ó Gaora (1943: 17-18). Translation by Donal Maguinness.

command. I can still see the piercing look in his eyes. There was poison in his voice and a twist in his mouth which seemed to add to the grossness of his brutality. No sooner was the last person to come out of the house than the bailiff went to work. Every scrap was removed from inside and thrown out. Then the men with crowbars put their [backs] into the work and began to demolish the house. When the woman of the house saw this [she] covered her face with her hands and let out a terrible moan. The howls of the children would have penetrated oak boards. The man of the house was watching the dregs of humanity through their sweat as they dealt blow after crushing blow to the roof and walls of the house. The poor man groaned at each blow, a piteous look in his eyes as the little house he had spent his life on in building and improving, was torn apart. It was a horror just to witness this scene.

As MacInnes (2006d: 174) says, 'From the nineteenth century onwards the outside world was invading the Gaelic consciousness with cataclysmic effect'.

Although it is true to say that Gaelic culture in Ireland and Scotland collapsed, particularly in the 19th century, there are significant examples of resistance and renaissance. Towards the end of the 19th century a widespread conflict over land erupted which became known as the Land War in Ireland and the Crofters War in Scotland. Michael Davit and Charles Stuart Parnell realised that people in both countries were suffering from the same problem – 'landlordism' – and linked the two creating the biggest threat to authority since the last Jacobite rebellion. Profound changes to land ownership followed which had long-term implications for sustaining Gaelic people and culture (see Cannadine, 1990/1996). Slightly later, particularly in Ireland, there was renewed interest in Gaelic culture, particularly as a result of *Conradh na Gaeilge* or The Gaelic League. Such advances, however, were happening in a wider context collapse.

3 Place and exile

Even a short review makes it clear that Gaelic people have experienced momentous highs and lows. This background is important because, as Rich (1986: 212) has said, 'I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history', and, as Sharp and Briggs (2006: 7) add, history '... is not something that can simply be transcended through good intentions.' That said, in order to use history and culture in contemporary debates we must distil key themes and insights. In this section I argue that the two such themes from Gaelic history and culture are place and exile (see Mac Craith and Macleod, 2001 for a similar perspective).

3.1 Place

Given the long association between Gaelic people and the Atlantic coasts of Ireland and Scotland it is no surprise that relatedness to place features in Gaelic culture. One example from Scotland is the poem *Moladh Beinn Dóbhrain* ('The Praise of Ben Dorain') by *Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir* (Duncan MacIntyre) (1724-1812) (see Black, 2001: 266-267, MacLeod, 1978, Meek, 1997, MacInnes, 2006d: 172). A more recent example from Ireland is the poetry of *Máirtín Ó Direáin* (1910-1988) which focuses on *Oileáin Árann* (the Aran Islands) and his birthplace *Inis Mór* (Inishmore) (see Ó Direáin, 1992 and for a discussion Ryan, 2002). In this section I focus on the

poetry of George Campbell Hay (*Deòrsa Mac Iain Dheòrsa*) (1915-1984) and the analysis provided by Byrne (2000), before extending the discussion through the concept of *dùthchas*.

George Campbell Hay was raised on *Cinn Tìre* (Kintyre) where he learnt Gaelic from close relatives. As MacInnes (2006d: 175) says, 'Campbell Hay's ancestry stretches back to the poets of Classical Gaelic'. Reading his poems and more about his life leaves the impression that *Cinn Tìre* became an essential part of his being. He returned regularly and much of his poetry tries to capture and express its qualities. As Byrne (2000, Vol 2: 93-94) says:

> There is more than deep nostalgia here: Hay's sense of place and history, of the human associations in every feature of the natural environment, and his awareness of the emotional, atavistic power of place-names, places him at the heart of the Gaelic tradition, in line with all Gaelic poets before him.

One examples of this is the poem *Cinntìre* which has been described as a love letter to the place and its people (see Byrne, 2000, Vol 1: 24-26).[5]

Cinntìre

Gnàthach sunnd is aobhachd inntinn
san dùthaich ghaoil a dh'àraich mi;
gràin no gruaim cha tig 'na còir-se,
gàire 's ceòl as dual di.

Ghràdhaich mi do mhuir 's do mhonadh,
lom do chnoc fo ghuirm' an speur,
drilseach grèin' air an slios taobhgheal,
lios aost' as milse gasta gnè.

Binn guth gaoithe air do chruachan,
ag èigheach air an guaillean àrd;
gur rìomhach do ghealchrios umad,
a' mhuir a' teannadh gu tràigh.

Is domhain a chaidh freumh do sheanchais,
luingeas Lochlainn, airm is trod,
Clanna Lìr air Sruth na Maoile,
Calum Cille caomh nad phort.

Deòrsa Mac Iain Dheòrsa

Kintyre

Cheer and gladness are customary
in the beloved land that reared me.
Hate or gloom come not near her.

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[5] See Byrne (2000, Vol 1: 24-26). I reproduce verses 2, 3, 4 and 12 of 14.

Laughter and music are her heritage.

I have loved your sea and moorland,
the bareness of your hills under the blue of the sky;
the shimmer of sun on their fair-sided flanks,
old pleasance of sweetest and finest nature.

Sweet is the voice of the wind on your summits,
crying on their high shoulders;
lovely your white girdle about you,
the sea closing in on the shore.

Deep has gone the root of your tradition:
ships of Norway, arms and strife,
the Children of Lìr on the Moyle Race,
gentle Columba in your port.

George Campbell Hay

To understand this poem it is important to locate it within the tradition of Gaelic poetry and to distance it from other traditions. As Byrne (2000) points out *Cinntìre* reveals Hay as a poet of place because it is saturated with history and meaning. This makes the sense of place different from W B Yeats' 'Celtic Twilight', the Romantic visions of 'the Lakes poets' and from the North American transcendental environmentalism of John Muir.

> A praise poem like "Cinntìre" makes it clear that his apprehension of place is as historical-intellectual as it is sensual-emotional: the peninsula's roots run deep in history, back to the Lordship of the Isles, further back to the very first arrival of Gaelic and Christianity in Scotland, and even further into Irish legend. (Byrne, 2000, Vol 2: 93-94)

This discussion can be extended (or traced back) using the Scottish Gaelic concept of *dùthchas*.[6] *Dùthchas* is widely acknowledged as a strong and emotive word and one of the more difficult Gaelic words to translate into English. It refers to a sense of place and belonging, particularly in connection with instinct, heritage and homeland. It appears in the phrase *tìr mo dhùthchais*, for example, which literally means 'land of my homeland' but might more accurately be translated as 'land to which I belong'. The concept of *dùthchas* features in 17th century clan poetry when the place you belonged to as a Gael was your *dùthchas*. It was a birthright to live in a place which meant the land but also the language and culture of the community.

In an effort to understand *dùthchas* I draw particularly on the book *Dùthchas Nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes* (Newton, 2006 see also Newton, 2000) and on advice from Ronald Black. John MacInnes has been referred to as 'the last native scholar' of Scottish Gaelic and his clearest statement of *dùthchas* makes a link with poems like *Cinntìre*:

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[6] Seamus Heaney is recognised as an Irish poet working today who has an acute sense of place. See Heaney, Seamus (1980) 'The sense of place', in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978*, Faber, London.

The native Gael who is instructed in this poetry carries in his imagination not so much a landscape, nor a sense of geography alone, nor a history alone, but a formal order of experience in which these are all merged. The native sensibility responds not to landscape but to dùthchas. And just as 'landscape', with its romantic aura, cannot be translated directly into Gaelic, so 'dùthchas' and, indeed 'dùthaich' cannot be translated in English without robbing the terms of their emotional energy. The complexity involved can be appreciated by reflecting on the range of meaning: *dùthchas* is ancestral or family land; it is also family tradition; and, equally, it is the hereditary qualities of an individual. A name such as 'Dùthaich MchiLeòid', for instance, is poorly represented by 'The Land of MacLeod' or 'MacLeod's country.' (MacInnes, 2006e: 279)

In his article 'Gleanings from Raasay tradition', John MacInnes (2006b) records some of the traditions of the island where he spent much of his childhood and gives a more personal insight into the meaning of *dùthchas*. The island's highest hill, which has a distinctive volcanic profile when viewed from Skye, is *Dùn Cana*. MacInnes recalls hearing a traditional rhyme which refers to it when he was growing up and two different versions of the same line, *dùn breac gaolach Mhic Gille Chaluim* and *dùn gaolach Mhic Gille Chaluim*. The first can be translated as 'beloved speckled fort of Mhic Gille Chaluim' and the second simply as 'beloved fort of Mhic Gille Chaluim'. Comparing the two, MacInnes (2006b: 78) observes that '[the first] though a fine image in itself, visually powerful, is less emotive than the bare statement [of the second] as an expression of *dùthchas*'.

To build on the insights of John MacInnes we can turn to the reflections of the eminent Gaelic scholar Ronald Black (pers comm April 2009). In particular these help to position *duthchas* in relation to other concepts like *duthaich* and *dualchas*:

In philological terms *duthchas* is the abstract noun from *duthaich* or 'country' in the same way that *luathas* means swiftness and *luath* means swift. So it's a word like 'nationality' (as a way of thinking and acting) or 'heredity' or (perhaps) 'community'. I think it's a matter of concentric circles: in traditional terms your *duthchas* centres on your home, and radiates out to take in your glen or island and all of your kindred. At the root of *duthaich/duthchas* is *duth*. You also have *dual* which gives *dualchas*. *Duthchas* and *dualchas* make a pair: patrimony and tradition, or the like. *Duthchas* is mainly geographic whilst *dualchas* is mainly cultural. *Dualchas* includes songs and stories. But both words seem to be used similarly in the sense of *rudeigin as dual/duth dhomh* – something that's in my blood.[7]

This discussion suggests that *dùthchas* refers to an existential sense of being in place. From Gaelic history and culture there are countless which support this. For example, the traditional process of inaugurating a new king involved marrying them to the land. A famous song includes the lines *MacGriogair a Ruadhshruth/Dha'm bu*

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[7] No. 378 in the series *Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh* highlights the difference between the words *dùthchas* and *dualchas*. They are often confused because both can be translated as 'heredity' or 'heritage'. More precisely, however, *dùthchas* means 'place of origin' or 'homeland' as well as heredity. *Dualchas* is connected more strongly to hereditary in the context of the family. See http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/alba/foghlam/learngaelic/litir/.

dual bhith 'n Gleann Liobhann or 'MacGregor of Roro/In whose blood it was to be in Glen Lyon'. People and place are routinely linked in clan references like *Mac Mhic Ailean à Mùideart*, *Mac Mhic Alasdair Chnòideart*, *MacLeòid às na Hearadh* (MacInnes, 2006e: 277). Even today it is widely acknowledged that Gaelic place names play an important role in linking Gaels to the world around them and there is a growing interest in recovering and reinstating them (see Nash, 1999).

This is sufficient discussion of place and *dùthchas* for the purposes of this paper although interesting issues remain. One is the problem of territorial or geographical extent. Ronald Black describes *dùthchas* as a series of concentric circles with home and glen at the centre but how far does it stretch? This issue surfaces, for example, in the distinction between the *Gàidhealtachd* and the *Galldachd* or Gaelic Scotland and the lowlands. It also surfaces in the way that the cultural geography of Gaeldom cuts across the more recent political geography of Ireland, N. Ireland and Scotland.[8] Other sources on *dùthchas* exist and some of these will be used later when I discuss its contemporary political significance (see particularly MacKenzie, 2002; MacKenzie, 2006a, MacKenzie et al 2004).[9]

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[8] MacInnes (2006a: 6) says 'Gàidhealtachd' and 'Galldachd' are abstract terms rather than ordinary place names and the areas they designate are not drawn with precise boundaries. The perspective is cultural. Elsewhere, '... I think it is true to say that at various levels of Gaelic tradition there is to be found an awareness (I shall not put it more strongly than that) of a time when 'all Scotland was a Gàidhealtachd'.' (MacInnes, 2006e: 267). There is a similar awareness that Gaelic Ireland is part of the same cultural and linguistic unit as Gaelic Scotland, although they drifted apart from 17th century and are divided by politics and religion today.

[9] The longest discussion is Mackenzie (2002: 545-546) who says:

> "Duthchas, briefly, refers to an "hereditary right" (Dwelly, 1994, page 375) embedded in beliefs in "the inalienability of the land of the kindred" (Hunter, 1976, pages 156 – 157). The right dates back to the ancient past and predates the clan system (Grant, 1961, page 8). It denotes a profound sense of belonging to the land, a sense encapsulated in the greeting *Càite do'n bein sibh?* (literally, where do you belong to?), still used by older crofters. The meaning is captured in the following words of a crofter on the Isle of Harris who traces his heritage to Norse ancestry: "In Gaelic, you never think about the land belonging to you; it is you that belongs to the land. The people belong to the land. ... Not just land, but the whole concept of belonging to that land, everything that goes with the life we live here. ... These are inherited rights that nobody can argue with" (interview, 19 May 1997). "[P]rolonged occupation of land", writes I F Grant (1961, page 7), "gave a right to a 'kindness', a right of permanent occupation". "[T]he commons of the clans and their crofter descendants have", James Hunter (1976, page 157) notes, "clung steadfastly to the notion of the indissolubility of their ties with the land from which they have scraped their often precarious subsistence".
>
> The right embedded in duthchas is informed historically by a set of territorial assumptions in a kin-based society, which are quite at variance with a property regime which recognises private landownership (Devine, 1994, page 10). Land is not a commodity. The "cultural force" of the concept, Tom Devine writes (page 11), "was pervasive in Gaeldom" and, founded on the principle of reciprocal interests between ruling elites and clan members, it was "central to the social cohesion of the clan". It was a right held collectively by all members of the clan to the land on which they lived and which they worked in common prior to the enclosures of the 18th and 19th centuries (Hunter, 1976, pages 156 – 157). The symbol became, as Charles Withers (1988, page 331) has shown, the key "legitimizing notion" for resistance during the Highland Land Wars of the 19th century and the central symbolic resource for reclaiming lost rights to land (see also Hunter, 1976, chapters 8, 9, 10; Withers, 1990)."

3.2 Exile

Exile is the second theme which emerges from Gaelic history and culture. It features, for example, in the momentous events of 'the flight of the Earls', when the Gaelic aristocracy of Ulster left Ireland on 4 September 1607. It resurfaces in *Colm Ó Gaora's* (1943: 17-18) account of an eviction in *Conamara* (Connemara) in the second half of the 19th century. Many of the people who went through this experience also emigrated, a process depicted by William McTaggart (1835-1910) in his 1895 painting *The Sailing of the Emigrant Ship*. In this section I explore the experience and condition of exile through the writing of *Pádraig Ó Conaire* (1882-1928) before giving some examples which illustrate its contemporary significance.[10]

Pádraig Ó Conaire (1882-1928) was born in Galway and is acknowledged as a pioneer of modern Gaelic prose literature. He became an orphan at 12 at which point he moved west to *Ros Muc* to be raised by his uncle. The family spoke English but in *Ros Muc* he was immersed in Gaelic and learned it fluently. In 1899 he moved to England where he worked as a clerk and joined the Gaelic League. He returned to Ireland in 1914 and spent the rest of his life roaming around Galway and Ireland before dying at the age of 46. Sadly, his death had all the hallmarks of the neglected artist. He died destitute in Richmond Hospital, Dublin, with no possessions other than an ounce of tobacco, his famous clay pipe and an apple.

O'Conaire helped to lay the foundations for modern writing in Irish Gaelic by not adopting the traditional folk lore style. Instead he was inspired by contemporary European writers and demonstrated that the themes which concerned them could also be explored through Gaelic and the experiences of Gaelic people. He wrote short stories, essays and plays and received major literary prizes. His books are often existential, with emotional power and psychological insight, and this sets him apart. His most famous book is *Deoraíocht* (Ó Conaire, 1910/2001), which can be translated as 'dispossession', but is more commonly given the English title *Exile*.

Deoraíocht tells the story of *Mícheál Ó Maoláin* (Michael Mullen) who leaves Galway to work in London but hopes to return with enough money to marry his childhood sweetheart. Things go badly and soon after arriving he is maimed in a car accident. After spending his compensation, and with no way of supporting himself, he joins the circus as a freak, travelling through England and Ireland and eventually arriving back in Galway. At this point *Mícheál* has returned to his native place but in tragic circumstances. The circus master instructs him to utter only wild noises and he is paraded through the streets. His neighbours do not recognise him and make cruel remarks in Gaelic without realising that he can understand. *Máire Ní Laoi*, the girl he wanted to marry, watches with her husband and also fails to recognise him. In the end, although longing to stay in Ireland, *Mícheál* returns to London where he dies in tragic circumstances.

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[10] For a more positive understanding of exile we can turn to the Golden Age of Gaelic history and culture when Gaelic Saints chose to go into exile for religious reasons. Examples include groups of monks living an aesthetic life on Skellig Michael and ones like Brendan, Columba and Columbanus who left Ireland to travel and evangelise. These examples add weight to the argument that exile has deep roots in Gaelic history and culture but also show that not all examples are negative.

Deoraíocht is important because it explores the condition of the *deoraí* or 'exile' in many different ways – spatial, physical, cultural and psychological. *Ó Conaire* uses *Mícheál* to explore the life of an emigrant worker, many of whom did suffer appalling physical injuries because of the work they did. At the same time, however, *Mícheál's* journey to London and his injuries symbolise an emotionally and psychologically maiming experience as the language, culture and values he grew up with are undermined. His experience in the circus leaves him so profoundly alienated that he asks the question '*Nach fear mé?*' or 'Am I not a man?' This rephrasing of Shylock's question to Salerio – 'if you prick us, do we not bleed?' – rises when someone's status as a human being is denied. [11][12]

Not surprisingly given the tragic history of Gaelic Ireland and Scotland, exile continues to be relevant today. In northwest Mayo, for example, the community of *Baingear* (Bangor) have erected a statue which shows a woman and child standing on broken rocks beneath a windblown tree and waving goodbye. It marks the place where local people gathered to say goodbye to loved ones who were leaving for the harvesting season or permanently. Similarly, on the road between *An Fál Carrach* (Falcarragh) and *Gleann Bheatha* (Glenveagh) in Donegal there's a small stone bridge over a mountain stream with a pale grey boulder next to it. This boulder also marks the place where people said goodbye to loved one. The final line of the verse etched on the surface is *Seo Droichead na nDeor* or 'This is the bridge of tears'.

4 Place and exile today

The first half of this paper has explored the history and culture of Gaeldom and the themes of place and exile – *dùthchas* and *deoraíocht*. The second half explores the contemporary relevance of these themes by analysing conflicts over environment and development. Extending the discussion from history to the present day is realistic because it is widely acknowledged that a Gaelic sense of historical perspective and continuity still exists in some communities. That said, as MacInnes (2006e: 266) observes in relation to Scotland, 'During the last two and a half centuries the processes of decline have produced what can only be regarded now as the detritus of a nation.' The same is true in Ireland. A consequence of this is that the list of possible case studies sites is very limited. My examples come from the Gaelic speaking area of northwest Mayo in Ireland and parts of the Western Isles off Scotland.[13]

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[11] William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, Act 3, Scene 1.

[12] Further insights into the conditions experienced by Irish immigrants in England can be gained from Friedrich Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. In this book he describes the 40,000 Irish who lived on the south side of the Manchester just off Oxford Road. "The race that lives in these ruinous cottages, behind broken windows, mended with oilskin, sprung doors, and rotten door-posts, or in dark, wet cellars, in measureless filth and stench, in this atmosphere penned in as if with a purpose, this race must really have reached the lowest stage of humanity".

[13] The communities discussed in this section are all in recognised Gaelic speaking areas. In linguistic terms those in the Western Isles of Scotland are relatively strong. The 2001 UK Census showed that *Barabhas* had the highest proportion of Scottish Gaelic speakers in Scotland – 74.7%. Gaelic in northwest Mayo is less secure. For an assessment of this area see Ó Giollagáin et al (2007).

4.1 The Corrib gas terminal

In the late 1990s a consortium of energy companies was given permission to exploit the Corrib gas field which lies 70 kilometres off the north coast of Mayo in the west of Ireland. In 2000 important aspects of the project began to take shape. Enterprise Energy Ireland, later replaced by Shell, planned to bring the gas onshore at *Ros Dumhach* (Rossport), a small coastal village, from where it would travel by high pressure pipeline to a new gas terminal at nearby Bellanaboy. From there the processed gas would travel south by a low pressure pipeline to Galway.

The Corrib gas project was controversial from the outset but the flash-point came in June 2005 when five Rossport residents refused to let Shell mark out the route of the high pressure pipeline across their land. Their defiance led to imprisonment for contempt of court. Families and supporters of the 'Rossport Five' launched a campaign and on 1 October 2005 thousands rallied in Dublin to support them. In this context Shell dropped its injunction and the men were released after 94 days.

In the context of this paper the reflections of *Micheál Ó Seighin*, one of the Rossport Five, are particularly interesting. He visited the area for the first time in 1962 as a student committed to playing a role in maintaining Gaelic language in the community. He met his wife *Caitlín* and decided to stay. In the introduction to an interview conducted by Mark Garavan, Lecturer in Sociology at the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, *Micheál Ó Seighin* begins by emphasising the relationship between people and place and the role of language in a way which resonates with *dùthchas*:

> With Irish the entire place is a unity, whereby the place where things happen becomes part of the event itself. So the placenames become a record of any particular event. You have got milestones in the place for any story whether it is something that happened to me recently or something that happened a hundred years ago. You have these indicators in the place all the time. Place seems to give credibility to the experiences of the people. As a language which is not borrowed but indigenous, its idioms and dialect differences have been honed to represent and describe a world always changing which has the effect of tying the people and the area together. (Garavan, 2006: 60)[14]

When *Micheál Ó Seighin* describes what he is trying to protect by resisting the terminal, he often raises issues which resonate with the idea of exile or *deoraíocht*, also linking it with a sense of place. In response to the question 'It took confidence to take on the system, so where did the resources to do that come from?' he responds:

> Our attachment to place comes into it too... as we were going on bit by bit and learning more it was obvious that it was the end of the place as somewhere to which the next generation could return whether visiting or otherwise. This was the end of it. It wasn't just a matter of new industry coming in – that alone is no

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[14] In a personal communication Garavan said the following about language as an aspect of the conflict: "I think that the Irish language may have had some role. It's hard to quite quantify it though. Within the area affected by the project a minority is Irish speaking. However, those speakers do have a sense of themselves as a distinct culture and have a confidence about that. I think as well being Irish-speaking in this part of Ireland leaves one more alienated from the state because nearly all state services are conducted through English." (pers. comm. Garavan Mon 05/11/2007)

problem – but that it would be the end of millennia of culture. For us the cultural aspect was very simple. When people talk about culture it's a page in the Times that on one reads or the Sunday newspaper. But for us it's a different thing, it's all of living, everyday survival. (from Garavan, 2006: 78)

In effect he seems to argue that the type of development being proposed will have such an impact that it will put people in exile from place, which is understood to be made up of people, community, environment, history and culture.

4.2 The Lewis wind farm

The discussion can be extended through the proposal to build a large wind farm on Lewis in the Western Isles of Scotland. In October 2004 a company called Lewis Windpower, a consortium of AMEC and British Energy, submitted a proposal to erect 234 turbines. Following numerous objections the number of turbines was reduced to 181 and a revised proposal was submitted in December 2006. Even at this scale the wind farm would have stretched most of the way from *Bràgar* (Bragar) to *Nis* (Ness) and *Steòrnabhagh* (Stornoway), impacting on nearly 25,000 hectares of moor land.

In April 2008 the Scottish Government reached a decision and rejected the proposal. Many environmental groups and most local people were pleased with the outcome. One survey found that 80% of those living in the communities directly affected were against the development and when the application was considered by the Scottish Government there were 10924 objections and only 98 letters of support.

Concerns regarding the wind-farm's impacts on the local community largely emerged from the people who would have been directly affected. Beyond concerns associated with the construction process and impacts on tourism, there were fears regarding impacts on the culture of the area. Many of these were underpinned by a sense of place and the fear that the development would undermine the many links between the people, culture and the land – exile – was often implicit.

In a leaflet produced by the *Mòinteach gun Mhuileann* – 'Moorland Without Turbines' – one local resident explains the relationship between the community and the landscape.

> Lewis villages stretch inland from the coast through croftland, the peat-cutting areas and out to moorland grazings. You can be in the next village a quarter of a mile along the coast road – but still in your own village five miles out on the moor.

Evidence to support this is easy to find. The local Ordnance Survey map records hundreds of shielings which make up a unique cultural landscape. Names include *Loch Àirigh na h-Aon Oidhche* or 'the loch of the sheiling of one night'. Because of this cultural geography, which can only really be understood by the people who live there, local critics argued that 'the industrialisation of our landscape' threatens 'an intrinsic part of the culture of Lewis'.

Land ownership is an important dimension of this conflict which makes it different to the one in Mayo for historical reasons. In many ways the late 19th century land war

was more successful in Ireland where it resulted in the transfer of land titles to many private owners. In Scotland the land war was settled with crofting legislation which left large estates in the hands of a small number of owners but gave tenants additional rights. Consequently the people resisting the wind farm on Lewis are tenants. That said, the 'Moorland Without Turbines' leaflet makes it clear that local people feel they have a moral if not a legal right to the land:

> Although most of Lewis belongs legally to landlords, the people who live here and who have been here for countless generations believe that the land is morally theirs.

The foundations of this argument are twofold, at least, but both aspects involve place and exile. It builds on historical experience, particularly the clearances, and articulates the close relationship between people and place which continues today and is captured in the idea of *dùthchas*.

4.3 Community land buyouts

Development in this part of the Western Isles took a radical turn after the Lewis wind farm was turned down when the communities on the Galson estate bought out their landlord and took collective ownership of the land. The context for this remarkable development was created by the reestablishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. After centuries of fighting for land rights, this legislation gave crofting communities a right to buy land under crofting tenure. Landlords are not forced to sell their estates but when they put them on the market the community has the right to buy before anyone else (see Mackenzie, 2006 for a discussion). An inscribed stone records the event:

> *B'ann air an là seo*
> *12mh Fhaoilleach 2007*
> *a ghabh muinntir Oighreachd Ghabhsainn*
> *sealbh air an fhearann aca fhein*
>
> On this day
> 12th January 2007
> the people of the Galson Estate
> took ownership of their own land.

This is the most recent addition to an increasingly long list of community land buyouts in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland which suggest an entirely different model of development compared to mega-projects like the Bellanaboy gas terminal or the giant Lewis wind farm. The book which tells the story of the first buyout, the purchase of the North Lochinver Estate by the Assynt Crofters Trust, repeatedly emphasises the history of exile and the importance of place or *dùthchas* (MacAskill, 1999: 24, 198):

> Commodization of land in Assynt in the 1800s led to eviction and dispossession on a large scale and this of itself caused great anguish. But it was not just the fact of dispossession, the physical loss of home and land, that

caused this anguish. The commoditization of land also violated the principle of *dùthchas*.

The crofters had a vision, not just to occupy the lands as tenants, not just to buy their own crofts, but to take managerial control over the estate and, thus, their own future, to take responsibility for the development of their land for the benefit of the community. In a strange twist, then, the commercial potential of the land, which had contributed so much to the violation of *dùthchas* and to the clearances, which had caused the destruction of communities was now something the crofters could use for the benefit of their own community. Indeed one author believes that the success of the Assynt crofters signifies the re-establishment of *dùthchas*.[15]

4.4 Reflections

For many of the land buy-outs in Scotland, including that of *Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn* ('The Galson Estate Trust'), it is too early to assess their achievements (the criteria are likely to be different to those used to assess more orthodox forms of development). That said, it is worth noting that a vision of what might happen in practice already exists in the work of *The Dùthchas Project*. This was a demonstration project funded by the European Union for the period January 1998 – April 2001. Its aim was to "To pilot an affordable, transferable process and framework for addressing sustainable development and integrated land management in peripheral rural areas". Work focused on three pilot areas in the Scottish Highlands and Islands – North Sutherland, the Trotternish Peninsula on the Isle of Skye, and North Uist in the Western Isles. Each area is home to between 1400 and 2000 people and they were chosen for their characteristics of remoteness, economic and social fragility and their important natural and cultural heritage.

Given limited time and resources and longstanding challenges in the contexts within which it worked there were limits to what the *The Dùthchas Project* could achieve but the vision remains in its publications. As the team explain in their final report (Dùthchas Project, 2001: 2).

> The name 'Dùthchas' was chosen carefully, to reflect the central purpose of the work. An historical Gaelic term, Dùthchas speaks of strong, united, self-sufficient communities who actively look after their people, their heritage and their environment – the essence of sustainability

Building on the earlier discussion it is clear that this is a reworking of the term *dùthchas* for modern times, although in a way which is consistent with its older meaning. Community is emphasised as a central issue and elsewhere the project describes in more detail what they believe the key characteristics of a '*dùthchas* community' are (Dùthchas Project, 2000: 1).

- it has a clear and strong identity, and a deep sense of belonging;
- it believes in itself because it has confidence;

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[15] The author referred to here is Dressler (1998).

- it values everybody within, and offers everybody the chance to earn a living through using their individual talents;
- it is the enthusiastic guardian of its surrounding natural inheritance today and tomorrow;
- it delivers local needs locally;
- it is positively engaged in creating its own destiny;
- it responsibly considers the effects of its actions on future generations.

It is also worth noting another contribution to the debate of land ownership in Scotland which has seen progressive potential in crofting communities and which picks up on the themes of place and exile in the modern setting. In a contribution to a recent inquiry into the future of crofting Professor John Bryden (2007) outlined some of the reasons why he thinks western society is unsustainable, including the separation of people from nature, separation of people from centres of decision-making, separation of people from production and work, and the separation of people, community and work from place. These can be understood as aspects of exile but such problems are potentially less significant in crofting communities because of their character, particularly ones which have achieved autonomy through land buy-outs, and to the extent that they remain such communities might be places where these problems could be overcome.

5 Understanding Place and Exile: Imperialism, Development and Environment

The tourist information board on the main street through *Cathair Saidhbhín* (Cahirsiveen) in southwest Kerry summarises key events in local history, provides a sketch map of the area and lists interesting places to visit. In the bottom right hand corner it also displays Sigerson Clifford's famous poem *The Boys of Barr na Sráide* – 'the boys from the top of the street' or 'the boys from Top Street'. Sigerson Clifford was raised locally and returned later in life. *The Boys of Barr na Sráide* recalls life in the village around 1920-21 so it is appropriate that the information board displays it. Four of the verses are valuable in the context of this paper.[16]

<div align="center">

The Boys of Barr na Sráide

O the town it climbs the mountain and looks upon the sea,
And sleeping time or waking 'tis there I long to be,
To walk again that kindly street, the place I grew a man
And the Boys of Barr na Sráide went hunting for the wran.

With cudgels stout they roamed about to hunt for the *dreoilín*.
We searched for birds in every furze from Litir to Dooneen.
We danced for joy beneath the sky, life held no print or plan
When the Boys of Barr na Sráide went hunting for the wran.

And when the hills were bleeding and the rifles were aflame,
To the rebel homes of Kerry the Saxon stranger came,
But the men who dared the Auxies and beat the Black-and-Tan,
Were the Boys of Barr na Sráide hunting for the wran.

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[16] I reproduce verses 1, 2, 3 and 5 of 6.

And now they toil on foreign soil where they have gone their way
Deep in the heart of London town or over in Broadway.
And I am left to sing their deeds and praise them while I can
Those Boys of Barr na Sráide who hunted for the wran.

Sigerson Clifford

The opening verses establish the context of the poem by conjuring up the image of people in place or the condition of being in place. This is particularly clear in the description of a local tradition with pagan origins – hunting for the wren – and use of the Gaelic word for wren which is *dreoilín*. The middle of the poem, however, describes an intervention which changes everything; the arrival of the 'Saxon stranger' in the form of the British army units called the Auxiliaries and the Black and Tans. Although the fight against them is successful, there is a sense that things will never be the same again. In the end the 'the boys from the top of the street' emigrate and become exiles on Broadway and in London.

This poem is valuable starting point in an effort to understand place and exile because it suggests that they become particularly meaningful in the context of imperialism. Here I use the term imperialism in the literal and general sense of 'empire-ism', meaning domination or control of a country or group of people by others.[17] I do not make this argument to target English or British military involvement in Ireland or Scotland specifically but to open up the problem of imperialism in all its forms from colonisation to globalisation.

In this section I develop this point further with the help of Postcolonial Studies literature including recent work on 'green' postcolonialism. I begin by reexaming Gaelic history and culture in the light of imperialism. From this point I move on to explore contemporary imperialism as expressed through ideas of development and environment. This provides a basis on which to analyse the three case studies. I argue that Bellanaboy gas terminal is an example of imperialistic 'development' and that the Lewis wind farm is an imperialistic 'green' development. Community land buyouts are more positive and interesting and might be understood as a postimperial move beyond development and environment

5.1 Imperialism: Exile and Place in Context

It is widely accepted that Gaelic people in Ireland and Scotland have been through a colonial experience. Indeed, Gaels were amongst the first to experience colonialism and many of the policies and processes which would later become synonymous with it emerged in this context first. Although it is unrealistic to identify a series of steps or stages of colonialism it is possible to identify key characteristics or moments, such as the undermining of indigenous institutions, cultural stereotyping and physical occupation. A brief exploration of these will help to establish the context within which place and exile become meaningful.

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[17] The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*

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As early as the 11th century in Scotland Gaelic society was under pressure from Anglo-Norman society. MacInnes (2006c: 96) explains some of the institutional dynamics:

> In 1070 Malcolm III (Mael Coluim Ceannmhor) married Margaret, sister of the claimant to the English throne after the Norman Conquest. Under this regime the Gaelic church – which did not repudiate papal authority as such – was 'Romanised'. This in itself is not of great consequence. What is of the utmost importance is that the reorganisation of the clergy, instigated by Queen Margaret, deliberately displaced one language and substituted another. English-speaking clerics were introduced; English-dominated trade was encouraged; there was an influx of English and Anglo-Norman families of high social status; and, in general, there was a replacement of Gaelic personnel in ecclesiastical and judicial positions... The plain fact is that during the reign of Malcolm and Margaret what has been described as a shift to an English way-of-life was deliberately planned and, as far as possible, implemented. The court became English and Norman-French in speech and the loss of status which that entailed for Gaelic in Scotland was profound and permanent.

Changes like these had significant cultural impacts and ultimately allowed a stereotype of Gaelic people to emerge which suggested they were uncivilised and backward. Writing in the late 1380s, John Fordum provided one of the earliest descriptions of an 'aboriginal' people (see MacInnes, 2006c: 100), something that would become a feature of colonialism around the world in the centuries to come.

Institutional changes and cultural stereotyping were often followed by more violent and destructive colonial policies. An obvious step change in the nature of imperialism arrived with the confiscation of land and the policy of 'plantation'. In Ireland, from the 16th century onwards this led to great swaths of land being transferred from Gaelic to English ownership. In the 1550s the estates of the rebellious O'Mores and O'Connors in Laois and Offaly – later renamed Queen's County and King's County – were seized and planted. Plantations followed in the counties of Limerick, Kerry and Monaghan in the mid-Elizabethan period. The most historically significant plantation, the plantation of Ulster, began soon after ' the flight of the Earls' in 1607. This policy was not limited to Ireland, however. The Kintyre peninsula was planted from the 1650s with the native Gaelic speaking population being displaced by lowland Scots.

The replacement of existing governing institutions, negative cultural stereotypes and the extension of formal control over Gaelic territory cleared the way for the full range of 'ethnocidal policies' – to use John MacInnes's term. In 1609, for example, the Scottish Parliament, through the Statutes of Icolmkill, provided for the suppression of Gaelic bards and education in English of the sons of Gentlemen. Previously the upper classes had been educated in Classical Gaelic. In 1616 the Privy Council passed an act (confirmed by Parliament in 1631) in favour of the removal of the 'Irish' language in the Highlands and Islands (MacInnes, 2006c: 105). The Education Act of 1872 made school attendance compulsory, with no provision of Gaelic language, and therefore marked the end of Gaelic education in voluntary schools. As MacInnes (2006c: 116) remarks, from that point on 'education and English became synonymous'. Policies like these led Alexander MacDonald in the 18th century to

refer to *mìorum mór nan Gall* or 'the great ill-wind and hostility of the Lowlanders' (MacInnes, 2006a: 14).

It is in this context of imperialism that place and exile resonate and become closely linked. To explore how this happened I will begin by outlining MacInnes's (2006d and e) seminal analysis of the 'panegyric code in Gaelic poetry'. After that I will turn to Postcolonial Studies literature where the impact of the colonial experience around the world has been explored in detail.

The panegyric code is the tradition and architecture of praise in Gaelic poetry which emerged in the medieval period. Its central feature is that the subject of the poem is eulogised, particularly clan chiefs and clan allies who occupy the heart of the system. MacInnes (2006d and e) shows that the panegyric code emerged as the threats to Gaelic society mounted and poets increasingly felt the need to reaffirm its important aspects. This is seen clearly in heroic elegies which were composed at moments of crisis brought about by the death of clan leaders. The panegyric code praised those qualities and values that were understood as necessary for the survival of the clan or Gaeldom in general as they saw it. As MacInnes (2006d: 170) says:

> The conventions of panegyric became a pervasive style. The style in turn reflects an attitude towards the world, which is regarded intellectually in terms of praise versus dispraise. Through genealogy it works into love poetry, it extends also to nature poetry, evoking a sense of friendly and unfriendly territory; in short, it bears the Gaelic sense of social psychology, of history, of geography.

Although clan chiefs and clan allies were at the centre of the panegyric code it extended to the land and *dùthchas*. The 19th century was particularly significant because in this period profound changes severed the link between clan and clan chiefs thus increasing the relative importance of the land and *dùthchas*. MacInnes (2006d: 171-172) refers to it as 'the bitter century of the Clearances, when the chaos that the break-up of any traditional society produces was intensified beyond endurance in the bewilderment of a people attacked by their own natural leaders'. In a culture where 'genealogy had been the opiate of the people', and clan chiefs had occupied the centre of the panegyric code, they quickly began to see themselves as private land owners who could evict their tenants.

MacInnes is far from uncritical of the panegyric code. At times, he argues, it produces in-bred poetry typical of a society which has become inward looking. At other times it descends into the merely sentimental. He also acknowledges that praise is a theme in poetry elsewhere so there is a danger of reading too much into Gaelic evidence. That said, he also argues that:

> ... unless we see these rhetorical codes (of which panegyric is only one, though in my view the dominant one) in the setting of Gaelic history, we get a very limited picture. (MacInnes, 2006e: 315)

MacInnes's arguments are important here because they help to explain how place and exile became linked in the context of imperialism. In general, as MacInnes (2006e) observes, Gaels have faced a world of sharply contrasting alternatives for

hundreds of years, between collaboration and resistance, place and exile and so on. This has been the dialectic of their history which never seems to resolve itself into an acceptable synthesis.

Our understanding of exile and place can be extended further with the help of Postcolonial Studies literature. This is particularly the case for *Ó Conaire* and his book *Deoraíocht* or *Exile*. Although his focus is Ireland and its people, *Ó Conaire* can be located within the broader tradition of Postcolonial Studies and in many ways anticipates it. Many postcolonial writers have tried to understand the loss of a sense of self which accompanies colonisation. In *Ó Conaire's* story it is significant that *Mícheál's* question '*Nach fear mé?*' or 'Am I not a man?' is directed particularly at the circus master who in this case represents the colonial power. Some argue that in order to survive cultural domination and colonialism – including its violence – people sacrificed their identity and took on that of the coloniser and so participated in their subjugation. Frantz Fanon, the influential French-Algerian writer, describes people colluding in their own oppression as a form of neurosis. The titles of his books – *Black Face, White Masks* and *Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1967) – capture this perfectly. The Gaelic people of Ireland and Scotland have been through this experience and at times it seems that their collective cultural consciousness has almost entirely collapsed as a result. They have this in common with other people around the world who have experienced colonisation and emigration.

5.2 Exile and Place Today: Imperialism, Development and Environment

Over time the nature of imperialism has changed. One example is the phenomena of 'internal colonialism' where rural and peripheral communities in decolonised countries have become targets for the imperial policies of their own governments. In recent years processes of internal colonialism have been given additional momentum by the new imperialism of neo-liberal globalisation in the context of which national governments collaborate with global businesses again at the expense of peripheral communities. As Adams and Mulligan (2003: 6) argue, "The process of political decolonization was therefore overtaken by globalization and neo-colonialism, making the transition to post-colonial societies complex and messy." In this section I revisit MacKenzie's (1998) analysis of the super-quarry that was proposed for *Lingreabhagh* on Harris in the Western Isles to show how exile and place become relevant again in this new context of imperialism.

In March 1991 Redland Aggregate Limited submitted a planning application for a super-quarry at *Lingreabhagh* on Harris in the Western Isles. Their plan was to extract 600 million tonnes of rock from the mountain of *Roineabhal* and to export it by bulk carrier from a new port facility. After 60 years this would leave a hole in the ground 2 km long and 1 km wide rising from 180 m below sea level to 370 m above it. The stated objective was to meet the demand for aggregate in England and beyond. Controversially, 'remote coastal superquarries' in Scotland had been identified as a source of aggregates after policy makers concluded that aggregates removed from England and Wales were causing 'unacceptable damage to the environment'.

Many of the imperial aspects of this proposal can be uncovered by exploring the ideas and assumptions of those involved in relation to development and the

environment. Redland Aggregate Limited characterised *Na Hearadh* as remote and underdeveloped, having 'a very limited and fragile economy, with no other hope of significant improvement in sight.' The traditional practice of crofting was dismissed as 'economically unviable' and the weaving of Harris tweed as subject to the 'vagaries of fashion'. Sources of income like tourism and tele-working were described as 'vague' and 'fanciful'. In contrast, they argued, the super-quarry would bring growth and progress through jobs and economic activity.

It was clear that the super-quarry would have profound impacts on the environment of Harris but those proposing it argued that any impacts should be seen in the context of a landscape that was not of a high value anyway. At the same time any negative environmental consequences could be measured and managed. A range of experts were used to make these arguments on apparently rational and objective grounds, including a geologist, ecologist, planner and various environmental consultants. With respect to both development and environment it is clear that value judgments of different kinds were central although experts and expert knowledge were deployed in ways which drew attention away from this.

Those opposed to the model of development associated with the superquarry emphasised the nature of wellbeing and livelihoods in crofting communities. [18] Crofting, it was pointed out, involves a wide range of traditional skills, knowledge and activities. The *Roineabhal* range provides peat, fresh water, grazing, salmon and trout in the lochs, and shellfish in the coastal waters. Providing accommodation for tourists is also an increasingly important source of income. Potentially the superquarry could put many traditional practices at risk and it could hardly be expected to increase tourist numbers. At the same time people emphasised important aspects of culture and lessons from history. Specific aspects of the local culture would might be put in jeopardy by incoming workers included the Gaelic language and the sanctity of the Sabbath. In history many local people detected a tendency for places like *Na Hearadh* to be viewed as locations which simply respond to policy agendas which emerge elsewhere and that these rarely help the region over the long term.

The way the environment was represented by those opposing the superquarry was also quite different to those in favour. To local residents the area is known simply as *na Bàigh* or 'Bays'. The hilly area inland is *Bràigh nam Bàgh* or 'upland of the bays'. Passing over the high-point and down the other side leads to the west coast which is known as *a' Mhachair* or 'machair land' after the fertile grassland which fringes the white sandy beaches. Supporters of the superquarry emphasised the small percentage of the mountain of *Roineabhal* that would be removed, the limited percentage area of Harris from which the quarry would be visible, and the absence of official UK or European conservation designations. Critics argued that *na Bàigh* and *a' Mhachair* and all the land between were part of single landscape which could not be divided into parts and did not derive its meaning and importance from designations given to it from outside. They also emphasised the important

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[18] It is worth noting that the categories 'development' and 'environment' are less helpful for analysing the case against the super-quarry because it often linked or went beyond them. This shows how conventional categories themselves can have imperialistic aspects. In fact, both of these ideas have their origins in the colonial period or shortly after.

relationship between people and place, thus undermining the idea of an external environment which should be understood primarily through expert knowledge.

To begin with local opinion was divided on the super-quarry, although it hardened against the proposal over time. *Comhairle nan Eilean Siar* (the Western Isles Council) initially supported it but changed their position towards the end of the Public Inquiry. When it came to an end in June 1995 its recommendations were passed on to the Scottish Executive. Finally, in November 2000 the Minister for Environment, Sport and Culture (including responsibility for Planning) turned down the application for the superquarry. Various disputes rumbled on but in April 2004 Lafarge – which had taken control of Redland Aggregrates Ltd – decided to withdraw the 1991 application and drop their proposals for the site.

For our purposes the case is important because it illustrates some of the mechanisms of contemporary imperialism. Imperialism in this case was driven forward by the need for aggregates in the economic core of the country. Peripheral regions were seen as a suitable place from which to gather these. Narrow and orthodox understandings of development were used in an effort to justify the project and convince local people of its merits. Expertise and technical knowledge, for example associated with environmental management, were deployed alongside value judgments about the quality of the landscape. As MacKenzie (1998: 528-529) (see also Dalby and MacKenzie, 1997) says in relation to the super-quarry case:

> The power of Redland Aggregate Limited's discourse, its claim to authority, lay in its presentation as self-evident what might otherwise be construed as deeply political... Sustainable development became a thinly veiled means of extending corporate interest and the interests of private property.

In response the historical experience of exile and the unique multi-dimensional nature of place provided resources for resistance and helped to raise wider questions. As Mackenzie (2002: 545) says elsewhere, 'This notion [of *dùthchas*] is of central significance in a discourse of resistance to processes of dispossession'.

5.3 Analysing the Case Studies

The conflicts surrounding the Bellanaboy gas terminal and the Lewis wind farm make more sense in the context. For some people with Gaelic heritage the ideas of place and exile help to articulate hundreds of years of culture and history in which imperialism in many different forms has played a significant role. Exile captures processes and threats which continue today and place is the articulation of what is important and potentially the basis of a vision for the future.

In relation to the Bellanaboy gas terminal the dynamics of imperialism have been outlined articulately by *Micheál Ó Seighin* (one of the Rossport 5). He draws attention to the postcolonial nature of Ireland and the imperialistic character of multinational companies.

> It never occurred to them [Shell] that they would have to deal with the people of the area. Because they had all their dealing done. Their dealing was only done, as in any post-colonial country, on the level of those in charge... That's

who they were used to dealing with wherever they were, whether in East Timor or Nigeria. They dealt with the post-colonial establishment as they would have seen it. Maybe they never analysed it like that. But that's how they would have seen how things work. Our establishment may be post-colonial but we are not. (from Garavan, 2006: 61-62)

As Garavan (2007: 853) says elsewhere about the conflict over the Bellanaboy gas terminal:

> The collective action undertaken by these local activists... was regarded by them as motivated by a desire to defend their 'place' from a mode of development imposed by outside actors.

To illustrate the view from the metropolitan centre of Dublin, which suggests a simplistic argument between pro- and anti-development, it is worth quoting Ireland's Sunday Independent journalist Liam Collins. In 2005 he wrote of the

> ...bleak landscape of north Mayo where people would rather stay idle and rear their families on welfare handouts from taxpayers further east than embrace a 900m gas project and all the spin-off industries it could bring... turf cutting peasants who would rather be pure and export our children to estates of suburban Dublin, London or New York, than grow up and start living in the third millennium.

In many ways the Lewis windfarm proposal is a more problematic case because it involved the construction of renewable energy infrastructure. In the context contemporary debates about climate change it is more difficult to analyse imperialism here. The imperative is so great that it is easy to dismiss critical concerns. In practice, however, imperialism is involved and the spectre of an ecological form of contemporary imperialism means that it is perhaps even more important to analyse it.

To understand the nature of ecological imperialism it is important to realise how the perception of land which was depopulated by the Famine and the Clearances has changed. In Scotland, when it was no longer profitable to use the land for raising sheep, it was redefined in cultural processes known as 'Highlandism' and 'Balmoralism'. The result was to recast the landscape as a romantic or recreational wilderness in which people could enjoy nature and pursue bloodsports. Although Gaelic people with legitimate claims to the land still lived there they found themselves nativized or cast as unwelcome residents in what might otherwise be a wilderness. In *The Other Side of Sorrow* the historian James Hunter shows how some modern conservationists, often inspired by the transcendental environmentalism of John Muir, have worked within this vision and helped to extend it.

Today in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland sciences of all kinds are being deployed, particularly in relation to conservation agendas to categorise the land as appropriate for protection. Toogood (2003: 162-163) has highlighted the imperialistic nature of conservation science and pointed out the significance of place as resistance:

The issue of place is quite central to this decolonizing framing because, in the Gaelic culture of the Highlands and Islands, place and land are central to identity formation and reproduction. Place does not become a particular issue until powerful forces, such as the legal, technical discourse of institutional conservation, represent place as natural space through a process of survey, evaluation and designation. The social content of these places in then disengaged from their location by scientific representations and designations. The scientific and partitioning approach of nature conservation, although underlain by a complex of motives than are non-scientific, can be contrasted with the Gaelic Highland tradition of poetry and song as being too self-aware, too distant from such heritage. The designation of space into ordered categories, such as SSSIs and National Nature Reserves (NNRs), and giving account of nature in conceptual terms such as biodiversity, sustainability and even conservation itself, lacks connection with the immediate experience of nature in the context of this culture.

The Lewis wind farm case study illustrates how climate change and renewable energy can underpin another form of ecological imperialism, in this case one that is supported by atmospheric sciences, energy models and so on. In her analysis of the Harris super-quarry proposal Fiona Mackenzie records the comment of a local resident who identifies successive waves of interventions over hundreds of years – 'the cheviot, the stag and the white, white, white rock'. This comment links the clearances for sheep, the introduction of stags and the proposal to quarry the rock for aggregate and implies that the same dynamics have been operating across time. To this list, in relation to ecological imperialism, we might add the birds and the wind.

The significance of community land buyouts now becomes clear. Fiona Mackenzie (2006b: 579) argues that they are '...visible evidence of a place-based movement in the Highlands and Islands antithetical to dominant discourses of globalisation.' This is true but they may also represent an overcoming of imperialism to the extent that this is possible. By removing land from the global real-estate market and handing control to communities the possibility is created of people beginning to define their own futures. As mentioned above MacInnes observes that for hundreds of years Gaelic history has been a dialectic which never seems to reach an acceptable synthesis. Perhaps community land buyouts are one example of such a synthesis.

6 Conclusion

In this paper I have shown that it is possible to derive insights from Gaelic culture and history and to use them to understand conflicts over environment and development today. Some familiarity with Gaeldom suggests that the themes of place and exile help to explain the lives and experiences of the people, particularly those on the west coasts of Ireland and Scotland who continue to live in Gaelic speaking communities. In Gaelic these can be understood through the concepts of *dùthchas* and *deoraíocht*. Gaelic history also suggests that these concepts become particularly meaningful in relation to imperialism, particularly processes of displacement and dispossession in relation to the land. Place and exile continue to be important today and thus help us to understand contemporary imperialism, including internal colonialism and what might be termed ecological imperialism.

To conclude this discussion I want to describe different ways of linking imperialism and sustainability which can be derived. The first relationship, *imperialism as a cause of unsustainable development*, is clear. It can be argued on many levels that the Bellanaboy gas terminal in Mayo and the super-quarry which was proposed for Harris are examples of this. Regardless of whether or not this is the case, however, the category itself remains and is defensible. The second relationship is *the imperative of 'sustainable development' as imperialism*. Arguably the giant wind-farm which was proposed for Lewis in the Western Isles is an example of this. Given the increasingly hegemonic nature of the sustainable development debate, and its reduction to the problem of climate change, communities will find it more and more difficult – although not impossible – to resist such projects. The third and final relationship is *the possibility of sustainability beyond imperialism or post-imperial sustainability*. This hints at a more meaningful way of operationalising sustainable development. In the context of Gaelic history and culture community land buyouts in Scotland and the vision of sustainable development outlined by the *The Dùthchas Project* begin to give us an idea of what this might mean in practice – from exile back into place.

The desire to control the land and resources of other peoples and countries in order to enrich or safeguard the core is a defining characteristic of imperialism. The exploitation of resources which has usually accompanied imperial involvement in Gaelic Ireland and Scotland was captured in the 17th century by *Aogán Ó Rathaile* in his poem *Cabhair ní Ghairfead* ('No Help I'll Call') discussed above. It includes the lines *ár bhfonn, ár bhfothain, ár monga 's ár mínchóngair / i ngeall le pinginn ag foirinn ó chrích Dhóbhair* or 'Our land, our shelter, our woods and our level ways / are pawned for a penny by a crew from the land of Dover.' Today the nature of interventions and resources are different, ranging from natural gas to the wind, but analogous processes continue to operate.

Taking a critical stand on these issues and raising the spectre of imperialism is important today because it opens a space for questioning orthodox views. This is a well recognised characteristic of Postcolonial Studies which I have drawn on in this paper. Imperialism in practice today relies on orthodox categories like 'development' and 'environment' and accepted understandings of what these are. Questioning imperialism, particularly with the help of an alternative historical and cultural standpoint, leads to many assumptions being recast as questions. What is development? What is the environment? Who has the power to answer these questions and to pursue their vision? These are the deeper questions that arise with sustainability and any meaningful effort to pursue it must involve seeking meaningful rather than orthodox answers.

Acknowledgements

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