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# The Highland Clearances and the Politics of Memory

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THE HIGHLAND CLEARANCES AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

by

Daniel G. Brown

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ABSTRACT  
THE HIGHLAND CLEARANCES AND POLITICS OF MEMORY

by

Daniel G. Brown

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2014  
Under the Supervision of Professor Andrew Kincaid

This dissertation explores the ways that the Highland Clearances of Scotland have entered into public consciousness through primary and secondary sources. My dissertation argues first that the Highland Clearances fall within the sphere of colonial intervention, and secondly that there exists a robust body of cultural production that reflects the postcolonial nature of the Highlands. This cultural production is the subject of my dissertation, which examines primary and secondary histories, historical novels, drama and public memorials that preserve and reconstruct the memory of the Clearances. The first chapter examines a number of primary and secondary histories of the Highland Clearances. The first sections focus primarily on Eric Richards' *The Highland Clearances* (2000), John Prebble's book, also called *The Highland Clearances* (1963), and Michael Fry's *Wild Scots* (2005). The chapter concludes by examining several primary histories, primarily the writings of James Loch and Patrick Seller, two estate managers who oversaw clearances on the Sutherland estate. Chapter two focuses on three historical novels set during the Clearances: Neil Gunn's *The Butcher's Broom* (1934), Iain Crichton Smith's *Consider the Lilies* (1968), and Fionn MacColla's *And the Cock Crew* (1945). Throughout this chapter, I argue that these three novels constitute a postcolonial literature invested in identifying the colonial forces at work during the

Clearances. The third chapter focuses on the work of John McGrath, particularly his play *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*. My final chapter considers the ways that the Clearances have been remembered in public memorials and museum installations. The chapter begins with a discussion of the Emigrants Memorial erected in Helmsdale, on the northeast coast and the statue of the First Duke of Sutherland in Golspie. The second section of the final chapter considers the ways that the Clearances have been represented in the National Museum of Scotland and at the Strathnaver Museum. The final section of the fourth chapter examines the memorial that emerged at Croick as a result of the clearance of Glencalvie in 1845.

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## Introduction

Historian Eric Richards writes that “The Highland Clearances is one of the sorest, most painful, themes in modern Scottish history” (3). That the “passionate indignation lives on, swollen rather than weakened by the passage of time. A rage against past iniquities has been maintained, fed by popular historians and every variety of media construction” (3). These Highland Clearances that Richards refers to were the forced relocation of the Highland lower classes as land use in the Highlands shifted from subsistence to capitalist ventures. Most displaced Highlanders were moved to make room for commercial sheep farming, as Cheviot sheep were introduced throughout the Highlands. Clearances took many forms; some involved just a few tenants, while others displaced whole villages, even entire valleys, at once. During the most sensationalized clearances,<sup>1</sup> hundreds of poor Highlanders were evicted *en masse*. Homes were sometimes burned to keep former residents from returning, and the heather on the hillsides set alight to encourage growth of new grass for the grazing of sheep. Some displaced Highlanders were given new plots or homes elsewhere on their landlord’s estate; others weren’t so lucky, as they were simply cast adrift to fend for themselves. Evicted tenants carried away their few possessions to start a new life on the coast or across the sea. The majority of the evicted Highlanders were removed to make way for large-scale sheep farming. The Clearances began around the final third of the 18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I follow the convention of Richards and other scholars in capitalizing the word “Clearance” when it refers to the “Highland Clearances” as a proper noun, but using the lower case “clearance” in reference to the act of eviction itself.

century and continued until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period “several tens of thousands” (323) of people were evicted from their homes.

The Highland Clearances have continued to spur a “rage against past iniquities” in popular opinion, academic discussion and political posturing. Class exploitation is perhaps the most obvious point of entry into debate about the Clearances. Owners of large estates were clearly far wealthier than peasant farmers who leased plots from them. At their most basic level, the Clearances entailed exploitation of the poor by the rich. Wealthy land owners used their power and capital to brush aside those with fewer resources. In the process, the wealthy expropriated land that had been providing subsistence for the lower classes of society. While many landlords responsible for the Clearances held the title of clan chief, few were involved with their clan in any social or cultural way. Mostly these were absentee landlords living in Glasgow, Edinburgh, or London. By the time the Clearances became widespread most landlords were alienated from their tenants, not just because of class differences, but because of cultural differences. Landlords assimilated into cosmopolitan aristocratic society and spoke English, while their tenants still spoke Gaelic and lived an essentially subsistence lifestyle. Along with serious questions about class exploitation, cultural differences between the exploiter and the exploited raise the specter of cultural antagonism within the Clearances. This clash of cultures demands that we consider the extent to which Gaelic tenants were specifically targeted by their English speaking landlords.

The Highland Clearances embody a complex dynamic of class, cultural, and economic factors, and the potential for many fruitful lines of inquiry. One such line is whether the Highland Clearances can be understood in the context of colonialism. In

their seminal work *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write that inclusion of Scotland within the colonial discussion has been hedged and qualified amid a sense that “complicity in the British imperial enterprise makes it difficult for colonized peoples outside of Britain to accept their identity as post colonial [*sic*]” (33). While Scotland may not be as obviously post-colonial as sites in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, it does bear significant similarities. Similarities are particularly evident in the historically Gaelic speaking regions. In his famous work *Internal Colonialism*, Michael Hechter writes of a “colonial incursion of England into the Celtic lands” (343) reinforced by “English military and political control in the peripheral regions [...] buttressed by a racist ideology” (342). Hechter’s internal colonial model posits that the colonial process functions just as insidiously within national borders as it does when crossing them. The culturally distinct Gaelic speaking regions—predominantly the Highlands and Islands—were being systematically exploited by the British imperial system; the Highland Clearances are an example *par excellence* of this incursion into the peripheral regions of Britain. Though this exploitation didn’t cross sovereign boundaries, it was a form of colonialism nonetheless. British imperial intervention was particularly evident in the aftermath of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, which led parliament to pass the 1746 Act of Proscription. This Act banned Highland dress and the keeping of weapons by Highlanders. It also prompted a military occupation of the Highlands during which historian Magnus Magnusson claims “Hanoverian dragoons slaughtered fugitive clansmen and innocent bystanders alike” (622).

The example of the Highland Clearances provides an opportunity to examine the limits of the colonial experience. My dissertation argues first that the Highland

Clearances fall within the sphere of colonial intervention, and secondly that there exists a robust body of cultural production that reflects the postcolonial nature of the Highlands. This cultural production is the subject of my dissertation, which examines primary and secondary histories, historical novels, drama and public memorials that preserve and reconstruct the memory of the Clearances. There are two specific ways that I see my dissertation intervening in the academic conversation. The first is by questioning the limits of our understanding of the colonial experience. The second is that through examination of both primary and secondary representations of the Clearances I work to expand on Michael Hechter's "internal colonial model" by more carefully examining the cultural antagonisms that compounded the internal colonial process within Britain. In order to make more porous the rigidities of criticism that looks skeptically on Scotland and the Highlands as postcolonial sites, I also trace how the experience of this colonial intervention has been memorialized in a diverse body of cultural production, arguing that this work presents a robust document of colonialism in the Highlands.

The first chapter of my dissertation examines a number of primary and secondary histories of the Highland Clearances. The first sections focus primarily on Eric Richards' *The Highland Clearances* (2000), John Prebble's book, also called *The Highland Clearances* (1963), and Michael Fry's *Wild Scots* (2005). Richards, Prebble and Fry take quite different approaches to their treatment of the Clearances. Their differences typify debates within the larger body of Clearances scholarship. Prebble, a novelist and journalist, focuses on a narrative of trauma and loss, and displays a deeply romantic attachment to Highland history. Condemning the actions of landlords, Prebble places the Clearances within the colonial realm, writing that "during the military occupation of the

glens, the British government first defeated a tribal uprising and then destroyed the society that made it possible. The exploitation of the country during the next hundred years was within the same pattern of colonial development” (304). Richards takes a more balanced approach based on extensive study of primary historical documents, but draws a similar conclusion to Prebble, writing that the “Highlands of Scotland were transformed as much as any colony in the Empire in that age, fully incorporated into the role of supplying the metropolitan economy, and routed by the forces of change” (327).

Journalist Michael Fry, whose *Wild Scots* appeared in 2005, takes an instrumentalist approach to the history of the Clearances, arguing from a neo-liberal perspective that, though they may have caused moments of trauma, the Clearances were ultimately beneficial because they helped “Highlanders take their place on the same footing as everyone else—in Britain, in Europe, in North America and now in the Orient too—in the modern, liberal, individualist, capitalist order” (320). I argue that Fry’s position is an ideological extension of the logic of capitalist expansion that gave rise to the Clearances in the first place. I illustrate the ways that Fry has crafted his interpretation to support his political agenda, ignoring or misreading the historical record where it suits his purpose. I argue that the historical record points towards colonial domination of the Highlands rather than Fry’s claim that the Clearances liberated the Highlanders by introducing free market capitalism.

The first chapter concludes by examining several primary histories that support my oppositional reading of Fry’s *Wild Scots*. This section focuses on the writings of James Loch and Patrick Seller, two estate managers who oversaw clearances on the Sutherland estate. Specifically, I expose the colonial rhetoric embedded in Loch and

Sellar's work, which suggests that Highlanders are lazy, have criminal tendencies, and need to be moved for their own benefit. One such example is in Loch's *An Account of the Improvements on the Estates of the Marquess of Stafford* (1820), which says of the Sutherland people that "the great proportion of their time, when not in the pursuit of [poaching] game or of illegal distillation, was spent in indolence and sloth" (51). Within these primary histories we also see clear evidence of cultural antagonisms, such as when Loch writes that "the co-existence of the two languages is impossible [...] the progress of the English language must be rapid and irresistible" (44), while Sellar contends that Gaelic speakers were "bred in a country of sloth and idleness the sons of Highland tenants and whisky smugglers" (184). The rhetoric that Loch and Sellar use to denigrate and dehumanize Gaelic speaking Highlanders is the language of colonial righteousness. Literary critic Douglas Mack equates the "dehumanisation [*sic*] of Highland Scotland and Highland Scots" (91) with the type of "dehumanization of Africa and Africans" that Achebe identified in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (89). Although both Sellar and Loch portray themselves as benevolent improvers, I argue that their rhetoric betrays their true motives: profit and promotion of civilization.

Chapter two focuses on three historical novels set during the Clearances: Neil Gunn's *The Butcher's Broom* (1934), Iain Crichton Smith's *Consider the Lilies* (1968), and Fionn MacColla's *And the Cock Crew* (1945). Throughout this chapter, I argue that these three novels constitute a postcolonial literature invested in identifying the colonial forces at work during the Clearances, and examining the effects of the Clearances on Highland identity. To begin the chapter, I examine the perception of colonial influence as it's expressed in each of the novels, arguing that the narrative of these novels fills

some of the empty spaces left in the colonial story of Scotland. Specifically they narrate the perception and experience of colonial intervention from within the Highlands in a way absent from other treatments of the subject. For example, in *And the Cock Crew*, MacColla writes that “England does not now lead armies against us [...] The day she looks for [...] is the day there will be Albannaich no longer who speak our language or remember the way of their forefathers and the things that belong to their nation: for that day she will have our country, we can never rise again” (126). The experience of the Clearances was not merely that of eviction, but also of cultural loss and forced assimilation. Each of these novels builds its narrative around the experience of eviction as a mode of colonial intervention, creating a powerful anti-colonial literature.

I then show how the Church functions as an “ideological state apparatus,” an institution which according to Louis Althusser “teaches ‘know-how’, but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology*” (133). A striking similarity between these three novels is their indictment of the church as an insidious agent of state control. In *Consider the Lilies*, the minister, asked by one of his parishioners to help forestall impending eviction, denies the request, instead asking “Have you ever thought that this came as a punishment for their sins” (74)? In *And the Cock Crew*, MacColla’s minister encourages his flock to comply with the demands of the colonial power shouting “‘The wrath of God is on you!’ [...] ‘Submit! Submit!’” (11-12). Dramatic accounts of the Church’s complicity in the Clearances are no mere fiction. Religious historian Douglas Ansdell writes “the Church emphasized the rights of property, encouraged the people to set their hopes on a spiritual homeland and to regard their troubles as a result of their own sinfulness” (157). I argue that the complicity of the Church throughout the Clearances

points to a complex, orchestrated system of ideological control that helped insure the continued dominance of the oppressors over the oppressed.

Finally, I examine these novels through the lens of Homi Bhabha's notion of the unhomely, which suggests that "The unhomely is the shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world" ("Home" 141), and that this experience of unhomely alienation is "a paradigmatic post-colonial experience" ("Home" 142). Throughout this section I trace the ways that the unhomely experience, this "shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world," shapes the identity of the characters in the novels, undermining sovereignty over their domestic space. I argue that these unhomely experiences provide further evidence that the novels under consideration constitute a body of postcolonial literature, and that the postcolonial identity created through the alienation of the unhomely continues to undermine Scottish identity.

My third chapter focuses on the work of John McGrath, particularly his play *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*. Written and first performed in 1973, *The Cheviot* dramatizes the history of the Highlands beginning with the Clearances and concluding with the discovery of North Sea oil. Throughout the play McGrath argues that the history of exploitation, displacement and disenfranchisement in the Highlands can all be traced to the same forces of capitalist expansion. While I place McGrath's work within my larger argument that the Clearances are an episode of colonial expansion, I broaden my focus here to consider the political implications of the Clearances in the twentieth century.

The first section of chapter three explores the political and ideological disjuncture that emerged from the opposing socialist and nationalist readings of McGrath's work.



The first performance of *The Cheviot* was at the 1973 convention of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP). McGrath was reluctant to accept the invitation to perform because he and his theater company were “not nationalists, and would attack bourgeois nationalism” (“The Year” xxvi). Rather, McGrath described himself as “a theatre-maker who is not only socialist but also committed [...] to presenting perspectives on our society that do *not* point to the greater glory of the capitalist system” (*Bone 2*). Despite McGrath’s socialist agenda his work was routinely interpreted in nationalist terms. Historian Christopher Harvie sums up the disconnect writing that “*The Cheviot* was the highlight of the SNP’s conference” and speculating that “for every one of McGrath’s audience who was converted to his own Marxist position, ten saw the confrontation in national rather than class terms” (186). I argue that this disjuncture typifies the ways that the legacy of the Clearances has been appropriated in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as activists have attempted to harness the “rage against past iniquities” to further their own political interests.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the problematic relationship of McGrath to the history that he appropriates to further his political agenda. As McGrath points out, “I’m English for Christ’s Sake, or Irish” (“Silver Darlings” 156). Not only was McGrath English, but he was Oxford educated and fairly affluent. The history that he appropriated was not his own. McGrath wrote from within the dominant culture while claiming the history of the Clearances to advance his politics. I explore the implications of the disconnect between McGrath’s relative position of privilege and the history instrumental to his work. McGrath himself acknowledged that initially his work was “a bit imperialist, in the sense that here we were, parachuting in from London and trying to

say to Scottish audiences ‘be involved in this, this is part of you’” (“Silver Darlings” 151). Although McGrath argued that he resolved the imperialist aspect of his work by involving Scots in his theater company and soliciting their input in his composition process, I contend that his appropriation of Highland history can be viewed as another mode of the very exploitation that he decries in *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*.

My final chapter shifts focus. It considers the ways that the Clearances have been remembered in public memorials and museum installations. The chapter begins with a discussion of the Emigrants Memorial erected in Helmsdale, on the northeast coast. The memorial consists of a ten foot statue depicting a family being cleared from their home, an interpretive plaque, and six flagpoles flying the flags of the nations that cleared Highlanders emigrated to in the greatest numbers. This memorial was the compromised final result of a much more ambitious plan, meant to erect a “statue, or clearance icon [...] about 120 ft high with the statue forming the top 30ft, supported by a 90ft spiral plinth in the form of an ancient hill fort” (“Clearances Project”). The planned epic monument was supposed to be accompanied by a heritage center projected to “create an international focal point for the commemoration of the Clearances [...] initially attracting 35,000 visitors each year by the fifth year of operation, with an ultimate target of 100,000 visitors per year” (“Clearances Project”). The Clearances Centre project was conceived as a counterpoint to the enormous statue of the First Duke of Sutherland erected several miles down the coast in 1834. The First Duke of Sutherland was the architect of many clearances, and his statue, known pejoratively as the Wee Mannie, has become the target of numerous vandals and a focal point of continuing outrage about the Clearances. While

the failed Clearances Project was clearly intended to memorialize, it was also intended as a commercial venture, and, I argue, another in a long line of attempts to exploit the Highlands.

The second section of my final chapter considers the ways that the Clearances have been represented in two museums. First I discuss the treatment in the National Museum of Scotland (NMS), in which the Clearances are only paid a passing glance as part the “Industry and Empire” collection, in an exhibit called “Scotland and the World.” I contrast the cursory treatment at NMS, which presents the Clearances as part of the inevitable process of economic development, with the treatment at the Strathnaver Museum which takes great care to illustrate the distinct culture that was undermined by the Clearances. I argue that the different treatments of the Clearances are symptomatic of the postcolonial experience; whereas the National Museum, situated in the metropole, far from the site of colonial intervention is interested in creating a national rhetoric of inclusion, the regional museum, situated in a community deeply affected by the Clearances is far more interested in reproducing the identity of the culture that was subverted by the colonial process. The treatment at NMS justifies the exploitation of the periphery by the center, while the Strathnaver Museum laments the cultural erosion of the process.

The final section of the fourth chapter examines the memorial that emerged at Croick as a result of the clearance of Glencalvie in 1845. After being evicted from their homes, many cleared Glencalvie residents took refuge in the nearby churchyard. While encamped there, several of the evicted residents scratched messages into the glass of the east window. Among the etchings are phrases such as “Glencalvie tenants residing here,”

“The Glencalvie tenants reside in the Kirkyard in May 24 1845,” “John Ross 1845,” “This house is needing repair,” and “Glencalvie people the wicked generation.” The etchings on the window have been preserved, and the church has become a focal point for memorialization of the Clearances. The etchings both bear witness to the moment of clearance, drawing a connection between the past and, I further argue, implicate the Church for its complicity in the Clearances.

## Chapter 1: The Historical Record and the Historical Debate

### The Chisholm Incident: Sparking the Debate about the Clearances

Running some twenty miles from Loch Naver in the south to the shore of Torrisdale Bay on the north coast, Strathnaver is a flat-bottomed green valley, fertile and lush along the banks of the River Naver. The Sutherland Hills rise on either side, gentle slopes covered in heather, native grasses and wildflowers, punctuated by rocky, barren ridgelines and outcrops. On the eve of clearance, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the strath was home to “approximately 340 families, with a total population of more than 2000 people” distributed among twenty or so settlements (O’Reilly and Crockford sec. II.c). Today the valley maintains a population of only a few hundred. Abandoned villages, some strikingly intact, still dot the landscape. This ribbon of land between the loch and the sea was the site of the most infamous and most thoroughly documented of the Highland Clearances. The clearance of Strathnaver, as reported by Donald MacLeod, stonemason from Rossal, first brought the Clearances under broad public scrutiny.

Though Strathnaver had been subject to creeping waves of eviction for some time, it wasn’t until 1814 that many people beyond the valley took note. It was Monday morning, the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, when Patrick Sellar rode into Strathnaver with a cadre of two dozen men bent on evicting the remaining residents from their homes. As sub-factor, or assistant estate manager, for the Sutherland family, it fell to Sellar to see that tenants served with eviction notices were out by the appointed hour. On this day, though, Sellar had motivations beyond duty. He was tasked with clearing residents from lands that were

to become his own sheep farm, and was anxious to start turning a profit from his new investments. Along with his financial motives, Sellar was particularly keen to deal with William Chisholm, “a tinker and allegedly a bigamist, and a man unpopular with his neighbours, who wanted his comprehensive ejection” (Richards 143).

It was late morning by the time Sellar and his men moved to evict Chisholm. Upon their arrival they were informed that Chisholm’s mother-in-law was still in the house, too ill and aged to be removed. Sellar insisted that eviction proceed without delay and, by several accounts, ordered that fire be set to the home immediately, shouting “Damn her, the old witch, she has lived too long; let her burn” (MacLeod 42). As a result of Sellar and his agents, Chisholm’s mother-in-law, Margaret Mackay, was dead within five days. While we know that Mrs. Mackay was eventually removed from the house, there is some debate as to whether she was removed before or after fire was set. The version of the story that has gained the most traction comes from Donald MacLeod, who recounted that, “I was present at the pulling down and burning of the house of William Chisholm, Badinloskin, in which was lying his wife’s mother, an old, bed ridden woman of near one hundred years of age” (42). Some years later MacLeod added “I got my hands burnt taking out the poor old woman from amidst the flames of her once comfortable though humble dwelling, and a more horrifying and lamentable scene could scarcely be witnessed” (121). In the final assessment, Mackay’s death was not attributed to injury caused by the fire, but to shock and being forced from her bed into the elements in a state of ill health. This episode in June 1814 has become emblematic of Sellar’s cruelty and the cruelty the Clearances generally.

The burning of Chisholm's house, and subsequent death of Margaret Mackay, along with a similar incident leading to the death of Donald MacBeath, led to a number of criminal charges against Sellar. The most serious charges were arson and culpable homicide (equivalent to a contemporary manslaughter charge); he was acquitted on all counts. As historian Ian Grimble points out, in the eyes of the court the charges levied against Sellar "rested on the evidence of a tinker, a worthless character, a reputed thief" (9), in other words, the prosecution relied almost entirely on Chisholm's testimony. Against this evidence the defense called nine witnesses who were with Sellar on 13 June, 1814; they "were Sheriff-Officers and servants," John Prebble explained, who "would have had to be very stupid men not to realize that, in one sense, they were on trial too" (91). Alongside these witnesses, Sellar came to court "armed with letters from gentlemen of the county and others, in which he was described as 'a person of the strictest integrity...incapable of any cruel or oppressive action...a most respectable character...of a humane disposition'" (91). Though Sellar had listed him as a witness, Donald MacLeod was not called to testify. The jury deliberated for only fifteen minutes before returning Sellar's acquittal (92); while the acquittal was met with outrage, few were surprised by the outcome.

Victims of the Highland Clearances, almost all of whom were members of the Gaelic speaking minority, were largely unable to tell their own story in any durable form. Their voices come to us only sporadically, and are generally filtered through the rhetoric of the dominant culture. The story of Margaret Mackay, William Chisholm, and his wife Henrietta, provides a striking example. Though Mackay survived for several days after her run-in with Sellar, witnesses say she never spoke another word. Unable to tell her

own story, it was taken up in court when William, Henrietta and several of their neighbors testified against Patrick Sellar. Lacking sufficient proficiency in English, their testimony was translated from Gaelic by the Reverend David Mackenzie. Much, though not all, of the testimony from the trial was published in *Report of the Trial of Patrick Sellar*, which provides one of the few first-hand accounts of clearance by those directly affected, filtered though it is through the lens of Mackenzie's translation. The most substantial and influential account of the Clearances from within the affected community comes from Donald MacLeod, a native of the Sutherland estates, a stonemason, and himself eventual victim of clearance. MacLeod was one of the few residents affected by clearance with sufficient command of English to speak out on behalf of his neighbors and himself. MacLeod began his intervention into landlord policy by writing letters to the editors of various newspapers, and eventually published his book *Gloomy Memories* from exile in Canada.

Controversy emerging from the Chisholm incident has proven to be an important catalyst for our understanding of the Clearances. A large portion of the historical record about the Highland Clearances emerged as a result of this episode and the sensation that it created. Among the few substantial primary sources is the *Report of the Trial of Patrick Sellar*, which provides first-hand testimony about Mackay's passing and the circumstances surrounding it. We also have James Loch's book, *An Account of the Improvements on the Estates of the Marquess of Stafford*,<sup>2</sup> which was published in 1820 partly to mitigate lingering bad publicity from Sellar's trial and to vindicate ongoing

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<sup>2</sup> Loch's title refers to George Granville Leveson-Gower (1758-1833), Marquess of Stafford, and from 1833, shortly before his death, First Duke of Sutherland. Leveson-Gower was married to Elizabeth Sutherland (1765-1839), Countess and, from 1833, Duchess of Sutherland; her ancestral title and lands were brought to George Granville through marriage.



policies of removal. Eric Richards relates that Loch's "greatest fear [...] was another publicity fiasco" (156). Loch's policies upon his promotion to estate manager in 1816 were motivated by avoiding further negative publicity that might hinder the advancement of clearance policy—the policy of removing peasant and tenant populations to make way for large-scale sheep farming and other capitalist ventures.

The Chisholm incident and Sellar's subsequent trial have become among the most iconic moments in the history of the Clearances. The incident is evocative of the cruelty emerging from the power and greed that drove the Clearances, of the inhumanity of the self-styled improvers, and of the cruel logic of capitalist expansion that justified the exploitation of the periphery by the core. Mackay's suffering put a human face on social strife in the Highlands that has resonated in ways that statistics and figures never could. It was Donald MacLeod's work, however, that ensured her legacy.

MacLeod's work in *Gloomy Memories* planted the seed for ongoing historical debates. The impact of MacLeod's work on scholarship about the Clearances is difficult to overstate. *Gloomy Memories* is the only substantial firsthand account written from the perspective of the affected people, not produced by estate management or the clergy. MacLeod spoke out as clearance policies were being implemented, and was run out of the country for his efforts. The vast majority of the displaced were Gaelic speakers, because of their largely oral tradition, and lack of any substantial facility with English, most firsthand accounts faded into obscurity, and vanished when their speakers died. For these reasons MacLeod and his work have become central to discussions about the Clearances. The two most prominent histories of the Clearances were written by Eric Richards and John Prebble; they share the title *The Highland Clearances* and both deeply mine

MacLeod's work for material. Two of the three major historical novels that dramatize clearance draw heavily from MacLeod. These texts, in fact all texts that work to make sense of the Clearances, owe a debt to MacLeod for casting the light of open debate on the impact of the impact of clearance on Highland people and culture. These literary and secondary historical responses to the Highland Clearances, along with surviving primary sources, are a robust body of work that reflects the postcolonial nature of the Highlands. A century and a half of debate and exchange about the Clearances has been shaped and driven by MacLeod; but MacLeod's motivation to bring his writings together into *Gloomy Memories* sprung from the intervention of an unexpected interlocutor, Harriet Beecher Stowe.

In 1853 Stowe was invited to Scotland by a group of abolitionists. Her time there was largely spent traveling from one grand reception in her honor to another. Among the noteworthy members of the British aristocracy to receive Stowe, was the Duchess of Sutherland, daughter-in-law of the First Duke. By the time Stowe arrived in Scotland there had been a number of stories circulating in American newspapers about the cruelty with which the Clearances, particularly in Sutherland, had been carried out. The bulk of the stories picked up by American media were written by Donald MacLeod, a native of the Sutherland estates, and witness to many clearances there.

In her book *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*, Stowe takes it upon herself to defend the reputation of her new friend the Duchess, going so far as to flatly deny claims of cruelty circulated in American papers. In her refutation, Stowe references the Chisholm incident and, without naming the source, quotes MacLeod's now famous account cited above in which Sellar is claimed to have said "Damn her the old witch [...]"

let her burn” (Stowe 311). Stowe categorically denies MacLeod’s claims, citing several refutations by James Loch who took over management of the estate in 1816. After what she presents as careful consideration of clearance policy, Stowe concludes that “the facts [...] speak for themselves. To my view it is an almost sublime instance of the benevolent employment of superior wealth and power in shortening the struggles of advancing civilization” (313). Stowe’s vindication is couched amidst a litany of facts and figures, population data, and fiscal records mined from Loch’s *An Account of the Improvements on the Estates of the Marquess of Stafford*, a copy of which was given to her by the Duchess “so that she might understand the nature and extent of the Great Improvements” (Prebble 289). Page after page of Stowe’s work recites specific details of life in Sutherland. For example, Stowe relates that the fishing industry in Helmsdale “affords employment to three thousand nine hundred people” (308) and that “Before 1812 there was no baker, and only two shops. In 1845 there were eight bakers and forty-six grocer’s shops, in nearly all of which shoe blacking was sold to some extent, an unmistakable evidence of advancing civilization” (307). Along with Loch’s book, Stowe was given access to a collection of Loch’s letters “which Lord Shaftesbury had allowed her to copy” (290), and which further helped shape her opinions. Loch had been the Sutherland family’s long time employee and the man responsible for day-to-day operations of their holdings for many years. The Sutherland family constructed a flattering narrative that focused on progress and emerging commerce, but which whitewashed the human cost of these meager gains. Stowe’s writing suggests she took this carefully manicured story at face value and found herself inspired, if not in fact encouraged, to speak out against

accusations of cruelty. Stowe's writing affects an authority of events about which in truth she is all but ignorant.

One cornerstone of Stowe's treatment is that unattributed restatement and refutation of MacLeod's account of the burning of the Chisholm home, originally written as a letter to the *Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle*, subsequently picked up by several American newspapers, and reprinted in a self-published pamphlet in 1841 (MacLeod 20). Though his writing is often pointed, and increasingly biased in his later work, there is no question that MacLeod was a witness to many clearances, including that of Chisholm in 1814. Court records show MacLeod listed by Patrick Sellar as a witness to the Chisholm incident (Adam 163, footnote). Though his testimony was never heard in court, he was clearly there on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1814. Stowe, on the other hand, was an interloper using her celebrity in an attempt to vindicate the reputation of her hosts, though the only knowledge she had of the Clearances were a few spoon-fed morsels provided by the family she labored to defend. Her voice, made famous for defending the downtrodden against the powerful, here was used to take up the cause of the capitalist improvers without a glance to the suffering that the improvement projects left in their wake. Though the juggernaut of modern creative destruction had reshaped the Highlands, Stowe was shielded from the destructive effects on life and culture while being paraded past the creative improvements to infrastructure and industry.

MacLeod's letters and his 1841 pamphlet likely would have faded into obscurity if not for Stowe's book. When *Sunny Memories* reached the presses in 1854, MacLeod had been evicted twice from homes in Sutherland and eventually driven to exile in Woodstock, Ontario (MacLeod 7). MacLeod, clearly embittered by this point, took

Stowe's book as a personal attack which provided the impetus for him to publish *Gloomy Memories* in 1857. A direct response to Stowe, the complete title of MacLeod's book is *Donald M'Leod's Gloomy Memories of the Highlands of Scotland: Versus Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's Sunny Memories in (England) a Foreign Land, or, A Faithful Picture of the Extirpation of the Celtic Race from the Highlands of Scotland*, though it is generally shortened to *Gloomy Memories* for obvious reasons. The book collects MacLeod's letters, adds an introduction and a scathing rebuttal to Stowe's claims. In this way, Stowe is indirectly responsible for many of the ongoing historical debates about the Clearances.

Several points of tension arise out of the exchange between Stowe and MacLeod, perhaps the most obvious of these is that Stowe took it upon herself to refute claims of cruelty levied against the Sutherland family based on information provided by agents of the family and a few cursory observations. Stowe contends that "one has only to be here, moving in society, to see how utterly absurd [these claims of cruelty] are" (301). This problematic assessment is compounded because Stowe's visit, and thus her movement in society, came forty years after the acts of cruelty that her movement in society exposed as "utterly absurd." Stowe's preface begins with a caveat that "This book will be found to be truly what its name denotes, 'Sunny Memories.' If criticism be made that every thing is given *couleur de rose*, the answer is, Why not?" (iii). Even with that caveat, it's hard to overlook Stowe's own absurd claims and proselytization, "*Couleur de rose*" or not, claiming the absence of cruelty bespeaks a naiveté improbable for someone as attuned to the realities of social injustice as the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* seems to have been. In reality, Stowe was hardly "moving in society" in any capacity that would have provides an opportunity to wade into the intricacies of social injustice or the human cost

of the Clearances. MacLeod presses Stowe on this, accusing her of being taken in by the glamour and hospitality of her hosts, wondering whether the Sutherland family “dictated, or at least supplied Mrs H.B. Stowe [*sic*] with all the information she required to make up chapter seventeenth of her *Sunny Memories* [*sic*]” (19). MacLeod concludes that “if she founded the information in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* [*sic*] upon no better evidence than she had on this occasion, that very little credence can be placed in it” (19). Stowe was welcomed to Edinburgh as a great advocate for the downtrodden. At a reception in her honor, Stowe was heralded with the lines: “Freedom’s angel now’s come, / Mercy’s sister now’s come: / Grim oppression drees his doom: / Harriet Beecher Stowe’s now come” (MacLeod 116). This greeting punctuates the irony of Stowe’s uncritical acceptance of the Sutherland’s version of history, and her advocacy of the virtue of the oppressor over the oppressed.

The exchange between Stowe and MacLeod established an international debate about the legacy of the Clearances not only in Scotland and the Scottish diaspora, but also amid larger global questions about class oppression, capitalist expansion, and the colonial process. Stowe’s initiative in disavowing claims of cruelty and dismissing MacLeod’s account of the Chisholm incident set the stage for future discussion of the Clearances. The fundamental questions debated between Stowe and MacLeod still resonate. Were the Clearances a benevolent process of “shortening the struggles of advancing civilization” (313), as Stowe contends? Or were they an attempt to “extirpate [the Celtic race] root and branch from the land of their birth” (9) as suggested by MacLeod? In other words, did the economic and infrastructural modernization justify the trauma and cultural erosion?

The treatment offered of Chisholm and his aged mother-in-law frequently serves as a bellwether for the social and political motivations of the author. In *Wild Scots*, Michael Fry comes down strongly on the side of landlords and emergent free-market capitalism, taking pains to paint Chisholm in a negative light. Fry presents Chisholm in Sellar's words as "a tinker who had taken possession of an extremely wild piece of ground in a morass among the mountains" (160). This quote from Sellar, which Fry neglects to cite, positions Chisholm on the margins of society, literally in the sense that he was living in a wild, mountainous morass, and in the sense that he was perceived as a no good character, a beggar or vagrant—a tinker. Fry's portrayal also implies that Chisholm had violently or illicitly "taken possession" of his holding. On the contrary, court records indicate that Chisholm had been paying an annual rent of five Guineas to a James Gordon as a subtenant (*Report* 29). It's clear that in June of 1814 Sellar wanted Chisholm gone, not just to take possession of the land for his own farm, but also because he had a poor opinion of Chisholm, who had been "accused by the tenantry of bigamy, theft and riotous conduct" (T. Sellar 49). Nevertheless, Chisholm does not appear to have been illegally in possession of this property, as Fry's word choice implies. Fry goes on to relate that Chisholm's neighbors were keen on aiding the process of eviction, "helping to unroof his home and demolish it" (160). Continuing, Fry relates that "Chisholm, although he was paid for the burned timbers, later stole new ones and built himself a second hideout" (160). Fry seems set on establishing Chisholm as a criminal element. As Fry reckons, Chisholm didn't build a new house, or cottage, but a hideout where we are to believe he was engaging in nefarious acts of the highest order.

Fry acknowledges that “Sellar’s men moved against people defenceless in law and in fact” and that “Any slow to gather their goods could find the roof going up in flames above them, for nothing was to be left here that might permit continued inhabitation” (160). Nevertheless Fry’s treatment glosses over any implications of this cruelty, and while he lays implicit blame on Sellar, Fry builds his discussion on the bedrock of relative legal right and economic necessity, turning only a passing glance at issues of morality and humanity. Fry does implicate Sellar for his role in the Chisholm incident, but withholds judgment, recounting that “Sellar laid faggots against the timbers of the house himself. As flames took hold, the old lady was pulled out just in time, her blanket already smouldering. [...] Neighbours carried her to a shed, and barely managed to stop this being burned too. She died within five days” (161). Fry discusses the entire episode in two paragraphs, and though he does seem to toss an accusatory glance at Sellar, the overall impression is that somehow Chisholm and his mother-in-law got what was coming to a band of scofflaws.

Fry stops short of calling claims of cruelty “utterly absurd” as Stowe does, but echoes Stowe in disavowing MacLeod’s account, glossing over the cruelty and human cost of clearance and enforced social change, focusing instead on progress in terms of prospects for advancing capitalism. In *Wild Scots*, Fry looks to the past to cull lessons for the future. He envisions Scotland as a free market paradise, in which “Highlanders take their place on the same footing as everyone else—in Britain, in Europe, in North America and now in the Orient too—in the modern, liberal, individualist, capitalist order” (320). For Fry, the Highland Clearances represented an important break from antiquated social and economic systems, paving the way for a modern system of industrial capitalism.



Though there may have been some growing pains, Fry saw clearance as necessary to divorce the lower classes from a subsistence lifestyle and move them into productive capitalist labor. Fry's distaste for the crofting system is such that he calls for it to be outlawed in modern Scotland, writing that "I think crofting should be abolished [...] otherwise [it will] just wither on the vine while it wastes human resources that could be put to better use" (322). Fry's objection to crofting is rooted in the capitalist fallacy that labor is only productive insofar as it takes place within the modern capitalist sphere. The implication is that small-scale farming and subsistence lifestyles are not productive, useful, or worthwhile. Fry's dismissal of the small-scale in favor of the industrial follows the mold of landlords and other improvers, whose rush towards industrialization condemned as antiquated any endeavor not geared toward turning a profit. Fry's position is that while individual moments of conflict within the Clearances may have been regrettable, the resulting shift in social and economic structures was necessary to facilitate a competitive modern Scotland. The landlords, he suggests, were right to impose these wholesale ideological changes on their estates.

For Fry and others that have turned their intellectual gaze towards the Highland Clearances, the intrigue lies not merely in making sense of the past but in better understanding the complexities of a Scotland continuing to move towards greater independence and engaging more and more as a partner within Britain, Europe and the World. In the case of both primary and secondary histories what we are left with is an idealized image of a future Scotland. While secondary histories reinterpret the Clearances through the political lens of the author, the primary historical material gives us insight not only to the facts, but also into the motivations of the agents of the

Clearances. These motivations are an important consideration, perhaps more so than the material results, in that they shed a greater light on the landscape of the idealized future envisioned by the actors. Several of the primary histories that we have available, particularly the work of James Loch and Patrick Sellar, give us a strong sense of the direction in which these social engineers were trying to drive the Highlands and Scotland more generally. Historians that have mined these primary texts have reshaped them in the image of their own political motivations, projecting yet another image of Scotland moving into the future.

#### “To Improve the Wretched Condition”: Motivations for Clearance

In the preface to *Wild Scots* (2005), Michael Fry identifies himself as the author of a controversial, and previously anonymous, 1977 editorial in *The Scotsman*. In that editorial Fry argued that “the main motive of the Sutherlands, and of many of the other landlords who followed the same course, was to improve the wretched condition of the people on their estates” (xii). Reflecting on the position he developed in 1977 “on no great fund of expertise,” Fry relates “I have found no reason to alter my basic opinion, that the concept of clearance is inadequate to characterize the general course of modern Highland history” (xiii). The assumptions laid out in these comments set the tone for the work that follows in *Wild Scots*, though both raise significant questions. Fry develops his critique in the context of motivation because it coincides with his view that the Clearances helped Scottish society to progress into the modern age, that the Sutherland family, whether or not they caused short term discomfort, were acting for the long term

good. For Fry the attempt to remake their lands in the model of industrial capitalism was a way to free tenants from the tyranny of subsistence, granting them passage into the freedom of capitalist production. For Fry this was a liberating act, not an oppressive one. The motivation behind the Clearances is significant to Fry because it resonates with his projected future Scotland. Whether the outcome was as landlords intended, they had acted in the interest of advancing a capitalist model of society. The issue of motivation is significant because it reflects the desired future of the ruling classes and the ways they worked to manipulate the socio-economic landscape in their best interests.

Fry's claim about motivation is problematic. It ignores the implication of records available from the Sutherland estate's own management. James Loch, who oversaw the Sutherland estate from 1816 until his death in 1855, complained that the tenants needed to be shifted because they "added but little to the industry, and nothing to the wealth of the empire" and that "the great proportion of their time, when not in the pursuit of [poaching] game or illegal distillation, was spent in indolence and sloth" (51). The only wretchedness Loch seems concerned with is the most heinous of sins in an emergent capitalism—lack of industry. Patrick Sellar, one of Loch's underlings tasked mainly with collecting rent and evicting people from their homes, claimed that "the use for which nature seems to have intended the Parish of Rogart [in Sutherland]" is "most decidedly the wintering of those extensive flocks of Sheep" and that "Without such an effectual arrangement justice is not done either to the people who reside where they cant [*sic*] benefit Society, or the Country which by the presence of people where they should be absent, and by their absence where industry is required, cant [*sic*] come to push and vigour" ("Sutherland" 181). Neither Sellar nor Loch is overly burdened by pathos in

these and numerous other moments of candor. Rather, their concerns are of a more worldly nature, advocating for more productive land use and greater engagement by the tenantry in the advancing capitalist economy.

Rather than the actual welfare of tenants, James Loch seems to have been concerned with public perception about clearance and the way it was carried out. After several clearances in 1819, Loch learned that his protégé Francis Suther authorized the burning of houses after tenants were evicted. This episode, Loch related to the Countess, had “created a good deal of observation and reflection” (qtd. in Richards 162). In response to these burnings, Loch chastised Suther not for poor judgment, nor for the distress that the burnings might have caused the tenants, but for the potential public backlash. Writing to Suther, Loch warned “I trust no acts of cruelty have been committed, they cannot be passed over if they have, and the punishment of them will be a triumph to the Highlanders, and make the next year’s movings more difficult” (qtd. in Richards 162). Again Loch’s concern is not born from compassion but from a desire to maintain unobstructed advancement of clearance policy and to avoid further negative publicity after the debacle of Patrick Sellar’s trial. Eric Richards writes that as Loch planned the large-scale evictions of 1819 and 1820 “Every precaution against the possibility of inhumanity and homelessness was to be taken: Loch was extremely anxious to avoid all public notice and criticism of the coming events. He feared that any further public excitation would attract parliamentary inquiry into landlord policy in the north” (154). Evidence suggests that, for Loch, the viability of clearance policy was paramount. It was the mechanism through which Loch and the Sutherland family would attempt to drag northern Scotland into the modern age of industrial capitalism. It was an experiment

in social engineering, in which Loch, the Sutherland family and others aimed to shape the future socio-economic landscape of the Highlands to better reflect the interests of capital and the upper class. For Loch and the Sutherland family, clearance was an exercise in supplanting the extant ideology with a new one, forcing tenants to assimilate to the new “civilized” socio-economic arrangement. Loch was the architect of the most sweeping changes on the Sutherland estate, and it was his example that many landlords in the region followed. The welfare of the tenants, where it is discussed in the primary material, is posed as a tool to ensure unobstructed advancement of clearance policy rather than compassion for the tenants themselves.

Had the clearance policies of estate management emerged from an abiding desire to lift tenants from poverty rather than swell the accounts of the landlords, would there not have been a more humanitarian approach and concern expressed for its own sake? In some cases, notably in Strathconan and Strathy, tenants were cleared multiple times as demand increased for ever more sheep pasture. Richards relates that, in Strathconan, “Some of them had been subjected to the devastation of a second and even a third clearance” (24). Had these people been moved for their own benefit, rather than simply to make way for more lucrative endeavors, why would second and third removals have been necessary or beneficial? Would management not have taken pains to assure that new allotments were adequate to support tenants, rather than necessitating further removals for their welfare? Had tenant welfare been the primary concern then Loch, Sellar, Suther, and the other agents of clearance would have taken greater pains to actually soften the blow of eviction rather than merely mitigate the public perception of cruelty. Likewise, if lifting tenants from poverty had been the primary consideration

there would have undoubtedly been more serious discussions about implementing a program to improve the lives of tenants *in situ*. The introduction of sheep farming to the Highlands could have been used as a tool to prop up the local population in a new system not so different from their traditional lifestyle, but instead spurred purely capitalist ventures. Such a scheme would have gone a long way towards alleviating poverty, freeing landlords of the burden of subsidizing food stores when crops failed, and maintaining extant social structures.

Integrating the existing tenantry into the new sheep industry would have provided tenants with a means of subsistence not so different from the cattle rearing and agricultural systems with which they were already accustomed. Such a scheme was never seriously considered. Nowhere in the writings of Loch, Sellar, or other estate managers is the subject broached. One of the few mentions in the secondary literature is from Eric Richards, who relates that “a sheep-farming expert, Andrew Ker, visited Sutherland in 1791” (124) and concluded that “the tenants on that coast would give up in great measure, their black cattle, and take to sheep, provided that they had an example shown them. But as they know nothing about sheep, or the management of them, they do not chuse [*sic*] to run any risk” (Ker qtd. in Richards 124). In his brief analysis Richards contends that “When sheep farming came to Sutherland, as to the rest of the Highlands, it was not so much the ignorance of the small tenantry, as the level of capital (in very large amounts), which appears to have disqualified them from even the slightest involvement in the new sheep-farming economy” (124). If the primary consideration of landlords was the welfare of their tenants there would have been a robust attempt at, and corresponding record of, less catastrophic interventions, such as involving existing tenants in the

emergent sheep enterprises. What we see instead is the colonial model of accumulation: expropriating resources from the subordinate culture, demanding assimilation to the imposed economic systems, and refocusing labor from subsistence to capitalist endeavors.

In the context of these facts, Michael Fry's assertion that "the main motive of the Sutherlands, and of many of the other landlords who followed the same course, was to improve the wretched condition of the people on their estates" (xii) can be seen for the apologist political rhetoric that it is. Fry's revisionist history seeks to reframe the exploitation of the lower classes in positive light. Aside from losing their homes, the cleared tenants were encouraged, if not in fact forced by circumstance, to change the nature of their labor. No longer would their labor primarily be geared towards their own survival and wellbeing, but towards turning a profit for upper class investors. This is a fundamentally exploitative shift in both land use and labor. For Fry, the shift towards a free market in which the rich were more strongly positioned to exploit the labor and resources of the lower class reflects his desired future for Scotland. The Highland Clearances attempted to maximize the profitability of Highland estates. By shifting tenants from land that could be put to more profitable use to marginal land with few economic prospects, and transitioning labor from subsistence to capitalist production, landlords improved their bottom line. Marx writes that the "directing motive, the end aim of capitalist production" is "to extract the greatest possible amount of surplus-value, and consequently to exploit labour-power to the greatest possible extent" (363). This is the fundamental economic shift we see taking place through the Clearances. In Fry's view this exploitation is a net positive. He vindicates the exploitation endemic in the

Clearances as an act of benevolence which in turn works towards vindicating the exploitation of the poor by the rich in contemporary Scotland.

The only evidence of attempts to improve circumstances for the tenantry throughout the era of the Clearances is in the form of famine relief. Loch is quick to trumpet distribution of aid as evidence of beneficence, claiming that “To supply those who had no cattle, [the Sutherlands] sent meal into the country to the amount of nearly NINE THOUSAND POUNDS” (77). The fact is, however, that the estate generally profited off of these distributions and used them to leverage tenants. Historian R.J. Adam reports that as a result of famine relief in 1807 the Sutherland estate “show[ed] a profit of £653 (or almost 14%)” (259); distributions in 1812 saw a profit of £288 and there was a further £568 generated from famine relief over the following three years (260-1). Frequently, aid was presented as charity but payment demanded after the fact. Debt incurred from these distributions was then used to leverage tenancy. Donald MacLeod relates that when it came time for tenants to pay their rent they were forced first to pay any outstanding debt from aid distribution, writing that “rents would not be received till the accounts for the provisions were first settled” and “if any lenity was shown, it would be for the rents, but none for the provisions” (77). MacLeod continues, noting that “The meaning of this scheme seems to be, that by securing payment for the provisions in the first instance, they would avoid the odium of pursuing for what was given as charity, knowing that they could at any time enforce payment of the rent, by using the usual summary means” (77). As a result of this practice the most at-risk tenants were forced into rent arrears which could then be used against them to encourage passive compliance with eviction when the time came. Estate management could then offer to forgive any



outstanding arrears in exchange for cooperation from tenants faced with eviction. Forgiving arrears to facilitate peaceful compliance was a common landlord strategy, though in this case the arrears were orchestrated expressly for the purpose.

Invariably, aid to struggling tenants, such as it was, was granted only in the form of relief with no complementary efforts to mitigate future crop failures or provide agricultural and economic stimulus for tenants before they were in dire need. No attempts seem to have been made to help the tenants update their farming methods or otherwise increase productivity. The only investments we see during this time are for the benefit of the landlords and their investors. The absence of programs—or even meaningful discussion of such programs—that might uplift the state of the tenants without removing them from their homes substantially undermines the notion that pity or compassion undergirded the architecture of the Clearances rather than greed and the logic of capitalist accumulation. Capital ruled the day and the new economic system lined the pockets of newly minted sheep barons and landlords alike. It's quite a stretch, then, to suggest that “the main motive of the Sutherlands, and of many of the other landlords who followed the same course, was to improve the wretched condition of the people on their estates” (Fry xii). Fry insists on this because it reflects the values of capitalism in which the illusion of social mobility and new economic prospects trumps the reality of suffering and destitution, and in which the rich naturally exploit the poor.

### Clearance as Trauma: the Human Cost of Eviction

In September 2005, *The Economist* reviewed *Wild Scots* in an article called “Clearing the Air,” acknowledging that Fry’s work had “been greeted with a volley of insults, the most ludicrous comparing [Fry] with David Irving, a writer who denies that the Holocaust ever happened” (74). Throughout roughly the last half of *Wild Scots*, the section in which he addresses issues relevant to the Clearances, Fry seeks to vindicate landlord policies on the basis of free market principles and to undermine popular sentiment about the extent of trauma associated with clearance. Fry’s argument holds that the Clearances marked a necessary rupture in the progression from antiquity to modern industrial capitalism. Thus Fry positions himself at odds with both popular sentiment and the general tack of academic debate, which tend to lament the loss of culture and undue trauma caused to the lowest classes of society. While the Highlands could not for long have remained insulated from the thrall of modern capitalism, the inevitability of modernization can never be taken as a justification for cruelty and subjugation undertaken in its name.

Fry’s work in *Wild Scots* invigorates debates about the Clearances; rejecting uncritical acceptance of the often deeply biased positions taken in other work, it interrogates the notion that traditional Highland life might have remained intact but for the tyranny of the land owners and undercutting the notion that pre-Clearance life was a pastoral idyll. While an invigorated debate about implications of the Clearances is welcome, Fry’s analysis fails on several levels. Not only does he downplay the traumatic aspects of mass eviction, such as the dissolution of entire communities, and the

fundamental reorganization of social and economic life, but he pins a major thread of his argument on the issue of total population change, hammering at it over and over, ultimately missing the point. Fry asserts, for example, that while “Certain historians have taken to labeling the late eighteenth century in the Highlands as the ‘first phase of clearance’” (158) Fry himself is skeptical because “On the contrary, the population continued its rapid increase” (159). The logic advanced here and elsewhere suggests that the absence of net population loss in the Highlands during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century refutes the notion that the Clearances were a widespread and disruptive phenomenon.

Fry takes pains to point out that the moments of brutality and cruelty, while they did occur, were not the common experience of displacement, but the sensational exception. If we limit our understanding of cruelty to acts of physical violence rather than ideological and economic domination, Fry’s point stands. But contemporary social theory rejects the supposition that trauma is exclusively predicated on acts of physical violence. Trauma within the Clearances emerged more as a result of disruption than it did from brutality and violence. Arthur Neal defines collective trauma as an event that “appears to threaten or seriously invalidate our usual assessments of social reality,” and writes that:

[u]nder such conditions, doubts emerge about the future as an extension of the present, and social events are perceived as discontinuous. Forces are operating that can neither be clearly understood nor controlled. It becomes difficult to integrate the problematic event with perceptions of the orderliness of social life. A deplorable condition has surfaced in the

social realm that requires some form of remedial action. The integrity of the social fabric is under attack, and some form of repair work is needed to promote the continuity of social life. (7)

One of the more striking examples of this type of disruption comes from the clearance of Glencalvie in 1845. Glencalvie was brought under greater public scrutiny than many other clearances because “the local Free Church ministers [...] blazoned their plight in the *Scotsman*” (Richards 15). As a result of the ministers’ action, *The Times* sent a correspondent north to report on what was happening. When the correspondent arrived he found the glen already cleared, indicating that “the whole of the people left the glen on Saturday afternoon, about 80 in number, and took refuge in [a] tent erected in their churchyard” (“Clearances of the Highlanders”). Their landlord, Major Charles Robertson, had provided them with no new accommodation. With nowhere else to go, they stayed on in the churchyard for several days, trying to come to terms with the disjunction in their social life, the rip in the social fabric, and to assimilate the newly imposed future with a ruptured continuity to the past. During their stay in the churchyard, several of the evicted Glencalvie residents scratched brief messages into the east window of Croick Church. Messages such as “Glen Calvie people, the wicked generation” and “Glen Calvie people was in the churchyard here May 24<sup>th</sup> 1845” (Croickchurch.com) stand as monuments to trauma, as the people struggled to give voice to the disruption.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Glen Calvie” and “Glencalvie” are used interchangeably in various sources. I follow the official website of Croick Church (CroickChurch.com) in using “Glencalvie” referring to the Glen, but maintaining the two-word form when used by my sources. For a more thorough discussion of Croick Church see the final chapter of this project.

Hayden White points out that in psychoanalytic theory, trauma “indicate[s] a shock to the organism that has the somatic and/or psychical effect of ‘unbinding’ the ‘drives’ formerly held in some kind of equilibrium and thereby producing neurotic or psychopathic states (paranoia, hysteria, obsessiveness, etc.) resulting in the dysfunctionality of the organism” (26). White contends that psychological trauma parallels the “historiological counterpart in which the historical event is viewed as a significant disturbance of a historical (social) system that throws its institutions, practices, and beliefs into disarray and results in group behaviors similar to those manifested in the conditions of hysteria, paranoia, fetishism, and so on” (26). It follows that the Clearances have maintained historical significance because of their traumatic nature, as the historical event and collective trauma manifest parallel structures. In the Highland Clearances we see again and again the disturbance of historical systems, social bodies, and their corresponding individual bodies. The act of displacement is traumatic in itself, more so when that displacement is part of a systemic wave of pressure applied to broad swaths of the social fabric, as we see in the Glencalvie example. At Glencalvie the act of etching messages into the window in memorial of the historical/traumatic event, to say nothing of taking shelter among the graves in the churchyard, can be seen as the moment of post traumatic dysfunction that White identifies. It was an obsessive, hysterical spasm in response to the rupture in social and historical continuity. Clearance disrupted the social body and unbound the equilibrium of individual and social bodies alike. The empty space and depopulated glens that were left behind recall the trauma. Formerly inhabited glens stood empty, old communities spared from clearance integrated new members, and new communities emerged to accommodate victims of clearance.

Everywhere throughout the Highlands changes in the social fabric bore witness to clearance. These geographic upheavals were accompanied by a fundamental shift in modes of subsistence, daily routine, and both the nature and the product of labor, these shifts also bore witness to clearance and trauma. This all points to the fact that, irrespective of the prevalence of physical violence, clearance was traumatic based on the definitions of both White and Neal.

Fry's argument disavowing cruelty and brutality forces us to question the point at which systemic physical oppression, hegemonic intervention, and economic exploitation transcend the realm of incidental class conflict and become structural modes of cultural aggression and nascent mass trauma. Where is the threshold between a structural, incidental moments of cruelty and coercion within the growing pains of global economic change, such as Fry sees in the Clearances, and a systemic mode of oppression that can be conceived as an identifiable oppressive movement? While clearance was a fairly widespread phenomenon, the similarities between clearances, the motivations of the landlords, and the relatively brief time frame during which they occurred, suggest that they were indeed systematic. At home after home, village after village, glen after glen, clearance was carried out with all the efficiency and bureaucratic impunity that landlords could muster. Throughout his work Fry attempts to diminish the significance of the Clearances, not only by suggesting that they weren't nearly as traumatic as we've been led to believe, but that clearance itself was far less common than we've been led to believe as well.

My understanding of what constitutes clearance, as opposed to simply eviction, is that it entailed the displacement of lower class populations in deference to new capitalist

ventures (regardless of whether the displaced people were provided new accommodations by their landlords), and was part of a systematic process of land reallocation. Fry sets a higher bar for what constitutes clearance, arguing that the term “clearance” is “bandied about so sloppily that some blameless souls take it as a synonym of genocide” (158). Rightfully Fry then suggests that it is “important, therefore, to establish a more exact meaning” (158). Despite his objection to the sloppy invocation of genocide, Fry uses that very blade to whittle down the meaning of “clearance” in the next sentence, saying:

If ‘clearance’ is taken to mean the disappearance of a population from its habitat—such as the disappearance of Albanians from Kosovo in the Serbs’ ethnic cleansing of 1998 or, to go further back, of the Jews from Berlin after these were transported to the camps by the Nazis—then in the Highlands of 1800 there was not a single county, not a single island, not a single parish, not a single estate that was cleared in this way. (158-9)

On the one hand, Fry is correct that understanding clearance as a synonym to genocide is problematic, and that there were no localities that were cleared in the manner of his examples. By this yardstick were there any clearances at all? Conceiving of the Highland Clearances as genocidal displays a lack of sensitivity to the scale and trauma of genocide, and invites gross misunderstandings of Highland history. Comparing Highland landlords and their agents to Hitler and Milosevic rings hollow, and again misses the point. On the other hand, while Fry recognizes the flaw in attributing genocidal characteristics to the Clearances, he indulges the practice by establishing that as the standard by which the trauma of displacement and oppression during the Highland Clearances must be measured. We can acknowledge that Highland landlords were

neither Hitler nor Milosevic, yet still acknowledge the trauma of the Clearances and not diminish the experience of the Highlanders; we can accept that the Clearances were traumatic without evoking images of death squads and mass graves.

Contrary to Fry's suggestion, clearance need not suggest complete removal, disappearance, wholesale eviction or extirpation any more than it means genocide. We can just as well understand clearance to mean clearing out, making way, or pushing aside, as one would clear the center of a room to make way for dancing. Dispossession and relocation have as much of a stake in the experience of clearance as total population change. In any definition we must acknowledge that clearance was fundamentally about the role of human agency in remaking the social space. Working to define "clearance," Eric Richards acknowledges confusion in the way the term has been used. He ultimately concludes, though, that "the phrase 'the Highland Clearances' has become an omnibus term to include any kind of displacement of occupiers (even sheep) by Highland landlords; it does not discriminate between small and large evictions, voluntary and forced removals, or between outright expulsion of tenants and resettlement plans" (6).

Fry brings his absolutist understanding of clearance to bear when he notes that clearances in Sutherland, in contrast with neighboring Easter Ross, "met no resistance" and that "however unhappy the people of the countess's estate were to leave their homes, they still had an assurance of somewhere else to go, and not far away" (190). In light of these claims, Fry proposes that "It is worth asking then whether Sutherland presents us with the lineaments of a clearance in the full sense of the term, the sense of coercive depopulation" (190). Fry concludes that "except on a small and local scale, as at Culrain, no clearance, no coercive depopulation took place. If it had, the numbers of Highlanders



could not have continued to rise,” rather the people “were ‘rearranged after a new fashion’, in Hugh Miller’s [apt phrase]” (190). Rather than acknowledging that clearance was carried out along a spectrum, Fry poses a functional understanding of clearance based on a binarism that rejects as clearance anything less than wholesale removal under threat of force or immediate legal action. Likewise Fry reinforces his notion that clearance cannot be the redistribution of social space in the absence of population decline on the scale of the estate or some larger entity. To be “rearranged after a new fashion,” then, fails to meet Fry’s criteria for clearance. While it’s true that the majority of the people in Sutherland were not unceremoniously cast adrift, the assertion that there was no coercive depopulation is simply incorrect; absence of resistance does not imply lack of coercion. Gramsci’s great contribution to the body of cultural theory is the recognition that hegemonic functioning, and thus coercion, can affect social change and reinforce oppressive social structures through systemic manipulation in the absence of physical domination, and certainly with no easily observable resistance.

Compounding Fry’s fallacy that there was no coercive depopulation in Sutherland is the further fallacy that the displaced tenants of Sutherland were “assured” of someplace else to go. During the 1814 clearance of Strathnaver, new lots on the coast to be inhabited by displaced tenants were not initially prepared by the time those tenants were to be turned out of their homes. Fry confidently claims that “At dawn on 13 June 1814 parties under Patrick Sellar swept along Strathnaver” (160) but that these evictees “were not just being thrown out: a few miles away new homes stood ready for them” (160). Fry offers up this caveat as a vindication against cruelty, though his claims here are incongruent. Grimble relates that during the clearance of Strathnaver, Patrick Sellar was busy clearing

tenants on the south end of the strath while the plots intended to receive tenants on the north coast had not yet been prepared (8-9); these people were not assured of somewhere else to go. Not only were there no “new homes” standing ready, but the plots hadn’t even been surveyed and assigned by the time the evictions began. These facts were laid out during testimony at Sellar’s trial. William Young, then factor of the Sutherland estate and Sellar’s boss, testified that the surveyor employed to prepare the lots was delayed in his work and “was employed till the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, in Laying off allotments. By the 4<sup>th</sup> of June every thing was ready for the reception of the people” (39). Young also testified that clearance of Strathnaver had begun well before the 13<sup>th</sup> of June that Fry cites, stating that “There were twenty-seven removed at Whitsunday 1814” (i.e. the 15<sup>th</sup> of May), and that “between the 31<sup>st</sup> of May and [the 4<sup>th</sup> of June], they were all present, and every man informed of his allotment” (39). Finally, Young testified that “The houses were to be built by the tenants themselves” (39). Fry is well wide of the mark in his assertion that “new homes stood ready.” As Young suggests, the Strathnaver Clearances began on Whitsunday, and all of the tenants turned out before the 4<sup>th</sup> of June found that their new allotments were not yet prepared for them; there were no new homes standing at the ready as this was never part of the plan. Even if we take Fry’s use of home to mean merely plot or allotment rather than house, based on the testimony of William Young we can see that he’s incorrect.

Beyond the fact that plots weren’t yet prepared to receive many tenants by the time they were turned out, Fry’s claim fails short on yet another front. That is, not every resident of Strathnaver, or Sutherland generally, had assurance of somewhere else to go on the estate. Ian Grimble reminds us that there was a “good character and conduct

clause” (31) in the assignment of new lots, thus estate management was able to pick and choose which tenants received new parcels and which did not. We know, for example, that Chisholm and his family received no new allotment because, again as Young testified, “for two years back complaints had been made against him as a worthless character” (39). We have little way of knowing how many other squatters and sub-tenants were deemed “worthless characters” or simply over-looked in the assignment of new lots. The 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1814 mentioned by Fry was the day cited in the indictment against Sellar, the day that he was accused of having set Chisholm’s house ablaze and causing the death of Margaret Mackay. Thus, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, although Fry claims tenants “were not just being thrown out,” we know for certain that at least one family was “just being thrown out,” and rather than “stay[ing] on to the last moment in inertia or anxiety” (160) there were some who stayed because they knew that they had nowhere else to go.

Even those who did receive new plots had no assurance that they were going to be able to make a living from them. Most were pressed from a mode of subsistence on arable inland glens to the rocky coast to cast their lot at fishing despite having no experience working the sea. In 1818 one of James Loch’s subordinate officers, a Captain MacKay, admitted that “very few of the lots were ‘capable of being made anything of and few would be acceptable to the people’” (qtd. in Richards 158). Other lots, particularly those at Dornoch were “‘improvable’ muirlands” (159) or, in MacLeod’s words “bog lands [...] on which it was next to impossible to exist” (39). Cast adrift or not, these changes represented a traumatic disruption in the equilibrium of the social body and

represented a change of situation not nearly as neutral, to say nothing of beneficent, as Fry would have us believe.

Despite Fry's protests, it's important to recognize the nature of trauma endemic during the Highland Clearances. The trauma of the Clearances, by which I mean collective trauma per Neal's definition of "an event that appears to threaten or seriously invalidate our usual assessments of social reality" (7), was a profoundly widespread phenomenon. Trauma was certainly visited on the poor souls evicted from their homes, but the effects of trauma spread beyond those individuals. Families took in displaced members, communities absorbed outsiders, and everywhere the modes of economic viability changed substantially. The methodical implementation of industrial capitalism in the Highlands produced a fissure throughout the region that called into question the "usual assessments of social reality." The Clearances created an historical focus, a moment of rupture in Scottish history that must be dealt with to define the character of the nation moving forward. The memory of this trauma still lives in the Highlands and casts a pall on the nation. On September 27, 2000 Scottish Parliament debated motion S1M-004, which stated "That the Parliament expresses its deepest regret for the occurrence of the Highland Clearances and extends its hand in friendship and welcome to the descendants of the cleared people who reside outwith our shores" ("Proceedings"). During the debate several MSPs spoke, two in particular made comments relevant to this discussion. Lewis Macdonald, MSP for Aberdeen Central, commented:

As a descendant of [Lord Macdonald's] victims, I do not want an apology from this Parliament. I do not even want an apology from the current Lord Macdonald. Instead, I want this Parliament to build on the resistance and

achievements of the past 150 years to deliver the far-reaching land reform that will secure the future of our crofting communities, to deliver a secure future also for the Gaelic language and culture as part of the heritage of the whole of Scotland, and to deliver social justice and economic opportunity, which are the shared ideals of Uist land leaguers and Aberdeen trade unionists alike. (“Proceedings”)

The issues of land security and security from exploitation by moneyed interests still resonate in 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland. Because of the continued development of global markets, there is ever more pressure on Scottish resources from abroad. John Munro, MSP from Ross, Skye and Inverness West added the following:

we have had a much more sophisticated type of clearance. We have seen the steady decline of employment opportunities in our major industries. I think in particular of the decline in our coal mining, our steel industries and our shipbuilding. [...] Where and when will we reverse this decline, and ensure that people are able to exist in their own country in secure, affordable homes, and with gainful employment? (“Proceedings”)

As Scotland moves towards the 2014 referendum, it must grapple with these issues that go back more than a century? How can an independent Scotland within the EU (or, for that matter, a devolved Scotland within the UK) best insure that its resources are being used to promote prosperity for its own people, rather than seeing profits from those resources shipped abroad? In order begin safeguarding these interests, it’s important shed a light on the systemic exploitation of the periphery by the core, and to understand the power structures that drove it. This means coming to terms with the ideology that

drove the Highland Clearances and its continuing legacy that drives these more “sophisticated types of clearance” the John Munro identified, which continue to reinforce the internal colonial process in Britain.

### Rearranged After a New Fashion: Depopulation or Dispersal?

While Fry is incredulous that resettlement in the absence of population decline truly constitutes clearance, he also dismisses the significance of the forced shift from farming to fishing or industrial labor. He acknowledges “the hardships of a fisherman’s life, which are undoubted,” but suggests that “throwing excrement over a patch of moorland and planting potatoes in it was not much fun either” (156). Not much fun Fry contends—maybe not, though perhaps we can agree that drowning or being smashed into the rocks off Cape Wrath was marginally less fun than spreading manure across a patch of moor. Tenants were given a choice between accepting marginal unfertile allotments or being utterly homeless with no capital and few skills; this presumably was not much fun either. The newly minted fishermen were particularly at risk because of inexperience and a lack of proper equipment. Donald MacLeod reported that as the displaced tenants began to ply the sea, casualties were “Numerous [...] and of almost daily occurrence” (58). These new fisherman were forced to take their lives in their hands going to sea in boats “cast off as unserviceable or unsafe” (59). The dismissiveness with which Fry treats this shift is troubling and again reflects his capitalist apologetics. Perhaps, Fry seems to think, these people cast aside by the juggernaut of modernity were still living

miserable, precarious lives, but at least they were now adding to the burgeoning capitalist marketplace, rather than laboring for their own needs.

Blinded by pragmatism, Fry tosses aside the structural marginalization of the displaced Highland population, arguing that “The forlorn settlements for the dispossessed on the coast of Sutherland were premature versions of the peripheral housing schemes around Glasgow and Edinburgh; the distance modern Glaswegians had to be moved for their own sake from, say, Townhead to Castlemilk is not so far short of that from Strathnaver to Bettyhill” (175). Again we find that while Fry might have the numbers right he misses the kernel of the matter. Notwithstanding that modern Glaswegians relocated by the Castlemilk scheme in the 1950s had access to a modern transportation infrastructure that early 19<sup>th</sup> century Sutherlanders could scarcely have dreamt of and thus the conditions and effort of travel were far less traumatic, the issue of total miles is quite wide of the mark. John Prebble recognizes this when he writes “Once expelled from the glen they had occupied for generations it was of small consequence to them whether they traveled ten miles or four thousand. The loss was the same, the pain as great” (21). While Prebble may err as much to the side of sentimentalism as Fry does to pragmatism, he recognizes that it is the expulsion, the embedded history, the loss their only known way of life that was traumatic. Whether or not Fry valued or approved of the life of the pre-clearance Highlanders and the values it represented is not the issue. The issue is that it was a geographically situated, long held social structure that was fragmented by the advent of nascent capitalism.

These issues raised in Fry’s interrogation of clearance in Sutherland reflect his concern with the question of whether “coercive depopulation” took place. Indeed he

argues that coercive depopulation in the Highlands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a scarce phenomenon, and that in Sutherland it occurred hardly at all. Any such suggestions will of course hinge on our understanding of the terms coercive and depopulation as they are employed in this context. Let us first examine the issue of depopulation.

Fry presents us with two visions of depopulation that he would classify as true clearance. The first vision comes when he invokes “the disappearance of Albanians from Kosovo” and the disappearance “of the Jews from Berlin after these were transported to the camps by the Nazis” (158). Here coercive depopulation reflects the image of ethnic cleansing; state sanctioned removal followed by imprisonment, internment, outright expulsion, or execution. This is the police state acting on its citizens and enforcing its policies of ethnic separatism. The second image of depopulation *qua* clearance that Fry offers is from Culrain, Easter Ross, as alluded to previously. In the case of Culrain, Fry explains that “What Munro of Novar carried out was indeed clearance in that full sense: he threw all the people out, with nowhere else to go. Then his estate stood empty” (190). Here then is wholesale eviction, “true clearance” in Fry’s reckoning, a clear case of coercive depopulation. However, when we say that the people of Culrain disappeared, or that Culrain was depopulated, those assertions carry vastly different implications than when we say that the Jews of Berlin were “cleared” and transported to camps by the Nazis. When we say that the Jews were cleared we know that this was depopulation taken to its ultimate degree. However, when we say that Culrain was depopulated we recognize that the 600 or so people that were cleared weren’t sent to gas chambers—in fact the majority of them didn’t leave Scotland, the Highlands or even the county of



Easter Ross. The majority of those cleared from Culrain were absorbed into surrounding communities. The two images don't line up.

To say that Culrain was depopulated, then, doesn't imply a net reduction of the population of the county, or the region, or the nation, or of living souls, but is tied to the rather arbitrary political and legal boundaries of the estate. Fry works under the assumption that the smallest "clearable" space, the smallest unit subject to depopulation, is identifiable by such legal boundaries. So when Fry questions whether "Sutherland presents the lineaments of a clearance" he is basing his skepticism on the contrast between Culrain which "stood empty" and Sutherland where "25,000 people still earned a living, or at least had encouragements to do so" (190). Add to this the fact that the Highland population "continued to rise" (190) and Fry calls into question whether clearance was taking place at all. Of those 25,000 or so people still earning a living on the Sutherland estate, many had been removed from the interior to new towns and settlements along the coast as part of those "small and local scale" clearances that Fry dismisses. While the overall population of the Highlands and of Sutherland may have seen modest population growth, numerous parishes within Sutherland saw major decline. Kildonan, for example, saw a population decline of eighty percent during the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Prebble 145). During this same stretch "from one-half to two-thirds of the Highland people in Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Inverness had been uprooted and dispersed" (145).

Fry's incredulity about clearance in Sutherland comes under even greater scrutiny when we recognize that 1820, the year Culrain was cleared, saw the culmination of an invigorated clearance policy in Sutherland. Eric Richards relates that "plans for

Whitsunday 1819 required the shifting of about 425 families (probably about 2000 people) and a further 475 families one year later (a figure subsequently revised to 522)” (161). Richards contends that these evictions “were concentrated clearances on the greatest possible scale” (161). Richards and Fry stand in stark contrast on this matter. Fry questions whether clearance was happening in Sutherland in any real sense, while Richards argues that this period saw clearance on “the greatest possible scale.” Contrary to Fry’s reckoning, these people had indeed been cleared in the sense that they were removed from their previous holdings, their homes and their social space. They were the subjects of a traumatic intervention to their social and historical continuity. Whether or not they had been pushed so far afield that they were made to leave the estate, the county, or the country is immaterial.

Clearance cannot be taken strictly to mean depopulation, coercive or otherwise, unless we include in that discussion social spaces much smaller in scale than Fry seems willing to concede, spaces such as the glen, the strath, the village, the home. Clearance never necessarily meant that the population of the Highlands was getting smaller. On the individual scale, clearance was always about disruption of the domestic, the social. As Fry eagerly points out, the population in the Highlands continued to rise in most districts from the late 18<sup>th</sup> through much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Fry’s claims are accurate, but don’t tell the whole story. Geographer Charles Withers has extensively studied population trends in the Highlands and found that, overall population in the Highlands did grow 6.56% in the decade ending in 1811, and a further 12.53% in the following decade. The growth rates in Sutherland, however, were substantially curtailed. For those respective periods Sutherland saw population growth of just 2.21% and .89% (Withers, *Urban*,

Table 2.1). So, while Fry's point is technically accurate, it is clear that there was pressure in Sutherland that forced a break with general population trends. Concurrent with the downtick in Sutherland there was a surge of the growth rate from 8.05% to 12.99% in the neighboring county of Ross and Cromarty and 6.47% to 12.45% in the nearby county of Argyll over the same period (Table 2.1). The overall effect of clearance on the aggregate population of the Highlands was not initially extensive. The vast majority displaced by clearance remained in the north of Scotland. Nevertheless the turmoil in Sutherland and other hotbeds of Highland displacement was helping to fuel population growth in other parts of the region. Richards, for example, points out that after the 1819 Sutherland clearances, 68% of the rent paying tenants remained on the estate while "7 per cent went to neighbouring estates, 21 per cent went to adjoining counties, and 2 percent emigrated" (172), likewise "sub-tenants and persons paying no rent" were distributed so that "73 percent were resettled on the Sutherland coast, 7 per cent went to neighbouring estates, 13 per cent entered neighbouring counties, 5 percent emigrated" (172). The numbers that Withers presents suggest that it wasn't until the census period of 1841-51 that the Highlands started seeing negative population growth, with -1.45% population growth during that period and -6.46% over the following decade (*Urban*, Table 2.1). If we read the assertion that clearance is fundamentally a matter of coercive depopulation back onto Fry's prefatory remark that "the concept of clearance is inadequate to characterize the general course of modern Highland history" (xiii) we see that he essentially claims that the process of coercive depopulation is inadequate to characterize the general course of modern Highland history. Based on the understanding of depopulation that Fry expresses, this prefatory assertion seems accurate enough (previous comments

notwithstanding), and indeed depopulation is not an adequate benchmark to explain the experience of the Highlands since the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This is particularly the case if we understand depopulation to be an overall population reduction within the Highlands or reduction of total population on a given estate, as Fry suggests, rather than the rearranging of tenants after a new fashion.

If we take Fry at his word that clearance must be coercive depopulation, and then only when it leads to overall negative population growth, he would have trouble accepting that any clearance occurred before the 1831-41 census period when we first see negative population growth in Argyll and Sutherland (Table 2.1). We must then reject the hypothesis that depopulation along with the presence of coercion (which will be addressed shortly) is adequate to explain the experience of the Highland Clearances. The policy in Sutherland and many other Highland estates was to “clear people from the interior glens” (Richards 123), to “resettle, not to evict” (154); in the words of Patrick Sellar that the people “be brought from the inaccessible interior of the county” and resettled on “the accessible sea coast where all his motions are distinctly seen” (“Sutherland” 183). Clearance in this sense is not depopulation, but rather reapportionment or, as I suggested previously, clearing out, making way, or pushing aside. Inland glens and straths were often depopulated while the population of the estate remained essentially the same.

The population movement during the Clearances was a process of marginalization, a literal movement from the center to the margins. In addition to the literal geographic marginalization, the move also shifted the population from land that was perceived as useful, at least when put under sheep, to land that had been unutilized

and had questionable value in sustaining traditional lifestyles or supporting profitable endeavors. New allotments were marginal both in the sense that they were outlying and coastal and that they were inhospitable, rocky, swampy, or of generally limited agricultural or industrial use. This spatial reorganization embodied the social transformations emerging in the Highlands at the time. It was reorganization after a new fashion that reflected the emerging needs of nascent capitalism. Spatial and geographical marginalization in the Highlands reflected and reinforced social marginalization in a social-spatial dialectic. It was this reorganization that was the most typical or characteristic model of clearance. Clearance was therefore a process by which the peasant and tenant classes were marginalized. This marginalization allowed the core to more easily appropriate the resources and labor of the periphery. Not only did this reorganization allow easier access to the land, but the restructured social space distributed tenants into discreetly manageable units while it undermined community cohesion and solidarity through which tenants might mount resistance

Land challenges in Scotland have continued throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. What began as sheep clearances in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, turned into deer clearances in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and became oil clearances in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1960s and 70s, with the North Sea oil boom, huge petroleum conglomerates began buying up coastal regions to support offshore drilling endeavors. Bill Forsyth's film, *Local Hero*, dramatizes the oil boom in the north of Scotland. In the film, a Texas oil company sends agents to a coastal Highland town to buy up the whole place and build an oil refinery. In the film, the locals are eager to sell, with visions of new found wealth dancing through their heads. This vision seems to be more fantasy than reality though, as many coastal

residents were forced from their land with little compensation. Many were driven from their homes as the boom drove substantial increases in housing prices and property taxes. Christopher Harvie writes that, during the 1970s, the government “backed rapid extraction and the dispersal of ‘onshore’ activities around the northern coast” (185), adding that:

This threat was dramatised when an oil platform construction company [...] proposed to acquire land at Drumbuie [...] covenanted by a previous owner to the National Trust for Scotland, yet the Heath government in early 1974 intended to help the company with an Act giving it general powers to acquire coastal land for oil-related use. Drumbuie was not the first—or the last—area of great beauty to be thus treated, but the government’s insensitivity promised the rape of the Scottish environment. (185)

Even at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Harvie explains that, “The hills were alive with the sounds of arms dealers, oil sheiks and Wall Street traders having fun. About 13 per cent of Scotland’s territory was still under large landowners and, in 1995 alone, 200,000 acres—1 per cent of all Scottish land—changed hands. Sporting estates, peculiarly uneconomic, still characterised the Highlands” (207). These examples illustrate that consolidation of land and resources into the hands of the wealthy at the exclusion of the poor by no means ended with the Clearances. They continue today and pose ongoing problems for the Scottish people as the wealthy core continues to have its way with the impoverished periphery.

### The Question of Coercion: Why they Left

In his attempt to more rigidly define the term clearance, Fry argues that, to rise to the level of “clearance,” evictions must constitute a process of “coercive depopulation” (190). In the previous section I considered Fry’s problematic assertion that a lack of negative population growth suggested that clearance wasn’t nearly as widespread a phenomenon as some people have come to believe. In this section I consider his claim that a lack of coercion similarly calls into question the prevalence of clearance. Disavowing the general practice of coercive eviction during the Clearances, Fry writes that “Landlords, deploying ample legal powers, did often direct the movement. Their main resort to coercion, however, came in seeking to stop emigrants [...] Absence of depopulation, together with use of coercion rather to promote the opposite result, vindicates a denial that in [the 18<sup>th</sup> century] any Highland clearances took place” (159). For Fry’s argument to hold true we must subscribe to a very narrow definition of coercion that Fry himself eventually betrays. While there may have been coercion aimed at stemming the tide of emigration, it came as part of a double edged sword. Eric Richards points out that “Some historians argue that the impetus [for emigration] came from below, from the people themselves, rather than the landlords,” but then argues that “this is a tricky distinction because it is clear that landlords were simultaneously bemoaning emigration while also causing conditions (including eviction and rent increases) which promoted emigration” (64). Fry, on the other hand, argues that most, if not indeed all, emigrants to North America in the later part of the eighteenth century “left of their own free will” (136) absent of coercion.

In many cases Highlanders were deceived by land agents and shipping operators who enticed would-be emigrants with unrealistic promises about prospects in the New World. Even Fry acknowledges, for example, that the emigrants on the *Hector* in 1791 fell victim to “speculating businessmen [...] who lured them across the ocean” (138). While this certainly doesn’t constitute coercion by the landlords it does underline coercion by the logic of capitalist exploitation. The rising tide of capitalism meant that the Highland lower class was being inundated by schemes designed to separate them from what few resources they had, whether it was clearance relieving them from their land and homes, or opportunistic emigration agents trying to relieve them of what little money they could come up with. For lower class emigrants transport was unsafe, onboard accommodations were wretched and often bred serious illness, and land allotments upon arrival were inadequate. John Prebble writes that “From the beginning the emigrants were the victims of speculators and ship-masters, of typhus, cholera and dysentery. They were deceived in most of the promises made to them” (187). During this time, newspapers were littered with advertisements for emigrant ships, and notices were posted in public spaces, but “In none of the advertisements was there any suggestion that death from fever, or from dysentery, was inevitable for some of the emigrants on every ship. Nor was there a warning that if the ship did not make the landfall it confidently promised, starvation would be added to the normal hell of passage” (192).

While Fry may be correct that social and economic pressure along with opportunistic emigration agents doesn’t amount to a “story of involuntary departure” (137), the existence of such forces does suggest the presence of coercion. One example



Fry offers to support his claim about Highlanders emigrating of their own free will comes from Lewis in the 1850s. Fry relates the story of Sir James Matheson who concluded that “numbers on Lewis had to be restrained somehow” (221). To address what he perceived as a population crisis, Matheson “allowed no more subdivision” of land holdings, “but offered generous terms for assisted emigration, with free passage and supplies for any family unable to pay its own way. He began with those whose rent was furthest in arrears, yet if they turned him down he made it clear he would refuse more help and reserve his legal right to evict them for unpaid rent” (221). In response to Matheson’s proposals, Fry writes that “from 1851 to 1855 over 2000 left for Canada” and cites John Prebble adding that these departures were carried out “without the intervention of a single soldier or policeman, with no civil disobedience of any sort” (Prebble qtd. in Fry 221). This example is meant to point out the great pains that some landlords took to assist their tenants. Fry tells us that Matheson was praised for his beneficence at the time, and that even John Prebble, who Fry elsewhere calls the “bloodhound of lairdly misdemeanour” (190), referred to Matheson as a “benevolent proprietor” (221). Despite these plaudits we must recognize that the presence of a carrot doesn’t suggest the absence of a stick. Matheson’s offer may have been generous in some regards, yet it was hardly devoid of coercion. The choice of free passage, supplies, and forgiveness of debt offered in contrast to the possibility of eviction and legal action is hardly neutral. When making this proposition Matheson’s agents “toured the townships setting out his terms, harping on the bright prospects in North America by contrast with the desperate outlook at home” (221). No one would lightly choose to uproot self and family, indeed entire communities, to emigrate to the colonies, but the pressure was being piled on. In the face of such

profound ideological, financial and legal pressures, the absence of intervention by “a single soldier or policeman” hardly points to the conclusion that these people left of their own free will devoid of coercion. The cumulative inertia generated by the carrot of financial assistance along with the hope of brighter prospects abroad, coupled with the stick of eviction, debt, and the prospect of “desperation” may not be functionally the same as being driven out at musket point, but both spring from the same mode of ideological control; the one aims to dominate physically, the other through the functioning of ideological pressure and hegemony.

In his continued interrogation of how we understand clearance, Fry suggests that “Clearance is the portmanteau term often employed to define the experience of [the Highlands] in the mid-nineteenth century. It is convenient shorthand, but misleading if taken to mean a general, coercive depopulation” (222). Fry asserts that, rather than clearance, the essential experience of the Highlands through this time was that “various trends brought a demographic crisis under control” and that “It would now be not the size of population that determined uses of land, but uses of the land that determined the size of population. This equation no doubt had to be worked out under new masters free of history’s burden. Into it went evictions, but more to the point a huge increase in the numbers of voluntary emigrants” (222). Fry’s use of the phrase “demographic crisis” is significant for its open-endedness. Certainly this claim can be read as the assertion of a population crisis, or more specifically a crisis of over-population, as Fry suggests elsewhere. Nevertheless Fry’s choice to invoke a “demographic crisis” rather than “population crisis” forces us to consider that it was the characteristics of the population that posed a crisis in his view, rather than merely the numbers. Taken in context with his

further suggestion that it would be “the uses of the land that determined the size of population,” we can see that, in Fry’s perspective, the demographic crisis was the result of changes in land use, not the other way around. In Fry’s logic the introduction of a new economic model, and thus new uses of land, predicated the need for population change. In this view there would have been no necessary changes in population size had the uses of land not been changing. It was capitalist aspirations that drove demographic change. The free market was set to dictate the uses of the land and the lives of the people. Fry’s defense of capitalist expansion through the era of the Clearances glosses over the source of changes in land use that would come to “determine the size of the population.” The changes in land use that would come to necessitate a smaller population were changes enforced from above; they were the result of that large scale experiment in social engineering. These were engineered changes. The lower classes were being forced to a position of further dependency and poverty by the wealthy who were supported by the government throughout the Highland Clearances. By saying that land use would determine population size, without acknowledging the role of human agency in changing land use, Fry positions the change as natural and neutral, and the corresponding changes in the population as an inevitable outcome, natural as the spring following the winter. On the contrary, the “demographic crisis,” as Fry calls it, was a manufactured outcome of changes in land use policy, not the cause of those changes. The legacy of this manipulation and exploitation cannot be forgotten, it casts a shadow even today, as the poor continue to be exploited throughout Scotland, Europe, and the world in the name of capitalism.

In claiming that there was a “huge increase in the numbers of voluntary emigrants,” Fry doesn’t take the time to consider what “voluntary” emigration really means in this context. His view of the Matheson episode falls apart under scrutiny as he fails to account for the influence of ideological and hegemonic coercion, and so must other accounts of voluntary emigration fall apart under similar circumstances. There may have been a great many Highlanders that did leave of free will absent of coercion, but the majority were under the sway of a constellation of social and economic pressures. It is impossible to parse each of the social, economic, ideological and hegemonic influences that were pressuring Highlanders to emigrate. Nevertheless we must again consider the assertion by Eric Richards that landlords were “causing conditions (including eviction and rent increases) which promoted emigration” (64) if we are to claim that emigration was voluntary. Given the prospects of only desolation and poverty, the hope of a new start was a powerful motivation. “Voluntary” emigration among the lower classes of Highland society was not generally embarked upon in a fanfare of optimism, but as a reaction to the pessimism of possibilities at home.

Ultimately, Fry vindicates emigration as a net positive when he claims that “A paradox of modern mourning about clearance is that it all comes from descendants of those who stayed behind” (228). The descendants of those who left, Fry argues, “insist their forefathers had not been cleared, but [came] of their own free will and made the most of things” (229). If true, this claim would substantially undermine Fry’s larger argument, that the social engineering of the Clearances along with the mode of capitalism that it introduced was a positive change and ultimately of benefit to the Highlanders, even if there were some bumps in the road. If, after all, those who stayed behind to reap the

benefits of the new economic system are the ones who passed on the memory of trauma, betrayal and a legacy of lingering poverty, is this not a condemnation of the policies that Fry works to vindicate? The accuracy of Fry's contention, however, is questionable.

This is another moment which finds Fry's position standing in opposition to that of Eric Richards. Richards writes that "The question of the Highland Clearances rankles still in the collective memory of Scotland and especially among Scots abroad" (4). Whatever the reason for the discrepancy, the fact remains that the memory of trauma continues both within Scotland and the Scottish diaspora.

While criticizing ideologues with whom he disagrees, Fry's own work reads as an apologia for capitalist development and the legal agency of landlords to discharge the administration of their holdings without regard to social responsibility. And, while he attacks uncritical sentimentalization, in his own reading Fry brings to bear an overly simplistic view of the power structures in the Highlands and the development of modern capital. Where Prebble and Grimble sentimentalize a culture driven to the edge of extinction in the wake of clearance, Fry waxes poetic about the emergence of capitalism, writing that "Sutherland is a rugged but varied country. It runs from smiling farmlands on the Dornoch Firth in the south-east to the forbidding wilderness round Cape Wrath in the north-west; there the visitor will feel himself at the end of the earth" (169). Fry estimates that improvers were trying to bring the beauty of order into this ugly wilderness: "Loch's plan," he relates:

was for art to be imposed on this nature [...] The interior would be turned over to sheep [...] the most rational use for that land in a modern Britain with an efficient division of labour. The people would be moved to new

coastal villages, where opportunities awaited them in industries and fisheries. In a nutshell, it was Scotland's first big experiment in social engineering. (169)

Fry sees elegance in this experiment in social engineering implemented through the Clearances. An experiment in social engineering is necessarily a top down proposition, it necessitates that the experimenter be in a position of privilege and authority such that he can transform members of the lower classes into subjects of the experiment. Social experimentation is therefore an exercise in domination. Social engineering is as concise a conceptual tool as any to make sense of the Clearances. Planned change was enacted through a systematic intervention in lives and social institutions. The most powerful members of Highland society, protected by the laws of the country, sought to remake social space, institute rigorous changes in both the division of labor and economic foundation of the region, and to dictate the distribution, lifestyle and conditions of labor of the lower classes of society. If we accept Fry's assertion that the Clearances were Scotland's "first big experiment in social engineering" we must look back at the matter of coercion through this lens. If the Clearances constituted a large scale social engineering project, then it must follow that coercion existed to a similar extent, not merely in the individual moments of aggression, legal posturing, and forcible eviction that punctuated the most sensational moments, but in the functioning of the entire system. Pressure to conform to the newly engineered social paradigm penetrated deeply into the fabric of the social system that it aimed to remake. Hegemonic and ideological pressure bound to the experimental social model permeated all of the relationships placed under pressure by the

experiment. Coercion was not merely top down in the moments of tension between the dominant and the dominated, but arose from a broad constellation of social relations.

In his final assessment, Fry blames the Highlanders for their own fate, arguing that “their history is largely one of mistakes, of an almost inerrant instinct for choosing the wrong, the losing side in religion, politics, economics and society generally” (320). Fry’s striking dismissal of the social and cultural capital of an entire society ignores, or implicitly rejects, the imposition of economic, social and hegemonic power within Highland society. Fry here exposes his deeply-held biases and exposes his conservative *bona fides*. The logic here suggests that had the Highlanders simply assimilated to the dominant modes of Scottish and British society and worked harder in a more productive capitalist manner, they could have turned victimization to success. Fry’s comments echo commentary from the modern right proclaiming that the individual has the ability to transcend poverty or racial bias through the sheer power of will and hard work: Thatcher’s famous comment that “There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families” comes to mind. In Fry’s rhetoric, religion, politics, economics and “society generally” are choices that can consciously be made, he rejects the notion that society and culture make us who we are. He also rejects the role of institutionalized forms of bias. Rather than being choices, Highlanders were born into linguistic, religious, economic and social positions that alienated them from the dominant social structures—these were decidedly not choices. Some Highlanders may have consciously chosen to embrace the logic of assimilation, domination and capitalist accumulation. Even then only the most privileged would have had the resources and social capital to make such a conscious move into the dominant modes of society. In this

sense, as far as the Highlanders were concerned, the history of the Clearances were the history of coercion; coercion to comply with clearance policy, to emigrate in order to avoid poverty and desolation, and to assimilate to the preferred cultural modes of the modern capitalist system.

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Highland Clearances have been brought under public scrutiny again and again as historians, journalists and artists of all stripes have mined the past to make statements about contemporary political issues. For Fry, the political statement is that whatever the human cost may have been during the Clearances, the rise of capitalism was worth the trouble. Fry sees capitalism as the path to freedom, writing that the way forward is for:

Highlanders to take their place on the same footing as everyone else—in Britain, in Europe, in North America and now in the Orient too—in the modern, liberal, individualist, capitalist order. The price of failure here can be high (though surely not higher than the price of Highlanders have already paid). Yet the reward of success is huge for those who depend on themselves, not on others. (320-1)

The whole of Fry's work seems to lead up to this assessment: that dependency on landlordism and adherence to traditional Highland lifestyles bred dependency.

#### What the Improvers Saw: Top-Down Perspectives on Clearance

It was May of 1809 when Patrick Sellar first set foot in Sutherland. He recalls setting out with several companions who together “embarked to see this *terra incognita*”



(qtd. in T. Sellar 22). Reflecting on what he knew of Sutherland before this visit, Sellar commented that “when I lived in Morayshire, Sutherland was very little known or thought of in that county. The honest folks there used to call the whole ridge of country which they saw on the opposite side of the Firth, ‘The Ross-shire Hills,’ and there was no communication betwixt the counties” (21). Despite living much of his life just a few miles away, across the Moray Firth, Sellar saw Sutherland as the frontier, an unimproved patchwork of mountains, wilderness, and morass. By Sellar’s account there was at the time “no road in the country, no harbour, not a single stading of houses” (22). The people of Sutherland too were imagined as wild and full of squandered potential even to one living as near as Sellar. Sellar, swept up by the writing of Adam Smith, and “extolling the virtues of the division of labour at all times” (Richards 129-30) lamented that “every man was his own mason, carpenter, tanner, shoemaker, &c., [...] work could not be got done in the country for love or money. Every man wore his own cloth, ate his own corn and potatoes, sold a lean kyloe to pay the rent, had no ambition for any comfort or luxury beyond the sloth then possessed” (P. Sellar qtd. in T. Sellar 23). In his own exhortation about the Sutherlanders, James Loch chastises them for their flawed disposition, referring to them as “a hardy but not industrious race of people” (51), accusing the men of being “impatient of regular and constant work” so that “all the heavy labour was abandoned to the women,” and claiming that “the great proportion of their time, when not in the pursuit of [poaching] game or of illegal distillation, was spent in indolence and sloth” (51). Again and again Sellar and Loch make similar claims of indolence, sloth and petty criminality. These claims position the Highlanders as barbarous, backwards and alienated from dominant modes of Scottish and English

society. Accusations of sloth, indolence, endemic illicit distillation and other petty crimes also seek to portray the Highland population in opposition to the established modes of morality in a Scottish society still deeply influenced by Knox, Calvin and the moral imperative of the protestant work ethic.

The rhetoric that Sellar and Loch used to characterize the Highland population has very old roots indeed. The notion that northern Scots were a backwards and barbarous people dates back at least to the time that Hadrian built his wall. By the time of James VI, 1567-1625, “the Highlands reached the ambiguous state of being both quaint and barbarous” (Houston and Knox xviii). Lingering prejudices here heightened in the 1740s as the Jacobite threat escalated and “the British elite [...] tended to see Highlanders as dangerous and primitive, as people to be both feared and despised” (Mack 89). In the political rhetoric of the 1740s, Mack identifies a tendency towards “dehumanisation of Highland Scotland and Highland Scots” (91) similar to the “dehumanization of Africa and Africans” that Achebe identified in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (89). Just a few decades before Sellar and Loch intervened in Sutherland we see a prominent and well developed example of this marginalizing rhetoric in Samuel Johnson’s famous travelogue *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, published in 1774.

Setting out from Inverness, Johnson writes, “We were now to bid farewell to the luxury of traveling, and to enter a country upon which perhaps no wheel has ever rolled” (22). Musing on the general character of highland people, Johnson speculates that “Mountaineers are thievish, because they are poor, and having neither manufactures nor commerce, can grow richer only by robbery” (36). For Johnson, the Highlanders were relics of an ancient time, marginalized in the lingering twilight of history. He is

preoccupied by the mythology of barbarism and savagery, longing to see the remains of an ancient culture preserved intact. However Johnson is blinded by his own assumptions and prejudice, at one turn he damns the Highlanders for their backwardness and at the next for what meager inroads “civilization” has made. When Johnson expects musealization and finds the slightest tinge of progress he laments the loss of the primitive, yet when he sees the possibility for technological advancement, or agricultural improvement he criticizes the very primitivism he fetishizes.

In Johnson’s mind, the continued use of Gaelic in the Highlands and Islands was both an important identity marker and an enemy of cultural progression, inhibiting social integration and holding fast to antiquity. Johnson reckons that “Under the denomination of *highlander* are comprehended in Scotland all that now speak the Erse language, or retain the primitive manners, whether they live among the mountains or in the islands” (40-41).<sup>4</sup> Johnson’s opinion of the Highland people is deeply entwined in his understanding of their language. The doctor reckons Gaelic as “the rude speech of a barbarous people, who had few thoughts to express, and were content, as they conceived grossly, to be grossly understood” (96). Johnson’s dismissal of Gaelic is predicated on his claim that “the *Earse* merely floated in the breath of the people, and could therefore receive little improvement” (96). Johnson’s claims display a cultural chauvinism deeply imbedded in the logic of colonial expansion. He dismisses as barbaric that which is different, and as unrefined that which persists in orality.

As Johnson elaborates on the privilege of literacy over orality his rhetoric pushes the Highlanders ever further into a position of marginality. By 1774, when *A Journey to*

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<sup>4</sup> Johnson uses both “Erse” and “Earse” to denote the Gaelic language

*the Western Islands of Scotland* was published, Johnson was very near the center of the dominant cultural modes of British society. He was famous, well educated, well regarded as an authority on many matters, and by this time in his life reasonably well off. From this position of interiority and authority Johnson constructs a rhetoric of marginality for the Highlanders that places them at the outermost periphery within the British isles. Scotland is the hinterland to England as a dominant center. The industrial centers in Scotland are further removed from the centers of power than those of northern England, as much by cultural distance as geography. Within Scotland the rural areas are outliers to the relative centers of power along the Clyde. The rural Highlands then are more marginal than the relatively more productive and developed Lowlands. The Gaelic speaking regions then are another step removed from the more integrated English speaking regions.

Beyond barbarism, Johnson also establishes the Highland people, specifically the *Gàidhealtachd*, or Gaelic speaking peoples, as foreign and exotic. Rather than merely domestic barbarians or friendly savages, Johnson positions the Highlanders as beyond the threshold of civil society, not merely a backwards people, but an exotic other. He suggests that “To the southern inhabitants of Scotland, the state of the mountains and the islands is equally unknown with that of *Borneo* or *Sumatra*: Of both they have only heard a little, and guess the rest. They are strangers to the language and the manners, to the advantages and wants of the people” (73). The Highlanders are the margin of the margin. Johnson positions the Highlanders as doubly removed from the English center to and from which he writes, even among the marginal Scots, the Highlanders are themselves marginal.

In his companion work, Boswell illuminates Johnson's position further, reflecting on an evening in the company of Lord Seaforth and members of clan Macrae of whom, other than their host, "Not one of them could speak English. I observed to Dr. Johnson, it was much the same as being with a tribe of Indians.—*Johnson*, 'Yes, sir; but not so terrifying'" (240). Boswell continues, "There was great diversity in the faces of the circle around us: Some were as black and wild in their appearance as any American savages whatever" (240-1). Here then is the rhetoric of dehumanization, so common in the colonial experience, the Macraes were black, wild and savage—exotic and foreign.

While Johnson and Boswell are happy to ascribe the *Gàidhealtachd* to the reliquaries of history, novelty and barbarism, they also lament the cultural changes that had made inroads by the time of their journey. Johnson observes that after the 1745 Jacobite uprising, Culloden and the censure of Highland dress and culture brought by the 1746 Act of Proscription, that "There was perhaps never any change of national manners so quick, so great, and so general" (47). Disappointed that such changes had already begun, Johnson adds "We came thither too late to see what we expected, a people of peculiar appearance, and a system of antiquated life. The clans retain little now of their original character [...] Of what they had before the late conquest of their country, there remain only their language and their poverty" (47). Johnson laments the cultural shifts in the Highlands because he has fetishized the exotic and because he anticipated the intellectual stimulation of doing ethnography on a primitive culture *in situ*, but he seems of two minds. On the one hand disappointment springs from the failure of the Highlands to sate his romantically fueled curiosity. On the other he finds value in the "civilizing" effects of the English language and modern social structures, commenting that "The

conversation of the *Scots* grows every day less unpleasing to the *English*; their peculiarities wear fast away; their dialect is likely to become in half a century provincial and rustick, even to themselves. The great, the learned, the ambitious, and the vain, all cultivate the *English* phrase, and the *English* pronunciation” (135).

In their exculpation of improvement policy, Loch and Sellar also tarry frequently on the role of language and the civilizing impetus of English. Loch, for example, argues that progress in the region was hastened by those Highlanders “situated nearer to the lowlands having, from such vicinage, gradually acquired more steady and industrious habits; and what was still more important, from having acquired such a knowledge of the English language, as to remove that barrier, which the prevalence of the Celtick tongue presents to the improvement and civilization of the district” (44-45). In a footnote to this passage, Loch expands that “the co-existence of the two languages is impossible,” and that “the progress of the English language must be rapid and irresistible. Every cause combines to produce this effect, founded in the interest of the people themselves” (44). Patrick Sellar states his case much more strongly. In his “Note Concerning Sutherland” Sellar makes plain his view of Gaelic, and of the Highlanders that speak it:

Their obstinate adherence to the barbarous jargon of the times when Europe *was possessed by Savages*, their *rejection* of any of several languages now used in Europe, and which being Sprung or at least improved from those of the greatest nations of antiquity, carry with them the collected wisdom of all ages, and have raised their possessors to the most astonishing pitch of *eminence* and *power*—Their seclusion, I say, from this grand fund of knowledge, places them, with relation to the

enlightened nations of Europe in a position not very different from that betwixt the American Colonists and the Aborigines of the Country. (175-6)

Sellar takes the native Gaelic speakers to task for rejection of modern European languages, as if it were an intentional decision, and not the product of isolation and cultural continuity. Dismissive of the value of their native language and its corresponding culture, Sellar again highlights the parallels between the native Highlanders and natives of other regions. For Johnson, Sellar and Loch, the dominance of the English language becomes the *sin qua non* of the process of civilization.

Sellar's note goes on to rage about the pervasiveness of illegal distillation on the Sutherland estate. He contends, for example, that the parish of Creich "so far as Lord and Lady Stafford's property is concerned was a complete nest of smugglers" (179), that "Rogart is entirely packed and crammed with Whisky Smugglers" (180) and that the people of Kildonan "pay their rents by Smuggling barley brought over the mountains from Caithness, returning the Whisky to that Country and Orkney and by stealing sheep from the neighbouring farm" (182). In response to what he imagines as an endemic problem, Sellar suggests that the first step to prevent illicit whisky production and the concomitant moral decline is "bringing of the patient from the inaccessible country where alone this mortal complaint rages, to the accessible coast where with proper care it can't exist" (179). Sellar's language again positions the Highlanders as both barbarous and criminal, in his own words the social and cultural equivalent of Native American peoples as he then conceived them. For the welfare of the estate, and to save them from their own devices of sloth and debauchery, Sellar reckons that the Highlanders need to be extirpated

from their current inland homes and brought to the coast where they will be forced into more industrious habits. Loch too writes that one of the aims of eviction was to “convert the inhabitants of those districts to the habits of regular and continued industry” and to “raise the importance, and increase the happiness of the individuals themselves” (78). To achieve this end, Sellar writes that Clearance of Sutherland was “*humanely* ordered” by the proprietors “because, it surely was a most benevolent action, to put these barbarous hordes into a position, where they could better associate together, apply to industry, educate their children, and advance in civilization” (“Colquhoun” 156). Expanding on this position, Sellar contends that:

nothing is more plain than that by an arrangement to be matured on a prudent considerate and systematic plan, the people may (as they ought) be brought from the inaccessible interior of the country where smuggling is the only possible means of life, where man is shut out from every rational pursuit to the accessible sea coast where all his motions are distinctly seen, where so many different fields for his industry lie open, where his children are educated and bred honest and useful trades and where the presence of people firmly knit together in the bond of one Society is necessary for any such things as scientific direction of labour wealth and prosperity in a Country. (“Sutherland” 183)

To achieve the latter changes Sellar proposes “medicines of the mind” (183) for which he suggests that “Teachers of Youth and the Ministers” be “brought from an industrious Country the sons of industrious Parents, and with a passion for industry in them” (184). In Sellar’s mind, Gaelic speakers that held such positions at the time were “bred in a



country of sloth and idleness the sons of Highland tenants and whisky smugglers, and with a tone imbued from earliest infancy of detestation to every introduction to industry or innovation on the ancient language and manners of the Gael” (184). Sellar’s distaste for the Gael is unambiguous and he advocates a systematic ideological and hegemonic intervention to assimilate them to dominant English and Lowland cultural modes. Sellar adds “The sure road to the head is by the heart and while the heart is kept subject to ignorance and prejudice, little genuine co-operation can be expected” (184). The intent of Sellar’s proposed re-education program is to affect ideological change, undermine future resistance and bolster acquiescence to the ongoing policies of removal and emerging capitalism.

Among the several interwoven threads that we can identify in the above comments is the tendency to exoticize. Silke Stroh has identified this tendency in treatment of Highlanders and Highland culture and argued that:

Portrayals of Highlanders in Anglophone discourses, especially since the eighteenth century, bear many parallels to Orientalism: ‘Celts’ often appear as timeless, static, venerable ancient cradles of civilizations, though in their *present* state dreadfully *uncivilized*; but also more ‘unspoilt’ natural or spiritual than a diametrically opposed (dynamic, materialist, efficient, civilized) centre. (184)

For Johnson the paradoxical dilemma of reconciling his expectations with the reality that he found on his journey was a response to this Orientalism, or rather to what has been termed Celticism. His expectations of a timeless, static society had been violated by the modest inroads of civilization. Loch and Sellar, having more practical concerns than

Johnson, can only see the “dreadfully uncivilized” nature of the *Gàidhealtachd*, and its vulnerability for exploitation and improvement. Other significant threads that we see emerging in these discussions are the refrains that these backwards savages need to be civilized and assimilated into dominant culture for their own benefit.

What this points to is that alongside the push of industrial capitalism there was indeed an aspect of cultural antagonism involved in the process of clearance. As I discussed previously, there is a current of thought about the Clearances that ascribes them with genocidal characteristics. I maintain that this is an overstatement or misinterpretation of the facts, but suspect that it is born from a recognition of cultural antagonism coupled with a failure of vocabulary. While the comments of Loch and Sellar suggest a desire to effectively extinguish Gaelic language and culture this urge is not genocidal but assimilative. Not only does Loch view Gaelic as impeding the general progress of capitalism, but he sees it as “retarding the improvement and progress of one portion of the people of Britain,” and argues that displacement of Gaelic by English should be carried out “in the interest of the people themselves” (44 footnote). The cultural antagonism present in the Clearances sought to subsume in order to exploit, rather than to destroy for the sake of malice or in the name of ending the threat of a scapegoated population; it claims also to civilize the barbarous for their benefit, not to eliminate them. This is the logic of the colonial rather than the genocidal.

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin offer two particularly useful paradigms for a discussion of the Clearances in the context of the colonial. First is that “One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language. The imperial education system installs a ‘standard’ version of the metropolitan language as

the norm, and marginalizes all the ‘variants’ as impurities” (7). The second is that “the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being” from a “concern with place and displacement” and that:

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by *dislocation*. Or it may have been destroyed by *cultural denigration*, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. [...] The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. (8-9)

The characteristics that Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin identify are easily distinguishable in the legacy of the Clearances. The experience of clearance was dislocation predicated on intervention in and settlement of the interior Highlands. The intervention and displacement of clearance created a crisis of identity for displaced Highlanders, disrupting community and heightening an already developed attachment to land and lifestyle as displacement lead to resistance, trauma and lamentation. The crisis in identity was further exacerbated as dislocated tenants lost the cultural ties of their previous situations and many began the process of assimilation through atrophy, necessity, or encouragement by agents of the dominant culture.

As I discussed previously, there had been a strong tendency, beginning well before the Clearances, to ascribe barbarous and uncivilized characteristics to Gaelic speaking Highlanders. This cultural denigration reached its zenith in the response to Culloden and the 1745 Jacobite uprising. The 1746 Act of Proscription institutionalized

cultural denigration of Gaelic culture, making it illegal to “wear or put on the clothes commonly called Highland Clothes (that is to say) the plaid, philibeg, or little kilt, trowse, shoulder belts, or any part whatsoever of what peculiarly belongs to the Highland garb; and that no tartan, or partly-coloured plaid or stuff shall be used for great coats, or for upper coats” (“Act of Proscription”). The punishment for such an egregious offence as wearing “Highland garb” was imprisonment for six months for the first offence, and transportation to “any of his Majesty's plantations beyond the seas, there to remain for a space of seven years” for the second offence (“Act of Proscription”). Denigration of Gaelic society in dominant culture continued throughout the subsequent decades, and was again reinforced by both by the process of clearance and hegemonic intervention.

Alongside the processes of spatial and cultural intervention, agents of change in the Highlands were clearly interested in eliminating Gaelic through hegemonic linguistic intervention. English was the language of the dominant culture and capitalism, and therefore was set to subsume the Gaelic language—yet another mode of cultural denigration. As Loch wrote, “the co-existence of the two languages is impossible [...] the progress of the English language must be rapid and irresistible” (44). Sellar and Loch, along with Johnson before them, characterize the Gaelic language as an impediment to economic progress and little else, not even seeing it as a valuable cultural inheritance. Loch goes so far as to write that attempts had been made by “excellent and worthy gentlemen connected with the Highlands, to arrest the inevitable and rapid extinction of the Gaelick language. This certainly would be a matter of deep regret [...] if it could be conceived that these attempts would be attended with success” (44, footnote). Linguistic assimilation, even to the point of extinction, was one of the

underlying goals in the push of economic advancement that fueled the Highland Clearances. Assimilation of Highlanders to the language of industrial capitalism allowed for their more rapid integration within the nascent economic structures.

The initial impetus for clearance may not have arisen from cultural differences or cultural aggression, but the differences did help facilitate their unobstructed progression. More likely the impetus for clearance can be identified within the asymmetric economic advancement of the core and periphery. Michael Hechter has argued that “The uneven wave of industrialization over territorial space creates relatively advanced and less advanced groups, and therefore cleavages of interest arise between these groups” (39). During the Clearances a substantial aspect of those “cleavages of interest” arose from questions of land use and allocation of labor. The relatively less advantaged group maintained their interest in small scale farming on the interior glens and straths. Meanwhile the more advantaged group pressed their interest in industrial scale farming and turning the labor of the less advantaged group from subsistence to industrial production. This cleavage had been codified by the advancement of industrial capitalism into the north of Scotland; the advantaged class then sought to expropriate and capitalize on the resources previously utilized by less advantaged classes. Hechter continues, writing that the advanced group, established as the core, “seeks to stabilize and monopolize its advantage through policies aiming at the institutionalization and perpetuation of the existing stratification system” this system seeks to “regulate the allocation of social roles such that those roles commonly defined as having high status are generally reserved for its members. Conversely, individuals from the less advanced group tend to be denied access to these roles” (39). Hechter calls this process the

“cultural division of labor.” Once again we can clearly see this process at work in new economic policies implemented through the Clearances. Cleared tenants were moved from the interior to the coast where it was expected they would engage in the fishing trade, either plying the seas themselves or working in the new processing facilities being built in Helmsdale and elsewhere. The wealthy and the well connected, generally lowland Scots, took leases on huge new sheep farms, hiring yet more lowlanders to tend their flocks. As I suggested previously, the Highlanders displaced to make way for these farms were systematically excluded from the sheep industry. This cultural division of labor, then, dictated that the lower Gaelic speaking classes be relegated to fishing and related industries, while the relatively more affluent English speaking lowlanders held stake in the newly minted sheep industry.

Michael Hechter writes that a “large body of inference concerns the mode of England’s domination of the Celtic periphery.” Hechter writes, however, that “very little is known about the actual mechanisms of such control, or about the prevalence of ethnocentric attitudes towards inhabitants of the peripheral regions” (347). One of the projects of this dissertation is to shed light on both the “mechanisms of control” of within the internal colonialism of Britain and the ethnocentric attitudes that helped to drive its progress. Over the previous pages I have traced some of the ethnocentric attitudes towards the inhabitants of the peripheral regions, from the eminent Dr. Johnson, through James Loch and Patrick Sellar, who were personally responsible for implementing the policies of internal colonial expansion. As for the mechanisms of control employed in the expansion of the internal colony, I contend that the Highland Clearances are one such

mechanism. The process of clearance was a powerful component of English dominance in the Celtic periphery, at least in Scotland.

To the extent that the history of the Clearances is a history of expropriation of resources, exploitation of labor, and subversion of culture it is appropriate to consider it within the sphere of colonial experiences, whether or not we conceive of it as internal, in the sense that it emerged from asymmetric economic development, or in a more traditional mode in which a dominating culture moves against a distinct and subservient culture. The example of Scotland within the colonial conversation is instructive. It differs from colonial sites in places like Asia, Africa or the Caribbean because of distance from the colonial center, the apparatus of political incorporation, and that the colonial incursion did not cross a color line or extend the reach of empire beyond Europe. Nevertheless, the similarities are striking. The colonial process in the Highlands breached cultural and linguistic barriers, imposing hegemonic pressure on the natives to assimilate to the dominant culture. It also sought to remake the social space of the Highlands, expropriate the resources of the colonized space, and redirect the labor of the colonized people, all under the justification of spreading civilization and lifting the poor savages from the bonds of barbarism. Including the Highlands of Scotland in the postcolonial conversation forces us to accept that the colonialism occurred along a spectrum of experiences.

### Post-Clearance Geographies: Spatiality and Surveillance

Edward Soja argues that, social and spatial relations “are not only homologous, in that they arise from the same origins in the mode of production, but are also dialectically inseparable” (78). Within the dialectically inseparable social and spatial relations in the Highlands spatial reorganization indexed the process of capitalist expansion; that is, Highland space was recreated to reflect the values and needs of capitalist production and accumulation. This new capitalist model supplanted the previous militaristic/subsistence/familial model as clearance reshaped the social space. After Culloden, the militaristic aspect of clan affiliation was rapidly constricted. Meanwhile the push of capitalism altered the economic and political utility of clan members and lands. Under emergent capitalism the land itself, and the uses to which it could be put, became a more important resource than the people were under militaristic clanship. Without the necessity of enlisting a regiment under the clan banner, much of the population became superfluous. They were an impediment to developing the economic potential of the estate except where they could be harnessed as a surplus of labor.

Under pressure from aristocratic and bourgeois interests, Highlanders living in lingering subsistence communities became rapidly proletarianized. As space was cleared and the population pushed aside, the logic of the market was scribed onto the geography of the Highlands. Eric Richards writes that “conversion of large territories of sheep could be allied, without great difficulty, to a parallel advance of fishing and manufacturing industry in designated places along the coast” (122). The underlying driver of clearance in Sutherland and elsewhere was to establish the infrastructure, facilities and impetus to



take part in emergent industrial and agricultural capitalism. The broader program consisted of a “plan of forced economic advance which included specific plans for coastal development, involving tanning, cotton, flax, salt, brick and lime manufacturing, coal-mining, fishing and ‘muir’ improvement. These plans were meant to be entirely complementary to the ongoing plans for clearances from the interior” (130). Though sheep farming may have been the immediate impetus for many clearances, it was just part of this broader program of industrialization.

In order to facilitate the desired economic changes, clearance sought not merely to empty or depopulate the interior, but also to introduce surplus labor into the planned industrial regions. Along with proximity to these new centers of commerce, estate management encouraged capitalist engagement by limiting the potential for other endeavors. To this end James Loch was “particularly anxious that [tenant’s] lots be so small as to prevent their massing any considerable part of their rent by selling a beast, their rent must not depend on that. [...] To induce them to exertion they must pay a more than nominal rent and yet not so much as to oppress them” (qtd. in Richards 155).

Elsewhere Loch writes that under this new system the Highlands:

should support as numerous, and a far more laborious and useful population, than it hitherto had done at home [and] convert the inhabitants of those districts to the habits of regular and continued industry, and enable them to bring to market a very considerable surplus quantity of provisions, for the supply of the large towns in the southern parts of the island, or for the purpose of exportation. (73)

These admissions by Loch strongly suggest that not only was the welfare of the tenants not the primary concern, but that driving down population numbers was in fact antithetical to the desired goals of increased economic production. Furthermore, Loch's assertion that Sutherland should "support as numerous" a population as it previously had and produce a surplus of provisions for export suggests that, contrary to Fry's vigorous assertions, the region was not overpopulated based on the capacity of the resources available, nor was clearance fundamentally about depopulation. Loch was of the opinion that Sutherland was able to support not only its own people, but also to add substantially to supporting the rest of the Great Britain. Moving towards greater productivity necessitated more efficient and modern techniques. It did not require disenfranchisement and alienation of the tenantry. This was clearly a choice, not a necessity. In light of these machinations it becomes evident that the process of geographic reallocation during the Highland Clearances was entwined with a system of hegemonic manipulation of social and economic institutions.

The new social-spatial dialectic in the Highlands progressed from capitalist aspirations that sought to dominate and optimize the production of both the land and the people. Clearance literally swept the people to the margins, in this action we can see the functioning of a dynamic social-spatial interaction. Invoking the work of Henri Lefebvre, Soja contends that we can distinguish "between Nature as a naively given context and what can be termed 'second nature', the transformed and socially concretized spatiality arising from the application of purposeful human labour" (80). It is within and through this ordered, or reordered, space of second nature that modes of social and economic domination are reproduced. Through clearance, the Highlands were recreated as in the

process identified by Soja as “a concretized and created spatiality that has been progressively ‘occupied’ by an advancing capitalism, fragmented into parcels, homogenized into discrete commodities, organized into locations of control, and extended to the global scale (92).

The spatial marginalization of the *Gàidhealtachd* marks the emergence of this “second nature,” the occupation of the Highlands by the logic of capitalism, and the incursion of the mechanisms of internal colonialism. Through a reductive process of hegemonic intervention the indigenous population is transformed first from a dynamic social body into an obstacle to capitalist expansion that must be pushed aside, and then through a process of consolidation and restriction the social body is made subject of the capitalist project as they are proletarianized and assimilated into the dominant culture.

Soja continues, writing that class struggle:

must encompass and focus upon the vulnerable point: the production of space, the territorial structure of exploitation and domination, the spatially controlled reproduction of the system as a whole. And it must include all those who are exploited, dominated, and ‘peripheralized’ by the imposed spatial organization of advanced capitalism: landless peasants, proletarianized petty bourgeoisies, women, students, racial minorities, as well as the working class itself. (127)

Within the logic of clearance the imperatives of class struggle that Soja illuminates are evident. In order to recreate capitalism in the hinterlands of Scotland, the landlords had first focused on the most vulnerable members of their society—poor Gaelic speakers—and dispossessed them of their most valuable form of capital, i.e. land. The first step was

to enact a policy of spatial organization that reinforced emergent modes of domination and anticipated the future needs of the market. Clearance marginalized, or “peripheralized,” in order to consolidate a labor force and to breed further dependency within the lower classes of society, no longer would they be able to merely subsist, they would now be dependent on engaging with the market. As we have seen, the new allotments were intentionally conceived so as to discourage independence.

While the proprietors Highlands estates were busy putting their lands under sheep and dislodging the social structures of their tenants, they were also bringing changes beyond the obvious economic upheaval, population redistribution and social reorganization that fractured Highland communities. In an 1816 letter to Lord Culmaily, Patrick Sellar gives the game away when, after a litany of unsubstantiated accusations levied at the inhabitants of Sutherland, he suggests that the people “be brought from the inaccessible interior of the country where smuggling is the only possible means of life, where man is shut out from every rational pursuit to the accessible sea coast where all his motions are *distinctly seen*” (“Sutherland” 183, emphasis mine). It becomes clear in this moment that it is not merely the economic aspirations of the landlords and their agents, nor, as Loch suggests, the “relief of these poor people” (79) that drives policies of eviction and social restructuring. Fueled by greed and an unabashed distaste for Gaelic culture, Sellar advocates for economic and geo-social transformations that will not only afford him the opportunity to cash in on the emerging sheep industry, but also implement a more rigorous disciplinary mechanism within Sutherland.

James Loch, too, saw a need for implementing a more stringent surveillance apparatus as part of the new spatial order of the Highlands. In 1820 Loch decreed that

tenants, having been shifted from the interior to the coast, were “bound to erect stone houses, and these must be placed in the view of the roads near which they are situated, so that they will not only be constantly under the eye of the local management, but will gradually acquire industrious habits from their being placed near the great lines of communication through the county” (103). While “the eye of local management” cast its gaze on the lives of these resettled tenants, it also insured that under the new system there would be no more possibility of sub-division or sub-tenantry, and squatters would be effectively rooted out. Under the new system “tenants all hold immediately of the landlord” (103). Requiring all houses be built in sight of the road would then “prevent the erection of those wretched huts under which that numerous population started up, which has been already described as paying rent to no one” (103-4). These new policies sought to observe the tenantry and through the functioning of a disciplinary gaze bring their behavior in line with the desired ideology of the ruling classes. They also sought to identify and catalog the population, confine them to their assigned allotments and thereby facilitate a rigorous surveillance apparatus.

Alongside Loch’s imperative that the tenantry must maintain a visible presence when building their new homes, there was a more insidious form of control and surveillance designed by Loch to prevent subdivision of holdings and stem population growth. In what became known as the “Loch policy,” Loch “sought to clamp ‘marriage rules’ upon the common people” (Richards 170). To this end Loch allowed unmarried children to remain on their parents’ property indefinitely, but forbade married children from residing on their parents’ holding. This also meant that unless the factor was able, and inclined, to find a new residence for the couple, they were forced to leave the

Sutherland estate if they chose to marry. Prebble goes so far as to claim that at one point the “young among them had to go to [Loch’s] agents for permission to marry” (69).

Strictly speaking Prebble is incorrect on this matter, there was never an imperative to ask permission to marry, merely to marry and subsequently remain on the estate; though for people living in poverty with few skills and few options, the difference was largely immaterial. Prebble clarifies his position when he argues that the policy essentially amounted to a proscriptive “marriage-by-permission” scheme, pointing out that:

though a small tenant might keep his children on his croft whatever their age, should one of them marry then he or she must leave. This amounted to marriage-by-permission, for unless the factor agreed to it, and found the pair a cottage and half-acre of land, they had nowhere to go. Those who married without permission were forced to leave the county. (155-6)

Richards is a bit more measured in his analysis, writing that the “Loch policy” was:

a quasi-Malthusian rule concocted to check population growth by preventing the sub-division of holdings which, he believed, threatened to swamp all the benefits of estate planning. [...] To all the world it seemed as though Loch was prohibiting marriage among the ordinary folk of Sutherland. It was, to most people, an unnatural and disgusting abuse of landlord power. (170)

Whether or not the “Loch policy” amounted effectively to “marriage-by-permission” or it was merely perceived that way, what is clear is that the underlying urge by Loch was to preserve the new carefully engineered social space, to enforce the integrity of the surveilable unit, and to assert the disciplinary authority of the estate management.

Having read our Foucault, we recognize that bringing the population to the coast so that they can be “distinctly seen,” and then placing them within the gaze of “the eye of local management” amounts to the implementation of a nascent apparatus of systematic surveillance. This new disciplinary apparatus was then maintained by careful control of the social body through structural disciplinary mechanisms such as the “Loch policy,” and through the more ubiquitous functioning of hegemonic pressure. It is undeniable that clearing the interior of the Highlands made way for industrial scale sheep farming, lined many pockets, and facilitated the modernization of both the Highland economy and social body. It is also clear, however, that the evictions and social engineering projects undertaken in the Highlands were part of a larger process of disciplinary advancement. In the age of the Clearances we see the works of a modern regime of power scribing its regulatory logic onto the landscape through a number of stages. As the Highlands lurched towards modern industrial capitalism there was more on the mind of the improvers than simply sheep. Clearance also schemed to establish new regional industrial centers, sought to redistribute the population to provide labor for those centers and generally encouraged a greater division of labor.

Clearance fractured and dispersed the existing social body and consolidated it into structured, identifiable, observable units that were regimented and controllable. Each unit was prescribed community with a discreet function within the machinery of the new industrial economy. Discipline, Foucault argues, “proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space” (141). In the Highlands this disciplinary distribution of individuals was necessitated by two interrelated factors. Initially the reorganization of social space, and the redistribution of individuals within that space, was predicated on the shift away

from a militaristic mode of clan, and thus estate, management. In the introduction to *Papers on Sutherland Estate Management: 1802-1816*, R.J. Adam writes that the “starting-point for any description of improvement policies on the Sutherland estate may be put in 1799, the year of the recruitment of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Sutherland Highlanders” (xxvi). The attempt to raise a regiment under the Sutherland banner “was so discouraging that by July the Countess of Sutherland was seriously worried.” This difficulty “played a considerable part in turning the minds of the proprietors and managers towards changes in the arrangement of the estate” (xxvi). It was this episode that made clear to the proprietors that the social contract had changed. It marked the shift from a militaristic to an economic relationship between clan and chief. The breakdown in the military compact between tenant and landlord, peasant and aristocracy presaged the need for a novel disciplinary mechanism not predicated on military service and supervision. One of the historical functions of hereditary clan lands had been to support the interests of clan and chief by providing soldiers to serve under the clan banner. That is, the members of the clan living on the hereditary estate were expected to provide military service to the chief when called upon. As part of this arrangement there were various officers that held large tracks of land by leave of the chief, those officers then subdivided their land amongst other clan members. This system provided an inherent mode of military surveillance and discipline which disappeared when the military relationship between clan and chief began to break down after Culloden.

The secondary impetus for an updated method of disciplinary spatial distribution and surveillance was the thrust of capitalist advancement. The economic aspirations of the ruling classes demanded that the subordinate classes be redistributed to facilitate



greater efficiency and controllability, and put in a position to both produce and consume the new products of industry. That is, there was a concerted effort to construct a capitalist spatiality. As Edward Soja points out, “The development of industrial capitalism was rooted in a conflict-filled attempt to construct a socially transformative and encompassing spatiality of its own” (128). Soja identifies these sites of conflict within:

the destruction of feudal property relations and the turbulent creation of a proletariat ‘freed’ from its former means of subsistence; the related uprootings associated with the spreading enclosure and commodification of rural and urban land; the expansive geographical concentration of labour power and industrial production in urban centres (and the attendant if incomplete destruction of earlier forms of urbanization, industrialization, and rural life); the induced separation of workplace and residence. (128)

During the Clearances there were clear corollaries to each of these shifts. In Fry’s work we see the echo of this notion that the proletariat needed to be “freed” from their former means of subsistence in deference to capitalism. Through the lens of Soja’s model the convulsions of the Clearances are clearly paradigmatic of the shift towards capitalization and commodification of land use that accompany emergent capitalism. Finally, Soja reminds us that the production of this “capitalist spatiality” is “no once-and-for-all event” but that it “must be constantly reinforced” (129). Loch’s imperative that new houses be placed “under the eye of the local management” is an acknowledgement of the need for reinforcement of the preferred ideological structures, and therefore of the newly scribed

capitalist spatiality. Compliance with the newly scribed spatiality was further enforced by prohibiting married children from remaining on new allotments and restricting the practices of sub-division and sub-tenantry.

The move to allotted, surveillable social units is the penultimate stage in the progression of the disciplinary apparatus. It sets the structure that will facilitate further disciplinary operations. Tenants weren't merely pushed to the margins, they were pushed to the margins in an ordered and regimented fashion carefully calculated to render them subject to easy observation. For Foucault, the operation of the disciplinary machinery is predicated on the requirement that "Each individual has his own place; and each place its individual" (143). This requirement must be carried out precisely, and disciplinary agents "must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation" (143). The aim of this newly structured Highland disciplinary geography was, in Foucault's words, "to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. It was a procedure, therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering and using" (143). Under Loch's supervision, each tenant now had a lot assigned by the estate management that was held in direct lease under prohibition of sub-division even within the family, and was compelled to build the dwelling house within easy sight of the estate managers. Furthermore, to marry and remain on the estate tenants were bound to live only on lots subsequently provided to them by the estate management, should the management agree to a new allotment. Finally, as I mentioned previously, the

new allotments were designed specifically to interrupt customary modes of subsistence, or in Soja's phrase, the tenantry was "'freed' from its former means of subsistence."

That is, lots were intentionally made too small to produce adequate subsistence and were thus designed to modify the behavior and character of the tenants by forcing them to ply the sea and preventing the young men from "remaining idle to the degree they were accustomed" (106). The Foucauldian logic of the Loch/Sutherland scheme is evident. Loch sought to distribute the population through a newly ordered and regimented social space, catalog presences and absences by maintaining the logic of spatial apportionment, and master the common people by inducing them into new modes of industry.

The final stage of the emergent disciplinary mechanism is the hegemonic assault from the center of the newly mapped social space and the functioning of a mature system of panoptic observation. As the development of disciplinary logic in Sutherland progressed, the landscape was recreated in the image of a panoptic apparatus. The population to be placed under surveillance was displaced from the interior to the margins. In their place were installed sheep farmers, the largest farmer, significantly, was Patrick Sellar. Sellar and the other sheep farmers served as intermediaries in the disciplinary mechanism by reinforcing the dominant values. The cleared-out interior and its attendant sheep farmers helped to maintain the newly implemented structure in two ways. First they provided a buffer zone between the primary observers and the observed, reinforcing the spatial logic of every individual having a place, every place an individual. They also reinforced the new logic of presences and absences, structurally parallel to the no-man's-land of the courtyard between guard tower and prison block. The second function of the cleared lands and its shepherds in the new disciplinary mechanism was surveillance. The

shepherds became tools of the disciplinary gaze, enforcing absence from the interior while also functionally discouraging adherence to traditional methods of subsistence.

In his tenth letter to the *Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle*, Donald MacLeod explains the extent to which the shepherds were engaged in maintaining the new social order. He writes that those tenants moved to the rugged north coast, struggling already to eek out a living, found their starving cattle “continually running to and fro, and frequently could not be prevented from straying towards their former pasture grounds [...] When this occurred, they were immediately seized by the shepherds and impounded without food or water, till trespass was paid!” (56). MacLeod continues, reporting that “this was not all that beset the poor beasts. In some instances when they had been trespassing, they were hurried back by the pursuing shepherds or by their owners, and in running near the precipices [many] of them had their bones broken or dislocated, and a great number fell over the rocks into the sea” while others “were baited by men and dogs till they were either partially or totally destroyed, or became meat for their hunters” (56). Once impounded, the stock were “detained by the shepherds” and held for “any amount the latter thought proper to exact, those of their owners who had not money—and they were the majority—were obliged to relieve them by depositing their bed and body clothes, watches, rings, pins, brooches, &c.” (56). The shepherds, it seems, were free to protect their borders through extortionate measures, acting of their own volition with no oversight. These shepherds were working within the logic of James Loch’s grand scheme, not only maintaining the division of space but also effectively discouraging tenants from “massing any considerable part of their rent by selling a beast” (Loch qtd. in Richards 155) and pushing them towards engaging in novel modes of subsistence. The

effect, in MacLeod's words, was that "One way or other, by starvation, accidents, and the depredations of the shepherds and their dogs, the people's cattle to the amount of many hundred head, were utterly lost and destroyed" (57).

Foucault writes that "the two processes—the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital—cannot be separated; it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them" (221). This two-stage process was the driving logic throughout the Highland Clearances—the accumulation of men in appropriate locations for surplus labor coupled with the accumulation of capital, through reallocation of resources and implementation of new industrial mechanisms. Manipulation of the social and economic space was coupled with the newly instituted mechanism of surveillance to implement an unprecedented level of control over the civilian population of the Highlands.

Michael Hechter suggests that there is a "large body of inference" about the "actual mechanism" of control in the Celtic periphery. As I suggested previously, the Highland Clearances generally were one of these mechanisms of control. The geo-social reorganization discussed above is a more detailed example of one of these methods of control. While the Highland Clearances entailed various strategies to achieve their goals and enact the internal colonial process, the geo-social restructuring discussed above provides an example of some of the specific functionings of the internal colonial apparatus through the Clearances.

## Chapter 2: A Postcolonial Literature of the Highlands

### Clearance and the Historical Novel: Perspectives from the Postcolony

In the movie *Trainspotting*, Ewan McGregor makes one of the most iconic and depressing declarations of Scottish identity to emerge at the end of the twentieth century. The scene finds McGregor's character Renton, along with Tommy, Spud, and Sick Boy, disembarking a train in the shadow of a snow capped hill. Spurring his friends on to some hill walking, Tommy meets resistance from Spud, who protests "Tommy, this is not natural man." Tommy responds "It's the great outdoors, it's fresh air," throwing his arms up in exasperation Tommy yells "Doesn't it make you proud to be Scottish?" In response, Renton shouts:

It's shite being Scottish. We're the lowest of the low, the scum of the fucking earth, the most wretched, servile, pathetic trash that was ever shat into civilisation. Some people hate the English, I don't, they're just wankers. We, on the other hand, were colonised by wankers; can't even find a decent culture to be colonised by. We're ruled by effete arseholes. It's a shite state of affairs to be in, Tommy, and all the fresh air in the world won't make any fucking difference. (Boyle, *Trainspotting*)

I raise this quote to highlight the perception of Scotland as a colony. Whether Scotland can usefully be considered within the context of the postcolonial continues to be debated and challenged. These debates, some of which I will address shortly, tend to focus on political and economic questions while ignoring issues of perception and lived experience. If Renton, or Irvine Welsh by extension, perceives Scotland as having been

colonized by England, and if this perception is shared by others, which it certainly is, it demands us to acknowledge this perception within our consideration of the colonial status of Scotland. The question of Scotland's colonial past is important amid current debates about independence. Building up to the 2014 referendum, it's important for Scots to come to terms with this aspect of their past. The past makes the present and the future. While Scotland will never be completely free of the English influence, it has an opportunity to make a dynamic statement that the insidious modes of cultural domination that have been systematically subverting Scottish interests to English ones are no longer acceptable.

Noted Scottish literary critic Cairns Craig wrote that "The development of literature in Scotland has been driven not so much by the internal dynamics of a traditional cultural nationalism, but by its interaction with the stages of the revolt against the British Empire and the Imperium of the English Language" (*History* 202). *Trainspotting* provides us with a clear example of literature written from within the tension of this interaction. Renton's assertion that "We, on the other hand, were colonised by wankers; can't even find a decent culture to be colonised by" illustrates the perception of oppression, cultural alienation, and of course that Scotland is a colony of England. It expresses a "revolt against the British Empire," while Welsh's decision to write in Scots, rather than in standard English, reinforces cultural alienation from the dominant modes of British society and reflects a conscious revolt against "the Imperium of the English Language" (*History* 202). *Trainspotting* is not the focus of this chapter. It has little direct connection with the Highland Clearances, but I bring it up as a striking example of the oppositional literature that has emerged from the tension between English

and Scottish culture that is fueled by linguistic differences, questions regarding the role of English power and influence within Scotland, and the perception that Scotland is, indeed, a colony of their southern neighbor. From an international perspective, *Trainspotting* was arguably the most significant cultural artifact to come out of Scotland in the second half of the twentieth century, and one of the most transformative moments in shaping global perceptions of Scotland as a modern nation, even if it did portray a “shite state of affairs.” While Welsh’s success with *Trainspotting* arguably positioned him as the most significant Scottish author of the twentieth century, he inherited a legacy of writing from within the tension between Scottish cultural memory and the institutional history of the British Empire. Within this legacy of oppositional writing there are several novels that narrate the conflict of the Highland Clearances. While they each achieved some level of popular and critical acclaim, the novels that I address here never became entrenched in the canon of Scottish, or for that matter British, literature. These non-canonical works speak from and for the margins, they narrate an alternative history and lay claim to a Scottish identity that’s been subverted in the canon of British literature. These works follow Walter Scott in that they dramatize the history of a “great crisis,” to borrow from Lukacs, but break from Scott in that they do not “represent and defend progress” (Lukacs 53). Rather, these three novels are deeply critical of the dominant notion of progress, and the power structures that sought to implement their capitalist vision of progress in the Highlands.

In the previous chapter I examined the histories of the Highland Clearances. I questioned the ways that historians have appropriated the legacy of clearance for their own political interests, but most importantly I argued that the primary record suggests



that the Clearances were an episode of colonial intervention in the Gaelic community. In this chapter I examine three historical novels written in response to the Clearances and argue that they constitute a postcolonial literature. Neil Gunn's *The Butcher's Broom* (1934), Fionn MacColla's *And the Cock Crew* (1945), and Iain Crichton Smith's *Consider the Lilies* (1968) each explicitly dramatize the Highland Clearances, focusing on the effects of clearance in small Highland communities. Through these literary statements, the authors present an alternative history of the Highland Clearances that reflects the human experience and is concerned with cultural costs rather than economic advancement. Each of these novels question the emerging bourgeois division of cultural space into public and private spheres, challenges the hegemonic role of the church in the Clearances, and contests the shift from Gaelic to English as the accepted day to day language in the service of emerging capital interests.

These three novels are unusual among major texts addressing the Clearances because of the authors' cultural connections to the Highlands, and because they each emerge from "interaction with the stages of the revolt against the British Empire and the Imperium of the English Language" (*History* 202). Unlike Michael Fry, Eric Richards and John Prebble, whose work I discuss in the previous chapter, and unlike John McGrath, whose work I discuss in the next chapter, Gunn, MacColla, and Crichton Smith were each raised in and around the Highlands and have cultural ties to the people most deeply affected by Clearance. Gunn was born and raised in Caithness, the northern most county on the mainland, bordered only by Sutherland and the sea, only thirty or so miles from Dunrobin Castle, the ancestral seat of the Sutherland family. MacColla grew up in Montrose, near the edge of the Highlands, the son of a native Gaelic speaker. Crichton

Smith moved to the Isle of Lewis as an infant, where Gaelic was his first language. That these oppositional literary responses to the Clearances emerged from writers with the closest cultural ties to the Highlands is perhaps no great surprise. As Cairns Craig has pointed out, “the transformation which made the nation state the primary form of political and economic organisation, and nationalism the driving force of political change, was given its fundamental literary expression in the historical novel” (*Modern* 117). The writers of each of these novels were invested in the project of Scottish nationalism; MacColla and Gunn in particular were deeply committed to Scottish independence.

Throughout the twentieth century the left has been deeply skeptical of nationalism, blaming it for regional chauvinisms, imperialism and atrocities on the grandest of scales. Benedict Anderson has suggested that “progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals” have gone so far as to “insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism” (141). Partha Chatterjee echoes Anderson’s concerns, writing that nationalism can “give rise to mindless chauvinism and xenophobia and serve as justification for organized violence and tyranny” (2). Despite these misgivings, Chatterjee argues that “In its essential aspects [...] nationalism represents the attempt to actualize in political terms the universal urge for liberty and progress” (2). Elsewhere, Chatterjee concludes that nationalism “administered a check on a specific form of metropolitan capitalist dominance. In the process, it dealt a death blow [...] to such blatantly ethnic slogans of dominance as the civilizing mission of the West, the white man’s burden, etc. That must be counted as one of the major achievements in world history of nationalist movements” (168). In the previous chapter I highlighted the use of these “ethnic slogans of dominance” by people

such Samuel Johnson who compared the Highland people to “American savages” (240), and James Loch who contends that the English language must replace Gaelic in the Highlands “in the interest of the people themselves” (44). While nationalist sentiments do breed the chauvinist ideologies that lead to dominance and oppression, they can also manifest an oppositional chauvinism that mobilizes the people against insidious forms of dominance. This oppositional nationalism is instrumental rather than chauvinistic. It becomes a tool for liberation rather than an excuse for oppression. The postcolonial model of nationalism is born out of a history of oppressive intervention and ideological domination, and provides a model for oppressed people to move towards independence. While nationalism can lead to the violence and tyranny that Chatterjee warns against, it can also be embodied in a progressive anticolonial ideology.

It is this oppositional mode of nationalist sentiment, a postcolonial nationalism born of an anticolonial liberatory desire rather than jingoistic fanaticism, that finds voice in each of these novels. These works don't merely emphasize the distinct social and cultural identity of Scotland, and the Highlands in particular, they also implicate the influence of English interests in undermining the cultural and social sovereignty of the Highlands. A number of observers have suggested that much of the trouble after Culloden, including the Clearances, were the result of Scots oppressing other Scots. Notably, historian Christopher Harvie, reflecting on Michael Hechter's internal colonial model, writes that after Culloden, “the internal colonisers were Scots [...] it was Scots landlords and factors, not Englishmen, who forced the Highlanders on to the emigrant ships” (44). While it's generally true that it was Scottish boots on the ground turning people out of their homes, and Scottish landlords producing the orders to do so (whether

or not they were forced onto ships), these were Anglophone Scots from the south, or they were Highland landlords assimilated into English cultural modes. These landlords spoke English, wore English clothing, engaged with English aristocratic society, and followed the logic of the English market. This is another mechanism of the internal colonial process. The assimilation of the Scottish aristocracy positioned them to reinforce the values of the colonial center. Politically these may have been countrymen, but culturally they were outsiders, indoctrinated to act in the interests of English and Lowland capital advancement; whatever else they were they were functioning under the influence of English hegemony. In his own assessment, Hechter points out that “From the seventeenth century on, English military and political control in the peripheral regions was buttressed by a racist ideology,” and that “the rulers of the Scottish state were, themselves, culturally Anglicized” (342-3). Hechter writes that “The colonial incursion of England into the Celtic lands raised the problem of culture in yet another way. The English connection stimulated Anglicization among the agrarian ruling class in the Celtic regions. Wider horizons beckoned to the Celtic gentry, if these men could but shed their provincial languages and *mores*” (343). Ultimately, Hechter argues that “ethnic re-identification was a possibility for only a small elite within the periphery. The bulk of the inhabitants of these regions adhered to Celtic cultural forms” (343). The racism that Hechter identifies is made clear in the writing of Samuel Johnson, James Loch and Patrick Sellar that I discuss in the last chapter, such as when Sellar writes of Highlander’s “obstinate adherence to the barbarous jargon of the times when Europe *was possessed by Savages*” (175). Even if these were Scots acting against other Scots, the Scots in positions of power were working within the sphere of English influence.

The influence of English interests during the Clearances is most clear in the social engineering projects in Sutherland. The Marquess of Stafford, through his marriage to the Countess of Sutherland, brought his vast wealth to bear in the “improvements” of Sutherland, aiming to shape Northern Scotland in the mode of modern capitalism. *The Butcher’s Broom*, first published in 1934, tells the story of a small Highland Village called “the Riasgan.” It traces the transition of the Riasgan from an idyllic tight-knit community, through the trauma of clearance and the struggle to establish a new community after being displaced to the coast. Through his narration, Neil Gunn articulates a view of English influence that anticipates Hechter’s work. During a meeting between Mr. Heller (a thinly veiled caricature of Patrick Sellar) and Lord Stafford to discuss their plans for Sutherland, Stafford tells Heller “You will benefit largely, but not more than the country, for the estate will now export huge quantities of wool and mutton. Ultimately what benefits the country as a whole benefits the people as a whole. Thus England will benefit. Against a conception as big as that, no personal criticism can ever prevail” (260). Gunn suggests, through Stafford, that whatever objections the Highlanders might make are irrelevant, and that the changes being proposed will ultimately benefit the interests of England—not the United Kingdom, or Scotland, but England—the site of hegemonic power in the British Isles. In this view the people of the Highlands were merely pawns in the larger workings of English self-interest. As the meeting progresses, Heller becomes swept up in the power, confidence, and wealth that Stafford stands for. Gunn reflects that “Mr Heller (*sic*) was definitely thrilled. There was nothing that he himself desired more than possession and power. Its expression in another he secretly worshipped. This man stood for England’s power. His power was

England's power, because he governed her" (261-2). While the situation in Sutherland was unique in that the changes were directly orchestrated by a member of the English aristocracy and funded by money born of English industry, it was not alone in being driven by English interests. Eric Richards writes that "millionaires sprang from the south, eager to display their wealth in a newly magnetic north. They sought a new theatre for their success, a playground. [...] the greatest beneficiaries of industrialisation came face to face with the losers" (248).

In *And the Cock Crew* (1945), Fionn MacColla implicates the role of English intervention in clearance in yet stronger terms than Gunn. At a pivotal moment in the plot, MacColla stages an intimate ideological debate beside the flames of dying peat fire. The debate is taken up by Maighstir Sachairi, the Presbyterian minister, and Fearchar, the Gaelic poet. Sachairi is the deeply flawed protagonist, more an antihero than a hero, torn between his sense of duty to the Presbyterian Church, and the social structures that it helps to prop up, and his sense of moral duty to protect his human flock from the devastation of clearance. Faced with this conflict, Sachairi fails to act until it's too late. Fearchar is the embodiment of traditional Gaelic culture and the bardic tradition, constantly at odds with the Sachairi, the Calvinist minister. Taken together the two characters represent the rift in Gaelic culture between attachment to history and a tradition steeped in poetry, music, dance, and the ceilidh, which stood at odds with the doctrinal teachings of Calvinist Presbyterianism which dictated structure, austerity and denial of worldly pleasures.

As Sachairi's conflict develops he finds himself wandering the glen in a daze when he stumbles upon Fearchar's house and finds the poet chopping wood. Fearchar

welcomes the minister with an air of inevitability, greeting him “Ah! You have come then, Maighstir Sachairi!” (*Cock* 103). Inviting the minister inside, the debate ensues. After several pages during which the two men volley back and forth the merits and failings of traditional Gaelic culture and the influence of the Church, the discussion turns to impending clearance. Fearchar contends “I look back, and what is it I see there in the past! I see war and fighting, disaster upon disaster, the blood of the Albannaich poured out on the soil of every century, I see strifes, invasions, famines, burnings, sorrow on sorrow—who can count them!” (*Cock* 121). Continuing, Fearchar claims “I look, and I think I see there is one cause—yes, there is one cause that is there always. It is England, our enemy. *There* is a nation that would never rest—never until she had taken away our freedom” (*Cock* 121-2). Eventually in what turns more into a soliloquy than a debate, Fearchar comes to the conclusion that “Conquest is not only a matter of defeats in battle. If a nation gives up its ways and its language and the things that belong to its nationality, and takes the ways and language of another nation, then it can be said to have been conquered” (*Cock* 123). Finally, Fearchar argues that “England does not now lead armies against us [...] The day she looks for—and it is coming near, and [clearance] will hasten it—is the day there will be Albannaich no longer who speak our language or remember the way of their forefathers and the things that belong to their nation: for that day she will have our country, we can never rise again” (*Cock* 126). MacColla and Gunn both explicitly attribute clearance to English intervention in the name of English interests (i.e. more profitable land use, reorganization of Highland labor, industrialization, cultural assimilation, etc.), even if some of the agents of clearance were nominally Scottish. Michael Hechter reinforces this position in his reading of the ideological antecedents of

the Clearances, when he says “The spatially uneven wave of modernization over state territory creates relatively advanced and less advanced groups. As a consequence of this initial fortuitous advantage, there is a crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two groups” (9). This “crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power” coupled with the potential for “wider horizons” among the elite, led to rapid Anglicization.

Hechter, along with Gunn and MacColla, saw the driving force behind the Clearances not just as capital accumulation, but also cultural control and assimilation. As I demonstrated in the last chapter, James Loch and Patrick Sellar were deeply invested in supplanting Gaelic with English, and with rooting out traditional Highland lifestyles. Hechter’s model is significant because it allows us to divorce colonial antagonism from the arbitrary borders of the nation state. The internal colonial model posits that colonial incursion can challenge what we might conceptualize as cultural and social sovereignty even where it doesn’t challenge state or national sovereignty. Cultural and social sovereignty would encompass such things as determination of where to live, what language to speak, what clothes to wear, how to make a living, whom to marry and under what circumstances, and any number of other basic aspects of community life undermined by the restrictive laws passed after Culloden and the disruption of clearance. The previous chapter outlines a great many violations of cultural and social sovereignty, such as the “Loch Policy” which restricted marriage rights of tenants living on the Sutherland estate. The internal colonial model can also account for colonial incursions that cross national boundaries that are not coterminous with state boundaries. In the case of Scotland there is a nation that is not a nation state. Scotland exists as an imagined



community, a nation unto itself, though it is subsumed by the British state. We can therefore imagine that a colonial incursion into Scotland crosses a national boundary even where it fails to compromise a state boundary. Nevertheless, there continue to be debates about whether Scotland in general, and the historically Gaelic speaking Highlands and Islands in particular, can usefully be considered in the context of the colonial.

Some critics argue that Scotland was never really a colony of the British Empire, that beginning with the 1707 Act of Union (or the Union of Crowns of 1603, or Culloden, or the failure of Jacobitism, or some other historical landmark) that Scotland was a partner within the British Empire, not a subject of the Empire. The inclusion of Scotland within the colonial discussion has been hedged and qualified amid a sense that “complicity in the British imperial enterprise makes it difficult for colonized peoples outside of Britain to accept their identity as post colonial [*sic*]” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 33). The argument posits that since many Scots profited greatly from the British imperial project and were deeply involved with the Empire at every level, that Scotland must be seen as part of the colonial axis of power, not a casualty of that power. Others critics point to the Darien Expedition, the failed attempt by Scotland to establish a colony in Panama, as evidence that Scotland had colonial ambitions of its own, and therefore couldn't be a postcolonial site. Such arguments ignore the fact that imperial complicity and ambitions, and the Act of Union itself, were the project of Anglicized elites looking to widen their horizons. These were not the work, nor the will, of the poor and working classes, particularly those Gaelic speakers alienated from the structures of power by a linguistic barrier.

A striking example that refuses to accept the notion of a postcolonial Scotland can be found in the article “Modes of Marginality: Scottish Literature and the Uses of Postcolonial Theory,” by cultural critic Liam Connell. Connell claims that his work “relies heavily on a political and economic analysis” (42) of Scotland in the context of the colonial, while characterizing previous work as being too heavily reliant on literary and cultural analysis. Connell criticizes the “designation of Scotland as an English colony” as displaying a preoccupation with “cultural component[s] in the systems of domination” (41). Connell claims that after the Act of Union and Culloden “Scotland retained comparatively high levels of autonomy relative to any international comparison” (44). Connell and others who have dismissed claims of a postcolonial Scotland have too adamantly positioned their work to privilege colonial modes of political domination, ignoring or dismissing social and cultural modes of domination. Connell and others suggest that economic and political success amongst some assimilated members of a marginalized society mitigates the institutionalized domination of the un-assimilated. Connell points again and again to the economic and political success of a few members of the Scottish upper class as evidence that Scotland does not constitute a postcolonial site.

While dismissing the relevance of ideological modes of colonial domination, Connell also ignores such political sanctions as the Act of Proscription of 1746 which banned the wearing of “Highland garb” (Magnusson 653) and the aftermath of the 1745 Jacobite uprising when Cumberland’s troops engaged in “a systematic process of murder, mutilation and almost inconceivable brutality” during which “Hanoverian dragoons slaughtered fugitive clansmen and innocent bystanders alike—men, women and children.

Everyone in Highland clothing was assumed to be a rebel” (622). Of this same time period, Tom Devine points out that when the “military onslaught [of Culloden] ended, the legislative attack on clanship began. Highland dress was proscribed as the sartorial symbol of rebel militarism” (46). Devine argues that while Culloden is generally identified as the death knell of traditional clan society in the Highlands, it was “the climax, not the beginning, of the imposition of state authority on Gaeldom” (170). In his discussion of this time period, Connell goes so far as to claim that “after 1746 when the threat of Catholic revolt had been suppressed” Scotland gained even more autonomy than it initially maintained after the Union of 1707 (44). While this may be true of the Anglicized elite, Hannoverian allies and the Scottish nation (such as it was), it was certainly not the experience in the Highlands. Connell posits that “one of colonization’s constant features has been the transfer of indigenous control over social organization to the colonial power” (44), suggesting that this simply wasn’t the case in Scotland. But as I’ve pointed out previously, after Culloden and the Act of Proscription, the British parliament outlawed the wearing of Highland clothing, actively suppressed historical cultural forms including language, and through clearance reorganized the entire economic and social landscape of the Highlands; yet for Connell this evidently didn’t rise to the level of “transfer[ing] indigenous control over social organization.”

Through the Highland Clearances the interests of the English state were allowed to dominate, exploit and control the social and cultural institutions of the *Gàidhealtachd*. The Clearances were part of the modernizing push of the regimes of power within Britain, and thus they register on the spectrum of colonial influence and domination. As I argued earlier, this process was most clear in the case of the Sutherland Clearances. The

Duke of Sutherland initiated the Clearances in an effort to restructure the social and economic conditions of the region by modernizing the infrastructure and spurring economic development. The improvements were conceived of as an exercise in social engineering aimed at destroying existing social institutions and reshaping the social space. This mode of creative destruction is indicative of the modern regime of power within the sphere of capitalist expansion. The Highland Clearances, and the Act of Proscription before them, violated the cultural and social sovereignty of the *Gàidhealtachd*, disseminating its people and undermining its traditions. The Gaelic communities in the Highlands faced intense antagonism from apparatuses of state that were foreign to their community, exterior to their culture and alienated from their experiences. Whether we use Hechter's internal colonial model or a broader reading of the colonial process, evidence points to the conclusion that from at least Culloden and the Act of Proscription, the Highlands were the subject of an intensive campaign of colonial intervention, the Clearances were a significant part of this intervention. *And the Cock Crew*, *Consider the Lilies* and *Butcher's Broom* comprise a body of literature that can usefully be considered in a postcolonial context. Each of these novels narrates the Highland Clearances and dramatizes the tension between a rich cultural history and the uncertainty of progress in a changing socioeconomic sphere, and each emerging from within Highland culture. They reflect an aspect of the human experience during the Clearances absent from other cultural artifacts and establish a narrative that stands in opposition to the colonial apologetics of the dominant culture.

### The Church as Ideological Apparatus

In any discussion of the Highland Clearances it's difficult to stay too long away from the topic of sheep. It was sheep that were the impetus for many evictions, and it was sheep that were the woolly inheritors of the depopulated glens. In *Butcher's Broom*, *And the Cock Crew*, and *Consider the Lilies*, sheep take on an important symbolic role as well. MacColla and Gunn in particular create a symbolic parallel between the Christian "flock" that's cleared to make way for the woolly flock. In *And the Cock Crew*, MacColla draws this parallel very early. As the novel opens we find a group of Highlanders being herded by their minister to a mysterious meeting under ominous circumstances. They are being driven by their ministers to a symbolic slaughter. The only thing missing is the wool and the bleating. MacColla writes that the Black Foreigner, a character reminiscent of Patrick Sellar, has summoned "man and woman and child" to Dùn Eachainn, a military fort by the sea. As the novel opens, the cleared people are making their way to this meeting not knowing what awaits them. As they near the fort, two unnamed men set the scene. Stopping to rest the men notice that a "group had emerged from the glen mouth and were standing on the track above them: an old man was leaning on a staff and with one hand keeping the plaid to his throat; a young man was in the act of stooping to let a child climb on his back. They moved slowly off. [...] After them came a large number of people drawn out in long irregular procession" (*Cock* 9). MacColla continues to describe groups of Highlanders making their way to the grassy coastal plain, spread out and moving slowly. Shortly the progress halted when they noticed "another band of people" miles away. Straining their eyes, the Highlanders see that this other band of

people was moving in “a deliberate formation. First was a dense body on foot, then a gap in which there were horses [...] The whole company moved with a strange regular motion, rhythmic and unbroken, strange yet strangely familiar and in some obscure way disquieting (*Cock 11*). An uncomfortable recognition slowly spread among the irregular procession of Highlanders. “An excitement ran through the people on the hillside, they drew together and their eyes stared. They had understood. Those on the plain *were marching!*” (*Cock 11*). Realizing that armed soldiers were marching to meet them, “people broke into panic. They swayed about, not knowing where to turn, pushing this way and that. On all sides alarmed voices were heard crying, ‘The red soldiers! We are to be murdered! We are lost!’” In their fear “The whole company began pressing backwards and recoiling up the track” (*Cock 11*). As they turned to move away from the marching soldiers, fearing for their lives:

They were stopped by a tall gaunt figure in the rear. The minister had from the start been riding last of all so that any that fell out or thought to return found him there to turn them and urge them on. He now threw out his long arms and waved them up and down, as one heads off a straying flock. ‘On! On!’ he shouted in a hollow loud voice. ‘What would you do, O people? Would you resist God’s judgment? Submit! Submit! Submit! before a worse thing befall you!’ (*Cock 11*)

These human sheep, under the direction of their minister are herded onwards towards whatever fate might befall them; absolving himself and those who would do the people harm, the minister, Maighstir Tormod, demands blind faith and a meek acceptance of whatever fate might befall his timid sheep.

For MacColla this symbolism transforms into an indictment of the structures of power within the Highlands. The devout people are easily made victim to the whims of the dominant ideology which are supported by the Church and the ministers usher them down the path of compliance at every turn. These poor Highlanders are not only lambs in the Christian sense, but the symbolic parallel of the sheep that will take their place in these glens. They are the Cheviot sheep; not players in their own fate, but merely pawns in the social and economic aspirations of their masters. Trying to turn away from what they can only imagine is a horrible fate, they are met by their minister who “advanced upon them, waving his arms. ‘The wrath of God is on you!’ he shouted. ‘Submit! Submit!’” (*Cock* 11-12). In their terror and panic “A few ran forward and threw themselves before him, clutching his stirrups, his thin knees. ‘Have mercy, Maighstir Tormod! You are our safety, our protection! Save Us! Pity us, Maighstir Tormod!’ The Minister shook them off” (*Cock* 12). In response to their pleas for pity and protection Tormod dutifully drives his flock forward crying “‘On! On! It is the will of God!’” In front of the walls of Dùn Eachainn the people stood “over two thousand [...] huddled together in the bitter wind, silent, awed and defenceless” (*Cock* 12). These were ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, steeped in Calvinist ideology, preaching meekness in the face of authority, and the rejection of worldly comforts in deference to a heavenly reward, and reinforcing the ideology of the dominant culture in the process.

While the symbolic parallel between the Christian flock and the wooly one is less pointed in *Butcher's Broom*, Gunn makes it nonetheless. There is, of course, the allusion in the title to the butcher sweeping away the sheep, or perhaps cleaning up after the

slaughter. The imagery parallel comes up in the text as well. In a conversation between Mr. Falcon, Mr. Heller and, Mr. Elder all fictionalized officials of the Sutherland family (thinly veiled caricatures of James Falconer, Patrick Seller and James Loch, all of whom were actual agents of the Sutherland family), concern is raised over the possibility of violent opposition. Falcon replies, ““You needn’t worry about that. And the Church will help the law in the matter.’ ‘The Church? Do you mean the ministers of these people?’ ‘I do’ said Mr Falcon. ‘Every one of them will threaten their people with the fires of hell, if they don’t go peaceably’” (168). As the conversation goes on it turns to dismissive contempt ““Good God! I’ve heard a lot about the great Gaelic people and the Gaelic heroes and heaven knows what. When you think of them in these bloody filthy little cabins [...] They’re sheep!’ ‘Not yet,’ said Mr Elder” (170). This exchange illustrates the collusion between the state and the Church, it also points to the dismissiveness displayed towards the people that are being displaced; they are, quite literally, disposable. The final quip that the people are “not yet” sheep adds to the sense of cruel indifference.

These episodes show the Church functioning in its role as an ideological state apparatus. Despite our expectation that the Church might protect its flock against the trauma of displacement, what we see instead is that the Church works to reinforce the ideology and dominance of those in positions of power. Althusser writes that “the Church,” among other institutions, “teaches ‘know-how’, but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology*” (133). Althusser characterizes the ideological function of the Church as insuring that its members ““recognize’ the existing state of affairs [...] and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, that thou shalt ‘love thy neighbour as thyself’, etc.” (181).



Tasked with reproducing the dominant ideology in its flocks by teaching “know-how,” the role of the Church during the Clearances became far more instrumental as ministers were tasked not just with preparing their sheep for the needs of the market, but driving them from their familiar pastures when the time came. I’m struck here by the notion that the Church was ideologically “fattening” its flock—teaching obedience, meekness, and deference to authority—before leading them to the symbolic slaughter that we see at the beginning of *And the Cock Crew*.

In *Consider the Lilies*, Crichton Smith gestures towards a similar parallel to the one drawn by MacColla and Gunn. While MacColla and Gunn explore the effects of clearance on entire communities, *Consider the Lilies* takes an intimate look at the experiences of its protagonist, the aged Mrs. Scott. Mrs. Scott is deeply religious, meek and humble. Through *Consider the Lilies*, Crichton Smith explores the challenges that clearance, and the complicity of the Church, pose to Mrs. Scott’s personal faith. At the beginning of the novel, Patrick Sellar visits Mrs. Scott informing her that she is to be evicted. Confused and frightened by the news, the devout Mrs. Scott resolves to visit the minister to implore his help. Several days after Sellar’s visit, Mrs. Scott dressed in her Sunday finest and steeled herself to make the long walk to the parish manse. On the way to visit the minister, Crichton Smith tells us that Mrs. Scott came across the “carcass of a thin sheep, soiled white with a black head, one of the Highland sheep” (70). Not thinking too much of the dead sheep initially, Mrs. Scott pressed on to visit the minister. When she finally arrived at the minister’s house, she received neither comfort, nor the protection which she sought, but was engaged in a catechism of sorts when the minister pointedly asked ““Have you ever thought, Mrs Scott, that this is a visitation?’ [...] ‘I

mean that the people of this village, aye, the people of all the villages here, have deserved this. Have you ever thought that this came as a punishment for their sins?” (74)?

Offering no support, merely the suggestion that the people’s own wickedness had visited judgment upon them, the minister turned Mrs. Scott out.

Making her way back home, feeling “completely desolate” Mrs. Scott is struck by a “dreadful fear that she was going to die on the moor like the sheep she had seen” (77-78). Abandoned by her shepherd, just as the dead sheep on the moor, Mrs. Scott and the sheep become symbolically intertwined. There is a sense here that Mrs. Scott, despite her feeling of desolation is not alone, that she is a metonym for her people, that the name Mrs. Scott is pointedly close to *Scot*, that she is a sheep, that they are all sheep, and that it is not just the old woman in peril of dying on the moor, but all the other Scots as well. This symbolism is reinforced when, near the end of the novel, the image comes back to Mrs. Scott in a dream. In the dream she sees that a “man in a black gown was standing at a door and behind him a river was flowing. In the river was a dead sheep with a human face” (117). This imagistic allusion to the grim reaper joins the “dead sheep with a human face” being washed away, just as the Clearances were going to wash the “human sheep” from the glens. In this moment the reader is reminded of Patrick Sellar arriving at Mrs. Scott’s home, standing awkwardly in the doorway as he delivered news of the impending clearance that would wash away the community. The river carrying away the human-sheep becomes the image of clearance sweeping through the Highlands, while Sellar, represented by the foreboding image of death, is the harbinger of this fate.

The complicity of the Church suggested in these novels is a reflection of what actually happened during the Clearances. The Church was complicit in the clearance

project. Not only did it function as in ideological state apparatus reinforcing the dominant ideology before clearance, but once the incursion began it provided a means of surveillance, preached acquiescence, and mitigated resistance within local communities. In *The People of the Great Faith*, religious historian Douglas Ansdell explores the social and cultural role the church played in the Highlands, arguing that while there were a few individual clergymen that stood firm in defense of their congregations, the Church as an institution supported the interests of land, money and the dominant culture. Ansdell writes of “a hostile church which contributed to the demise of an indigenous culture and consistently opposed song, story, music, poetry and sport” (127). Standing on the side of the dominant ideology, the role of the Church has been a significant question in clearance scholarship. As Ansdell contends:

A persistent image in Highland church history is of the minister who had more in common with landlords than people and in times of clearance offered little or no support to the people. From this perspective the Church emphasized the rights of property, encouraged the people to set their hopes on a spiritual homeland and to regard their troubles as a result of their own sinfulness. (157)

Ansdell’s assessment echoes Donald MacLeod who claims that “The clergy, too, were continually preaching submission, declaring that these proceedings were foreordained of God, and denouncing the vengeance of heaven and eternal damnation on those who should presume to make the least resistance” (5). The “persistent image” of the minister “who had more in common with landlords than people” is clearly evident in the work of

MacColla, Crichton Smith and Gunn as discussed above. The perception that the Church betrayed its people has become a powerful theme in narratives of the Clearances.

The Church that is implicated in these novels, and in the work of Ansdell and MacLeod, is the Church of Scotland. While the Church was a Scottish institution, neither the Church itself nor its ministers were shielded from the influence of the dominant ideology. Highland ministers in particular were beholden to the whims of the landlords. Tom Devine writes that, in the Church of Scotland “the Patronage Act of 1712 [...] granted individual patrons (mainly landowners) the right to present their candidate to vacant church offices” (374). “Patronage,” Devine argues, “became a symbol of the subordination of the Church to the upper social orders, especially landed interest” (Brown qtd. in Devine 375). Deference by the church to landowning patrons meant that ministers interested in maintaining their congregation needed to stay in the good graces of landowners, even if that meant supporting policies of eviction. Ministers were beholden to their patrons. If landlords were assimilated into the dominant English culture and working to advance its policies, then these were the policies that the Church supported as well. The existence of distinct social structures within Scotland, such as a Church and an educational system that differed from England’s, have been a point of contention among those that doubt Scotland’s postcolonial status. Indeed, Michael Hechter notes that the “national church in Scotland was established as a condition of the Union of 1707,” adding that “in Scotland the Established Church could be held to be a repository of the national heritage” (172). The Patronage Act, imposed by parliament shortly after the union, began promptly to erode the status of the Church as sovereign social institution, assuring that it would become an ideological tool of the ruling classes. As I noted in the

previous chapter, Hechter has speculated that, though it's obvious that London has "great influence" on the peripheral regions, "very little is known about the actual mechanisms of such control" (347). Along with the social reorganization of the Clearances, patronage was one "mechanism of control" used to advance the internal colony. Patronage assured that the Church would embody the ideology of the most ambitious landlords who sought to advance their standing in English society and the empire. The example of the Church, and of patronage, is one aspect of the colonial process in Scotland that sets it apart from other postcolonial sites. Rather than sending missionaries to convert the colonial people to the ideological model of the dominant culture, English interests were more insidiously deployed through what was, nominally at least, a native institution.

The work of MacColla, Gunn and Crichton Smith each reflect the functioning of a sophisticated colonial apparatus. Each novel recreates the historical domination of English interests in the Highlands during the time of the Clearances. The colonial apparatus operating in the Highlands was a multifaceted regime of power that gained legal legitimacy through a government based in London, that was implemented and advanced by English and Anglicized elites, and whose hegemony was reproduced through the ideology and surveillance of the Church and its agents within the Highlands. Each of the novels under consideration here is a work of postcolonial literature. They are not postcolonial merely because the identity of the authors tie them to the oppressed Highland communities which they write about, but because each author creates a narrative oppositional to the apparatuses of power, and because they seek to expose and critique dominant colonial power structures.

Not only does the Church reproduce the dominant ideology in its capacity as an ideological state apparatus, but it serves as intermediary between the English speaking agents of clearance and the Gaelic speaking victims. It was the clergy who were bilingual, who occupied the deeply hybridized space that bridged the gulf between the two communities; the clergy lived in the communities of Gaelic speakers, but were not members of these communities, they were sentries placed in distant outposts by those in positions of power through the process of patronage. MacColla's narrative in particular speaks from within the tension of this hybridity and polemicizes about the Church and the oppressive social systems within Highland culture that reinforce the ideology of the dominant culture. The opening scene of *And the Cock Crew*, as discussed above, implicates the clergy for complicity with the military and political power that has drawn "every man and woman and child" (9) before the gates of Dùn Eachainn. As the crowd huddles in front of the ramparts, the first ministers we meet, Tormod and Iain, betray their allegiances. Initially they hold ranks with their congregations, "standing a little in front of their flocks" (*Cock* 14). As tension mounts, and uncertainty weighs on the people, we find that they have incrementally moved away from their flocks, at first "not so near the people," until eventually "there was no doubt about it; they had moved by imperceptible degrees some distance away. In the end they were some twenty paces distant and almost half-way to the military" (*Cock* 15). The incremental movement of the ministers symbolizes their allegiances and foreshadows the collusion which becomes explicit as the plot develops.

Into the standoff at Dùn Eachainn enters Maighstir Sachairi, the protagonist of MacColla's narrative. Initially Sachairi appears a willing and able champion for his

people. “There could be no doubt about it, an angry voice was making its way to the front! [...] It was a strong-looking reddish man, wearing his bonnet. He was about the middle size, but looked both larger and redder because he was buzzing with rage” (*Cock* 20). In this first encounter Sachairi bellows and rages in defense of his congregation, standing up to the factor (estate manager), and the “little legal personage,” as MacColla refers to the officer of the court. In opposition to the factor, Sachairi bellows “Ye have brought thegether decent well-doing fowk and feared them o’ their lives with sodgers and cannons. And what is more ye have taken poor men that didna understand a word ye said and couldna resist ye and roared and glowered at them like dirt and put them in mortal fear” (*Cock* 22).

MacColla explains that “because of the disposition of his mind” (*Cock* 34) Sachairi initially opposed clearance. However, after standing in defense of his flock at Dùn Eachainn, he finds himself conflicted not knowing in which direction his duty lies. Initially Sachairi stood in opposition to clearance because it represented the “forcible pushing back of completed Nature into infertility. It involved the senseless dehumanization of a whole countryside. On every count it represented a regression, a reversal of the natural line of growth” (*Cock* 35). Lost in this thought Sachairi experiences an epiphany, “it broke upon him what he had been doing—constantly, all those years,” that “everywhere he looked, he had been seeking the satisfaction of an inner craving of his mind for harmonies, for the beauty shed by intelligibility in created forms. And as the natural man is in Sin, and the natural mind seeks what is contrary to God, *he had been sinning*” (*Cock* 36). This conflict between his nature and his Calvinist notion of the divine drives Sachairi’s action, and inaction, throughout the rest of the novel.

MacColla's opposition to the ideology of the Calvinist Church goes beyond interrogating the role that it played during the Clearances. In *At the Sign of the Clenched Fist*, he argues that:

the continuing effect of the Reformation had been that every Scott [...] has been subject to a built-in mechanism, *a monitor of consciousness*, which automatically switches aside the will when it is directed towards anything in the area of free creativity, or at any objective having to do with the welfare of his nation-community. (*Clenched* 193)

MacColla contends that at least since the reformation, religion in Scotland has stifled the Scottish spirit, discouraged traditional Scottish culture, and through this entrenched mechanism of surveillance—this “monitor of consciousness—had reinforced English hegemony, and passive acceptance of English domination. The cynical MacColla characterizes these conditions, as an ideological apparatus constructed by dominant English interests to insure a compliant Scotland.

Crichton Smith also sees the Church as a source of ideological domination and repression. In *Consider the Lilies* one of the keenest insights that we have into Mrs. Scott's psyche comes when she is reflecting on her engagement many years before. Having become engaged she “danced about the room [...] Her heart was brimming like a cup which could hardly contain its happiness. Yet at the same time she knew she would never be so happy again” (18-19). This image of the young Mrs. Scott stands in stark contrast to what we had learned about her before. Early on, the novel depicts Mrs. Scott as an austere, simple and devout woman whose family had all abandoned her. The daydream about her engagement reveals that she was not always that way. After her



afternoon reminiscence passed, Mrs. Scott dug through an old chest where she “found her mother’s bridal dress crushed under the heavy Bible” (19). The Church, symbolically represented by the “heavy Bible,” crushed the joy and happiness that she felt during her engagement and early in her marriage, represented by the crushed wedding dress that had been worn by both Mrs. Scott and her mother. Mrs. Scott lives alone. We learn that her husband has died fighting in Spain during the peninsular wars, and that her son emigrated to Canada. But rather than creating community, or fostering joy and happiness in Mrs. Scott’s life, the Church has increased her isolation. Devout in her faith, Mrs. Scott disapproves of the music and dancing that her neighbors are drawn to. She sits in judgment of Donald MacLeod (a fictionalized version of the stonemason discussed in the previous chapter) for his rejection of the Church, telling her son to stay clear of him because a “man who doesn’t go to church is an evil man. There is no getting round it” (43). Crichton Smith also suggests that rigid adherence to her faith ultimately drove her husband to join the army and her son to emigrate to Canada. Like the wedding dress, Crichton Smith suggests that Mrs. Scott herself has been crushed by the church, that her passions and her loves have been taken from her because of her faith.

The fictionalized Donald MacLeod, based on the author of *Gloomy Memories*, is the only character in the novel, aside from Mrs. Scott, that Crichton Smith develops to any great extent. In the preface, Crichton Smith writes that “I have made [MacLeod] an atheist though there is no evidence that he was. He seems to have been a wholly admirable person with great concern for his people and a desire to speak out and tell the truth” (v). It appears that Crichton Smith made MacLeod an atheist to emphasize the isolation that religion brought to Mrs. Scott. In the novel, MacLeod has a rich and warm

family life, a stark contrast to Mrs. Scott's. It is MacLeod and his family that care for Mrs. Scott after she collapses on the moor returning from the minister's manse, and who offer to take her in after they've been cleared from their homes. The humanity of MacLeod and his family set them apart from Patrick Sellar and the minister. MacLeod, at least Crichton Smith's version of MacLeod, is free to care for his neighbors and critique the apparatuses of power because he is free of the influence of the Church. As an atheist his will and his mind are his own. This grants him the clarity to see things as they are and to take action. Near the end of the novel, Sellar and James Loch return to visit Mrs. Scott. They offer to allow her to stay in her home for an additional six months and to pay her a pension if she agrees to implicate MacLeod's guilt in libelous writings "stirring up hatred against the minister and the Duke" (137). Among the egregious writings that Loch and Sellar sought to implicate MacLeod for, was his suggestion that "religion has forced us to endure pains which we might not otherwise endure" (135). This reflects the profound role that religious preconditioning played in the Highlands. The faithful were conditioned to be easily herded, and to endure that which they might otherwise oppose as they sacrificed their worldly comfort for their presumed reward in heaven. The offer that Loch and Sellar presented to Mrs. Scott is made the worse because the pension being offered had already been earned by her husband's military service, but never delivered. As literary critic Moray Watson points out, her husband "has given everything—his life, even—in the service of the Duke and his country, and his family's only repayment is to be burned out of their home" (25). After all of that, Loch and Sellar ask her to betray the only community that she has left in order to receive that which right and the law should have provided long ago.

In her introduction to *Consider the Lilies*, Isobel Murray suggests that “it is not Christianity that Crichton Smith is opposing here; it is what he calls ‘the Calvinist ideology’” (xi). The tension in the novel arises from Mrs. Scott’s isolation, the impending dread of eviction and the indifference of the Church and governmental bodies to the plight of Mrs. Scott and her neighbors. Underscoring this tension is a sense of remorse and impotence in Mrs. Scott. One of the tragedies of *Consider the Lilies* is that Mrs. Scott’s “own lifelong ideology of Christianity cannot, to her surprise, halt the advance of the ideology of profit” (18). Not only could her faith not protect her from upheaval of clearance and the implementation of the profit system, but the Church itself was actually complicit in its advance.

More so than the other authors, MacColla becomes very didactic in his dramatization of the colonial incursion. MacColla makes a direct case that Scotland, and the Highlands in particular, is a colonial space influenced and shaped by English power through a complex intervention of ideological, hegemonic, and economic institutions and practices. Through Fearchar the poet, MacColla argues that the advancement of English interests in Scotland is not limited to economic expansion. Rather, MacColla points to a concerted effort by England, the colonial center, to encourage assimilation until Scottish culture is subsumed. MacColla argues that dominance of England over Scotland was not alleviated by the union, but merely made more subtle. Fearchar proposes:

Suppose there are two nations, Maighstir Sachairi. Two nations that are neighbours; and one of them bigger than the other and more numerous.... The larger nation is trying to conquer and bring into subjection the one that is smaller. [...] When the two nations—the bigger and the smaller—

are united, so that the government of the larger one rules both, what would be the likely thing to happen then? Would that be the end of the struggle between them? [...] Or would there be in truth no difference?—the big nation would go on and not rest till it had utterly destroyed and eaten up the little nation, harrying its people from the land and uprooting them until nothing was left, neither land nor people—except that now it would commit at its leisure, under the pretext of the government and with forms of Law. (118-9)

Fearchar's position echoes what we see in Hechter's internal colonial model, in which, despite political unity, the dominant center continues to exploit and assimilate the underdeveloped margins. Fearchar continues, arguing that "Conquest is not only a matter of defeats in battle. If a nation gives up its ways and its language and the things that belong to its nationality, and takes the ways and language of another nation, then it can be said to have been conquered by that other nation" (123). As the colonial intervention proceeds, more and more Scots were made to give up their traditional ways. Forced from their lands they were made to take up fishing and abandon their traditional agricultural ways. Incorporated into industry and hybrid society, they were forced to give up their language in order to participate in the newly established economic system.

Throughout *And the Cock Crew*, Sachairi, the minister, is portrayed as an outsider. He is *in* the community but not *of* the community, he is a part of the influence wearing away tradition and cultural viability. It becomes clear that long before the threat of the Clearances was imminent, Sachairi was actively sublimating traditional culture and thereby reinforcing the precondition of compliance as part of the ideological state

apparatus, and as a mechanism of surveillance. Upon his arrival in Gleann Luachrach, Sachairi found it “given over to vanity; singing and dancing, contests of wit or manly prowess” (45). He took it upon himself to put an end to this, to change their ways and to subvert their traditions: “[in] the end he had them on their knees weeping and crying to God to avert the visitation of His wrath. The Holy Ghost swept through Gleann Luachrach with the sough of the whirlwind, so that any that were without the changed heart hid their faces and kept peace” (46). Fearchar, the Gaelic poet, symbolic of the subverted traditional culture, is driven into exile. Once a leader in the community we learn that Fearchar has been an outcast for twenty years, a victim of the ideological dominion of the Church.

Each of these three historical novels is deeply skeptical of the role of the church during the Highland clearances. The Church is presented as a partner in the colonial project in the Highlands which paves the way for clearance and other modes of colonial intervention by reinforcing an ideology of passive acceptance, and threatening its people with hellfire should they choose to resist. Sadly, this assessment of the Church is no fiction, but reflects what the historical record bears out. As perhaps the only Highland institution in a position to forestall eviction or help maintain traditional social structures, the Church nevertheless chose to fulfill the role of the ideological state apparatus, reinforcing the dominant ideology that aimed to remake the social space of the Highlands in the image of modern capital. This illustrates the control that the colonial center was able to exert, not only directly on the people, but through more quiet, insidious manipulation of their cultural institutions.

The Unhomely Moment: Colonial Alienation in the Highlands

Near the beginning of *And the Cock Crew*, as the mass of frightened and disheveled Highlanders stood before the gates of Dùn Eachainn, there is an episode at once both comical and unsettling. Standing in front of the gawking crowd, the factor (estate manager) called out a name: “Donal’ Munro, Woodend!” The assembled crowd stood in silence. Again he “roared out in the loudest and most terrifying voice, ‘Donal’ Munro!’” As the moments passed, the factor became more and more enraged until finally, “Words failed him for anger. He raised his fist. It looked as if he would have leapt upon the people” (*Cock* 16). After a few tense moments passed, one of the gathered ministers, Maighstir Iain, spoke out: “‘Is Domhnall Mac-an-Rothaich here?’ He called out in the Gaelic language. ‘Domhnall Meadhonach, from Ceann-na-Coille!’” (*Cock* 16). As a flush of recognition spread across the crowd “all the heads began turning. ‘Domhnall Meadhonach Mac-an-Rothaich’—the name went from mouth to mouth” (*Cock* 16).<sup>5</sup> Accused of petty crimes, which MacColla suggests are likely fabricated, Domhnall, along with his neighbors and friends, fails to recognize his name called out in its Anglicized form. Maighstir Iain, questioning Domhnall, asks “Now, now, Domhnall, surely you heard what the gentleman was reading out of the big paper?” In response Domhnall, “shaking his head doubtfully,” tells the minister “I could hardly say with truth that I did, Minister. I heard indeed a certain noise of speaking in the English language, and it seemed to me that the Factor and the fat gentleman yonder in the red coat were in a rage” (*Cock* 18). The episode is a comical interlude in the tension and uncertainty of the

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<sup>5</sup> Meadhonach, MacColla tells us, is a nickname, meaning “middling.”

moment, the red faced bluster of the factor is completely incomprehensible to the people who stand silently in confusion, not knowing what is being asked of them. The factor becomes a buffoonish caricature of blind rage and incompetence.

While the reader can muse at the humor of the enraged factor, the implications for Domhnall and his neighbors is much more troubling. This moment represents a profound disruption in the identity of these Highlanders. Standing before Dùn Eachainn, toe to toe with a company of Red Coats, Domhnall Mac-an-Rothaich, becomes Donald Munro, and Ceann-na-Coille becomes Woodend. Returning to Liam Connell's objections that, among other reasons, Scotland was never a colony because there was never a "transfer [of] indigenous control over social organization to the colonial power," we can see in this moment another powerful counter example. Called forth by the representative of colonial power, neither Domhnall Mac-an-Rothaich nor his neighbors recognize his name, nor, presumably, do they understand Woodend to mean Ceann-na-Coille. The reason Domhnall does not recognize his name when called forth in this way is quite simple, it's not his name, it's merely English "noise." In the moment dramatized here by MacColla it is clear that control over social organization has slipped. What more basic form of social control can there be than the right to name ourselves and our homes? What we experience through this scene is a process of alienation. On the one hand Domhnall is being alienated from sovereignty over his own identity, he is forced to accept, at least in this moment, the Anglicized identity that is being forced upon him. On the other hand he is also being made aware of his alienation from the apparatus of power that is reshaping the Highlands. Domhnall's identity is unseated as he becomes the subject of the colonial gaze.

What is occurring in the episode described above, is that Domhnall's identity, and the identity of Ceann-na-Coille, is being subsumed within a new narrative of power implemented by the colonizing influences. This process of alienation is characteristic of what Homi Bhabha has called the "unhomely moment." Bhabha suggests that this moment entails a flash of recognition that "the personal-*is*-the political" (*Culture* 11). Calling Domhnall Mac-an-Rothaich forth to face charges as Donald Munro, the factor has politicized the personal, Domhnall's name is no longer his own, it is subject to the consent of the political power which, in an act of colonial domination, has chosen to apply a new name in its own image. Domhnall's identity slips here from the product of his own culture and personal history, to that of colonial subject. The "unhomely," Bhabha suggests, is "a paradigmatic post-colonial experience" ("Home" 142). Within the unhomely we see the tension of alienation, the slippage of "indigenous control over social organization," and the uncomfortable recognition of one's personal and social life becoming the unwilling subject of the politics of colonialism.

While we can see the presence of the unhomely in MacColla's work, it is much more prevalent in the work of Crichton Smith and Gunn, largely this is due to the fact that in both of their work we see much more attention paid to domestic life, which Bhabha suggests is the site of "history's most intricate invasions" (*Culture* 9). In his introduction to *Consider the Lilies*, Crichton Smith claims that his is not an historical novel, but rather "a study of one person, an old woman who is being evicted" (v). Crichton Smith chooses to focus on the interior small-scale effects of clearance, the domestic and the individual, rather than the more sweeping political and cultural issues taken on by MacColla and Gunn. These small-scale effects are a largely overlooked



aspect of the clearance story. Historians and artists alike have tended to focus on the scale and scope of change—empty glens and displaced communities, rather than homes and individuals. As I argued in the first chapter of this project, it's important to consider clearance not just in terms of the effect on entire villages, straths, or estates, or of Highland society, but in terms of the small scale disruption of the domestic and the social; these are the moments that tell the human story. This is perhaps why the story of Margaret MacKay has been retold in so many ways. Her story reflects a moment of human suffering and distress that contrasts the litany of facts, figures and archival records that make up so much of the discussion. *Consider the Lilies* tells just such a story about Mrs. Scott as she comes to terms with the trauma of clearance. While her entire community is being evicted alongside her, the novel focuses on her personal struggle.

As the novel begins, Mrs. Scott sees a rider on a white horse in the distance. The rider turns out to be Patrick Sellar coming with news that she will be cleared from her home. In the moment that Mrs. Scott is told that she must leave her home, the only home she's ever lived in, she experiences an upheaval in her perception of sovereignty over her domestic space. Informed by Patrick Sellar that the Duke planned to tear down her house, Mrs. Scott couldn't make sense of what she was hearing: "He said this as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world. Pulling her house down, when after all it was her house. She had never lived in any other house in all her seventy years" (Crichton Smith 6). This was *her* house, she controlled it, her history was entwined with it, but the politics of clearance were invading. From the standpoint of the domestic, clearance was the process through which the home was invaded by external public and political space. We first meet Mrs. Scott in the moment of tension that wrests her from an insulated

domestic life into engagement with the exterior world, when the border between the domestic and the public is penetrated.

The upheaval that Mrs. Scott feels in this moment is identified by Homi Bhabha as the “stirring of the unhomely.” In his article “The Home and the World,” Bhabha argues that “The unhomely is the shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world” and that “In the stirrings of the unhomely, another world becomes visible” (“Home” 141). For Mrs. Scott this shock comes when Patrick Sellar approaches on horseback to tell her that she is to be cleared. We initially find Mrs. Scott unengaged with the world beyond her small house, “just an old woman sitting in the sun watching a few hens scabble in the dust, she wasn’t really thinking of anything” (1). Sellar’s arrival makes visible that other world beyond her home, the political world beyond the domestic. Rather than emerging to meet him in the world, when Sellar arrives she turns towards the domestic, to the familiar: “as far as she was concerned, he was a stranger and to be treated with hospitality even though she was old” (1). Her experience and her culture necessitated hospitality, itself a mode of the home entering into the world, and the world entering into the home. Hospitality, though, maintains sovereignty of the domestic, allowing the world to enter on limited terms. She invites Sellar in, “It wouldn’t be polite to keep a stranger outside the house. She went inside and waited for him to follow her, which he did” (2). Here we find that symbolic moment of first contact in which the “world” enters into Mrs. Scott’s home, the public and private sphere here become intertwined.

Sellar’s visit portends the slippage of Mrs. Scott’s sovereignty over the domestic to the domination of that other world beyond her home. Sellar says, “I came to tell you

that you'll have to leave the house" (4). Her response is disbelief, "It was ridiculous to say that she must leave the house. She had nowhere else to go and in any case she didn't want to go anywhere else" (4). Mrs. Scott is confused by the exchange with Sellar, and dazed by the sun shining in her eyes (5). The sun shining in her eyes forms a symbolic parallel of the world entering into the home. The exterior sun intrudes on the interior of the home just at the moment that Mrs. Scott is becoming aware of the exterior political world entering into the internal domestic. Disturbed by the sun, Mrs. Scott rises from her seat and draws the curtains to block the light (5), a symbolic attempt to reinforce the border between the internal and the external, a gesture intended to maintain the sovereignty over her domestic space which she feels slipping away. Feeling the first rumbling of this slippage, Mrs. Scott attempts to regain agency over her home by repeating its history, and her history embedded within it. She narrates the history to herself, "She had never lived in any other house in all her seventy years. [...] She had been born in the house, had spent her girlhood there, and had spent all the years of her marriage—such as it were—in it" (6), these are her claims to the house and to sovereignty over it. Bhabha suggests that "the intimate recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement the border between home and the world becomes confused" ("Home" 141). We can see this confusion in Mrs. Scott as her internal narrative tries to maintain the separation between the internal and the external, the home and the world, but the moment of rupture has passed and the border between the domestic and the public has been breached. For Bhabha, "the unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" ("Home" 144), and

indeed Mrs. Scott's "personal, psychic history" within this house has been shifted from its interior, private position to enter into the "wider disjunctions of political existence" within the Highland Clearances. "Uncannily," Bhabha writes, "the private and the public become a part of each other, forcing on us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" ("Home" 141).

In her confusion, and her attempt to maintain the control that she feels slipping away, Mrs. Scott articulates the rift that she perceives between the domestic and the public, the interior and exterior world. Initially she claims the house as her own, but in panic born of confusion she defers to an implicit binarism between a feminine domestic interior and a masculine public exterior. As she is forced to recognize the invasion of the "world in the home," and the presence of her home in the world, she continues to re-narrate her history, noting "My mother used to sit in that chair" (6), as if her knowledge of its history would reinstate authority. As the encroachment of exteriority becomes more uncomfortable her attention shifts from the feminine interior history to the masculine exterior. She moves to the window and looks out over the churchyard, reflecting that "[h]er husband wasn't buried there but her father and mother were" (7). Her history and her past are here in the house, and in the churchyard, "The dead," she thought, "just didn't go away for ever [*sic*]. They were near the house, present in the house" (8). As her parents died they moved from this house of hers out to the churchyard, pushing the bounds of the domestic, but not leaving it entirely. Her husband, we learn, has died and was buried "in a place called Spain" (7) as part of the Duke's regiments in the Peninsular wars, and her son has emigrated to Canada. She is alone in the domestic space. As the men in her life have traveled farther and farther afield, she

has become more and more encapsulated by the domestic, more isolated from the world outside. As Sellar presses the matter of impending eviction, she retreats further into the familiarity of the domestic but continues glancing outward. She attempts to position the masculine history of the house—now slipped away—between her domestic world and the public world of Sellar. “This is my father’s house” (8) she claims, and then “The house belongs to my husband, [...] and to my son” (9). This slippage points to the tension between the relative comfort of her domestic existence and her unease with the public/political world beyond her walls of which she knows so little. She defers first to her dead father, then her dead husband, and finally to her absent son to stand in for her in the world that has entered the home.

The “unhomely moment” sneaks up on Mrs. Scott as she is forced to accept the intervention of the external political world of the Clearances and “recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world.” Faced with this intervention Mrs. Scott turns inwards in an attempt to regain sovereignty over her domestic life. Bhabha suggests that the “unhomely moment” requires a “shift of attention away from the political as a theory to politics as the activity of everyday life” and that it is “precisely in [the] banalities [of everyday life] that the unhomely stirs” (“Home” 141). As Sellar’s initial invasion nears its end, Mrs. Scott finds herself “looking at a square of sunlight on the floor. In the middle of it she noticed a patch of grey. Funny how she hadn’t noticed that before” (Crichton Smith 11). Her attention shifts back and forth from Sellar to the spot on the floor, but “she couldn’t think of what had caused that grey patch” (11). Her focus shifted back to the floor, to the grey spot framed squarely by the penetrating sunlight, the symbolic penetration of the world into the home, and towards banality of the

domestic, Mrs. Scott focuses on the “grey spot” finally recalling that it “must have been caused by the milk she had spilt hot from the pot” (12). As the first chapter ends, Sellar finally takes his leave. As the second chapter begins Mrs. Scott decides to scrub the floor and to cleanse the domestic space of the grey spot that she now associates with Sellar and the invasion of the exterior world. Scrubbing the spot with boiled water, we learn that “She didn’t get the greyness out but she felt more contented” (13). Here is the “banality of everyday life” where the unhomey stirs; it’s the minutia of the stained floor framed by sunlight that fixates Mrs. Scott’s discomfort as her “world first shrinks,” and “then expands enormously” (Bhabha, “Home” 141). Throughout the rest of the second chapter Mrs. Scott reflects on her history in the house, retelling the story of her mother’s death, her married life and her son’s childhood. She tries to comfort herself with her history, reasserting her possession of that history within the sphere of domestic space. This narration is another attempt to reinforce the boundaries between the domestic and the public. This was her house, and this was her history, though it was now being undermined by the sweep of a different history beyond her experience and control. The attention to the grey spot, the scrubbing, the act of reciting her history all point to a disquiet within the home, a stirring of the invasion of the public into the domestic, a sense of the impending dispossession of agency over her home life that she is trying to keep at bay.

One of the climactic moments in *Consider the Lilies* occurs when Mrs. Scott, after repeatedly narrating her history to herself, is finally able to actually speak it out loud. Donald MacLeod asks “What was it like, those years when you looked after your mother?” Mrs. Scott pauses for a moment, “Then, her fingers clutching the chair and

emptying themselves of it, she began to tell” (101). MacLeod stops what he was doing and listens to her story, “She told him of her mother’s attempt to kill herself [...] about her son Iain, and his going off to Canada. She told him of the emptiness to which she had returned night after night.” MacLeod, now enraptured, continues to listen “as if she was relating a history that had always been and might always be, like a sea rising and falling for ever [*sic*]” (102). The scene borders melodrama. Having been cutting hay, MacLeod becomes so enraptured that he abandons his work still gripping his scythe, accidentally cutting himself on the blade, until he eventually finds himself “kneeling, as if like a child at the breast of a mother who would tell him everything in the form of a story he would never forget” (102). At this point in the story Mrs. Scott has left home, gone off across the moor to see the minister to ask for his help, and collapsed on her way back. She is now staying with MacLeod, recovering from her ordeal, and being forced to engage with the external public world beyond the home that has enclosed and defined her whole life to this point. MacLeod’s overly dramatic response reinforces the power of the moment in which Mrs. Scott’s story ceases to exist simply in the domain of the domestic and enters into the wider world. In the moment of enunciation she reclaims her history, slipping from her position as a subaltern female defined solely by her relationship to male family members. It is in this moment that the interior feminine history of Mrs. Scott’s domestic life—the history of Mrs. Scott and her mother—enters into the exterior world occupied by her male relatives, politics and the law. Bhabha argues that “The historical or fictional subject is conscious of the ‘meaning’ or intention of the act [of claiming history]; but its transformation into a ‘public’ symbolic or ethical realm demands a *narrative* agency that emerges after the event” (“Home” 143). This progression in Mrs. Scott is evident

beginning with the recognition that her memories and her history are her identity. These histories and memories make her home both sacred and sovereign, but it is only after the rupture of the unhomey moment that she is able to translate that understanding into the world beyond the domestic and claim agency within the exterior world through narrative. Before the rupture she narrates only to herself, when Sellar arrives she begins tentatively to narrate her history to him, but only after the rupture is complete is she able to translate her history into the public realm.

In *Butcher's Broom* the characters Mairi and Elie are also deeply coded with the tension of the unhomey. Mairi, alternately referred to as Dark Mairi or Mairi of the Shore, is the embodiment of a mode of culture rooted in the land. She is at once the witch and the earth mother figure, the vestigial remains of an older culture. She practices traditional herbal medicine and has an intimate knowledge of the landscape. Literary critic Margery McCulloch observes that “in appearance and character she has the detached, abiding quality of the surrounding natural landscape” (53). From the beginning there is a tension within her characterization. She is described as having “in her an older knowledge than was common to the rest of her ancient kind” (Gunn 11). Her croft, we are told, is on the margins of the community, on a hillside set apart from the other cottages. She is further set apart by the descriptors used in naming her—*Dark Mairi*, *Mairi of the Shore*—these names identify her as an outsider, exterior and mysterious. The more religious members of the community, “the Men” as Gunn refers to them, are deeply skeptical of her “heathen” ways and her “paganism,” though initially their objections don’t gain much traction. Despite her marginality within the community, Gunn portrays



her as being at home in the landscape, almost as a natural outgrowth of the land. Making her way home from collecting medicinal plants at the shore, Gunn describes her as:

untouched by doctrinal purity and as unconscious of her paganism as she was of the sea in her basket or the glimmer of harvest on her face. Indeed for the moment there was some inscrutable connection between the basket and her face, between her body and the hillside [...] going calmly into the hills, to which she would no more have thought of lifting her eyes for aid than they would have thought of refusing to receive her. (18-19)

Mairi is already experiencing the unhomely rupture, simultaneously being at home in the land and within a cultural legacy that is being pushed aside by progress and cultural change. The unhomely tension lies in being both interior and exterior to the community. Gunn establishes this tension from the outset of the novel which opens with a description of Mairi “on the Darras, the doorway between the bright sea and the dark hills” (7). From the very beginning she is positioned in the liminal space between the “dark hills” and the “bright sea,” on the threshold between past and future. The dark hills are the world of the interior glens, of the villages and the people soon to be cleared away; they will be pushed to the margins, to the sea to make way for sheep. We find Mairi already bridging the gap between the two worlds. For Mairi the disquiet of the “unhomely moment” is already in place.

In the next paragraph the unhomely rupture is made more evident. “For a long time she was like one who had turned into her own house and found it empty, and walked in a silence that was hearkening to presences withdrawn beyond the walls and fading away” (7). In this description there is a sense of displacement, a migration of the

interiority of the domestic into the world beyond. In this description there is “the shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world.” In the image of Mairi, we see the transcendence of the domestic beyond the walls of the home and into the landscape; Mairi is of the land and at home within it. Mairi of the Shore, *Dark Mairi* of the “*dark hills*,” standing on the threshold between the interior hills and the exterior sea she draws together the interior and the exterior and codes the entire scene within the realm of the domestic. She is at home here, within these borders, she is of this land. Elsewhere Gunn writes “She might have come out of the hillside; and presently she seemed to enter it again” (426). In this sense of domesticity, the landscape as home space, we can view the Clearances in general as the moment of unhomely rupture. Bhabha suggests that the unhomely “has less to do with forcible eviction and more to do with the uncanny literary and social effects of enforced social accommodation, or historical migrations and cultural relocations” (“Home” 141). In the case of the Clearances all of these forms of domestic dispossession apply. Through clearance the external political world redrew not just the individual domestic space of the home, but of entire communities.

As in *Consider the Lilies*, there is a relative absence of masculine presence within the domestic sphere in *Butcher’s Broom*. Mairi’s husband is long dead, and her son has emigrated to America. The only male figure in Mairi’s household is her grandson, Davie. In roughly the first half of the book one of Davie’s most notable characteristic is his propensity to hide. Thus the only masculine presence in Mairi’s home is juvenile and often obscured in darkness and shadow. Elie’s relationship with Colin, the eventual father of her son, also unfolds along lines that keep him exterior to the home space.

Rendezvous between Elie and Colin are always outside of the home, at night in the shadows of the grove just beyond sight of Mairi's cottage. It is only after Colin has committed to join the military, on the eve of his departure, that Elie becomes pregnant. Colin leaves never knowing that Elie is pregnant with his son. The boundary between the feminine interior of the domestic and the masculine exterior is maintained.

When Elie realizes that she is pregnant, she decides to leave for Edinburgh. McCulloch suggests that it is difficult to "reconcile the departure of the pregnant Elie from the Riasgan with the warmth of the community as Gunn depicted it in the opening passages" (56) and goes on to argue that her departure must be read symbolically. Indeed, this episode can be read in terms of the unhomely rupture. Elie ventures forth into the world, and symbolically brings the world back with her upon her return. McCulloch points out that "The cleavage between the depiction of the community before the departure of Elie and after her return is also too strong to be convincing" (56). Gunn's initial portrayal of the Riasgan is an Idyll, it is full of music, poetry and laughter, an image of innocence, a domestic community before the rupture of the unhomely moment. Elie's departure marks the symbolic shift for the community. When she returns it is on the eve of eviction. Her return marks the moment of recognition of "the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world." During her absence, the Riasgan had "become vaguely aware of the disintegrating forces at work in that northern land" (Gunn 191). Upon Elie's return, both she and Mairi come under scrutiny as scapegoats for the wrath of God that is being visited on the glens, Elie for her immorality and Mairi for her "heathen" ways. "If the minister was too busy to do his duty, 'the Men' themselves would call the girl before them in a searching assize. For did she not come back amongst

them as the living witness of that general sinfulness which the Lord was to punish by using the chief and her factors as His instruments” (192)? Gunn codes the intervention between the domestic and the public again in masculine terms, establishing “the Men” as the arbiters of the interaction. The unhomey emerges in the dispossession of Mairi and Elie of sovereignty over their personal and social lives. As “the Men” draw Elie’s personal life into the public sphere, we see the eclipse of the public over the domestic.

It’s worth noting that both Gunn and Crichton Smith narrate the Clearances from the perspective of victims, while MacColla tells the story from the perspective of either an accomplice or an intermediary, depending on how generous our reading of Sachairi’s character is. That Sachairi the minister/interloper is masculine, while Mrs. Scott, Elie and Mairi are feminine reinforces the coding of the rift between the domestic and the public in terms of masculine/feminine social forms. The domestic space is strongly coded as feminine, and both Crichton Smith and Gunn reinforce this by invoking the absence of the masculine, thus reinforcing the sovereignty of the feminine in the domestic sphere. At the same time the public sphere, the law and the church are strongly coded as masculine. Partly this reflects historical reality, but it serves to reinforce the sense of the unhomey as the masculine public *world* invades and disrupts the feminine domestic *home*.

Throughout *And the Cock Crew*, *Butcher’s Broom*, and *Consider the Lilies*, one consistent theme is that of alienation. Whether this alienation is the result of the unhomey moment, the simple act of displacement, or the linguistic rift between the Highland people and the Anglicized agents of clearance, it permeates each of these novels. MacColla, Gunn and Crichton Smith each concern themselves with the trauma of

displacement and question the very nature of identity in the face of enforced social changes. It is clear throughout these works that transfer of “indigenous control over social organization” was integral to the intervention of the Clearances, despite Liam Connell’s claims to the contrary. While these novels are all fictionalized accounts of clearance, they are also rooted in the historical experience. The alienation that is evident in these works is not only an alienation from the structures of power that implemented social change in the Highlands, but also an alienation from the very historical and social legacy that established Highland identity. Each of these novels functions as postcolonial literature to the extent that they attempt to reclaim a history that had been subsumed by the domination of an imperial power. In the example of Domhnall Mac-an-Rothaich, colonial intervention robbed him of his very identity, of his personal history. Mrs. Scott’s history, too, was challenged by colonial encroachment. It was her history that she turned to again and again to maintain claims to sovereignty over home and identity. Mrs. Scott’s story is instructive. If our history defines us, we must maintain it, we must speak it to the world. *And the Cock Crew*, *Butcher’s Broom*, and *Consider the Lilies* represent an attempt to maintain and reclaim a contested history from within the cultural legacy of the Highlands.

## Chapter 3: A Drama of the People

### Introduction

Several years ago while doing research for this dissertation, I was on the north coast of Scotland to visit the Strathnaver Museum in Bettyhill. I discuss the museum itself in the final chapter, but there were two things about my visit to Bettyhill that have really stuck with me which are relevant here. First is that the setting of the village is stunningly beautiful. Perched on a promontory jutting into the North Atlantic and bracketed by the sandy beaches of Torrisdale Bay to the west and Farr Bay to the east, Bettyhill is a striking contrast between rocky cliffs and soft sand. I'm drawn to such rugged, windswept northern landscapes. Two hundred years ago the very features that drew me in made this a very difficult place in which to make a living. I knew the history, which was why I had come. Bettyhill is a village made by the Clearances. Sitting at the northern terminus of Strathnaver, the site of many of the evictions and burnings that I discuss in chapter one, Bettyhill was created by the Countess of Sutherland (and named in her honor), as one of the new coastal settlements intended to receive Highlanders displaced from the interior glens. The rugged coastline, the thin rocky soil, the unbroken exposure to the north wind and the sea, all these things that drew me in made this land expendable to the Countess. This marginal land was all but useless for agriculture. It was here on the north coast, in towns like Bettyhill—beautiful to the modern sightseer—that many victims of clearance struggled to eek a living from the sea and from the shallow soil, barely beyond view of where they once lived in relative comfort. This contrast between the beauty of the scenery and the ugliness of the history has stuck with me.

Aside from the contrast between the natural beauty and the historical ugliness, there was an incident while I was visiting the Strathnaver Museum that has stuck with me. The museum lies downhill and to the east of Bettyhill proper. I arrived to find the converted church locked tight with no one in sight, despite it being during the posted opening hours. I made an inquiry at the café cum tourist office next door, and after a few phone calls by the staff there, a man came quickly clamoring down the hill to let me into the museum. After looking around the displays and making some cursory notes, I found myself standing in the small, cluttered museum office chatting about my project. Eventually talk turned to John McGrath, the writer and playwright (and the subject of this chapter) best known for his play *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*. By then I had read much of McGrath's work, along with most of the limited amount of critical work available about him. I was surprised and skeptical that what I found in my reading seemed more a paean to a cult of personality than real critical work. The title of the one volume of critical work published about him reflects this sentiment: it's called *Freedom's Pioneer*. But there I was, in beautiful Bettyhill, having a lovely chat with this friendly man who came clamoring down the hill to let me into the museum, who, upon the mere utterance of McGrath's name blurted out, "God bless that man, it's amazing what he did." I was intrigued. On the one hand it was a confirmation of McGrath's legacy here where the Clearances had taken their greatest toll, and of the high regard in which he was held. On the other hand it piqued my curiosity about why so little truly critical work had been written about him when it seemed there were a number of very legitimate questions to be asked about his work and his legacy. Notably, I wondered about the implications of a privileged Englishman appropriating the history of Gaelic speaking Highlanders to

further his own socialist agenda? What follows in this chapter is a consideration of this and other lingering questions about McGrath's legacy in the context of my larger project of looking at the Clearances as an episode of colonial intervention in the Highlands, and considering the political utility that the legacy of the Clearances has found in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

“Nationalism is not enough”: Socialist Perspectives on the Clearances

In “The Year of the Cheviot,” the introductory essay to the Methuen volume of *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, McGrath recalls performing *The Cheviot* at the 1973 Scottish National Party (SNP) conference at Oban. Most strikingly McGrath recounts his wife Liz MacLennan, “squaring up to all 500 of them and delivering ‘Nationalism is not enough. The enemy of the Scottish people is Scottish capital as much as the foreign exploiter’—with shattering power. Some cheered, some booed, the rest were thinking about it” (“The Year” xxvi). *The Cheviot* was the first play that McGrath wrote and produced with his 7:84 Scotland theater company. It was *The Cheviot* that thrust McGrath and 7:84 into the vanguard of Scottish theater and elicited the types of critical reaction, and spontaneous outbursts of gratitude like the “ten minute standing ovation” that McGrath recalls at Oban (“The Year” xxvi). *The Cheviot* strings together a series of loosely connected dramatic vignettes, songs, direct addresses to the audience, and dramatic readings of historical records. A plot summary of the play would be difficult to produce. There is no conventional narrative structure; dramatic montage is perhaps the best analogy. The play begins in Sutherland with two women speaking to



each other in Gaelic. These women are then interrupted by the arrival of James Loch and Patrick Sellar, who, naturally, inform these women that they are to be cleared from their homes. McGrath then develops the “plot” of the Clearances as Loch and Sellar discuss the economic gains they hope to realize through clearance, outlining the profits to be made by rearing Cheviot sheep. The dialog between Loch and Sellar then gives way to a Gaelic singer who sings a song called “Mo Dhachaidh” or “My Home.” As the song ends the play moves into a series of dramatic historical readings. One of these readings relates that “When the Sheriff and his men arrived, the women were on the road and the men behind the walls. The women shouted ‘Better to die here than America or the Cape of Good Hope’” (11). The plot, such as it is, develops in this fragmentary way, telling the story of the Clearances first and then connecting the capitalist ideology that drove the Clearances to the frenzy that surrounded the discovery of North Sea oil. These dramatizations depict and narrate the intervention of both historical figures such as Patrick Sellar and James Loch, and fictional characters such as Texas Jim, the greedy oil prospector. *The Cheviot* dramatizes the history of the Highlands beginning with the Clearances and concluding with the discovery of North Sea oil. Throughout the play, McGrath argues that the history of exploitation, displacement and disenfranchisement in the Highlands can be traced to the logic of capitalist expansion: exploitation of labor, expropriation of resources and a winner takes all approach to members of the local population that stand in the way of a potential profit. *The Cheviot* makes the case that these processes of capital accumulation were as much at work in the 1970s as they were during the Clearances.

McGrath's agenda with *The Cheviot*, first performed in 1973, was explicitly socialist. He attempted to shed light on the exploitation of lower classes as bourgeois and aristocratic interests seized the means of production in the Highlands, and redirected the labor of the proletariat towards capitalist accumulation. *7:84* took its name from the statistic that 7% of the British population controlled 84% of British wealth at the time; this unequal distribution of wealth fueled the political strivings of the company. McGrath and company set out to make "an oppositional form of theatre" which "search[ed], through the experience and forms of the working class, for those elements which point forward in the direction of a future rational, non-exploitative, classless society" (*Good Night* 21). For McGrath, this opposition was intended to undermine the ideology and hegemony of the ruling class. McGrath argued that the "British state and its institutions are organized in the interests of that ruling class" (*Good Night* 20), arguing that "the bourgeois theatre in all its forms as part of that legitimating ideology" (*Good Night* 21). McGrath asserts that "The theatre can never *cause* a social change" but that it can "be the way people can find their voice, their solidarity and their collective determination" ("The Year" xxvii). Theater was the ideal medium for reaching people in this way. Theater doesn't require its audience to possess the literacy that a novel does, nor does it require the investment in technology of cinema. Likewise theater can take place anywhere, McGrath and company took their production of *The Cheviot* to community halls, pubs and other public spaces, eschewing traditional theater venues. For these reasons, despite its association with bourgeois sensibilities, the West End of London, or Broadway, theater has the potential to be a truly egalitarian art form. While McGrath aimed to plant seeds of socialist solidarity in his audience, reception of his work broke in two directions:

socialist and nationalist. The divergent reception resulted from both the content of *The Cheviot* and the context in which it was performed.

In *The Bone Won't Break*, a collection of lectures given by McGrath at Cambridge University in the Fall of 1988, McGrath describes himself as “a theatre-maker who is not only socialist but also committed to working with working class and oppositional audiences, and to presenting perspectives on our society that do *not* point to the greater glory of the capitalist system” (*Bone 2*). *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* reflects McGrath’s socialist perspective, arguing that the history of Northern Scotland from the Clearances through the discovery of North Sea oil has been substantially driven by capitalist exploitation. To reach “working class and oppositional audiences” McGrath eschewed conventional theaters that he associated with bourgeois sensibilities and felt were alienating to working class audiences. Instead he chose to take the show on the road, touring to working class communities, playing in village halls and other community venues, bringing touring theater to small communities in the Highlands that weren’t previously thought receptive to theater. McGrath relates that initial attempts to source funds from the Scottish Arts Council were met with resistance, as they believed that “Highlanders didn’t want to hear about the Clearances, the politics of oil and such, and anyway wouldn’t pay to see a theatre-show because they didn’t go to the theatre” (“The Year” xiv).

Despite the socialist framework of 7:84, and his assertion that the company were “not nationalists, and would attack bourgeois nationalism,” McGrath relates that Billy Wolfe, the chairman of the SNP, invited 7:84 to perform *The Cheviot* at the annual conference, suggesting that it “would stimulate discussion within his party” (“The Year”

xxvi). McGrath and 7:84 accepted the invitation and, as McGrath tells the story, the play concluded with “a ten minute standing ovation, and the company responding with raised fists and a short speech about socialism and nationalism” (“The Year” xxvi). In an obituary for McGrath, Michael Russell, MSP (SNP), expands on this story, writing that “Eventually John McGrath joined [the cast on stage] and indicated he wanted to speak. In total silence he stepped forward and said ‘I think I should tell you that none of us are nationalists’. [sic] Whatever he expected as a response, all he got was even louder applause!” Russell continues, “John himself, at least to my knowledge, never joined the [SNP] but he certainly expressed very considerable support and sympathy for it as year succeeded year. His ‘Border Warfare’ is at times overtly Nationalist” (Russell).

Christopher Harvie goes a step further in his discussion, claiming that “*The Cheviot* was the highlight of the SNP’s conference at Oban” and speculating that “for every one of McGrath’s audience who was converted to his own Marxist position, ten saw the confrontation in national rather than class terms” (186). The episode at the SNP conference illustrates the ambiguous, and at times uncomfortable, conflation of nationalist and socialist political aspirations that emerged from McGrath’s work.

Despite audience reception that broke away from his stated aims, McGrath maintained an expressly socialist ideology throughout his career. Nevertheless there are moments that his work clearly embraces aspects of nationalism by romanticizing the past and implicitly acknowledging an “authentic” Scottish identity that was disrupted by the Clearances. This uncomfortable merging of Nationalist and Social sensibilities in Scotland, comes in part from practical consideration, summed up by journalist Arnold Kemp, when he writes that “The Scottish Labour movement emerged from the First

World War with a commitment to home rule,” which stemmed “above all from the conviction that it would take much longer to achieve socialism in England than in Scotland” (80). In this sense Scottish nationalists and socialists saw each other as allies, if only for the short term. Socialists saw independence as means to their socialist ends, while the nationalists were willing to accept any additional support they could find. Kemp continues, writing that “hatred of landlordism merged with industrial grievances of the Lowland and Irish working classes” (80). Private investment in industry was continuing to exploit Scottish labor and resources while at the same time the interests of industry and capital were propped up by English hegemony, as English spread as the language of commerce and the ideology of capital accumulation spread as the new normal.

In an interview published in 1996, McGrath laments the lost potential of nationalism saying that “Nationalism should be a very fruitful movement, a fruitful communal emotion: it should be good that people take pride in the values of their nation and their culture.” He goes on to suggest that “nationalism in the context of Europe is becoming increasingly important, particularly in terms of small nations” (“Silver Darlings” 154). These comments reflect McGrath’s fear that Europe might take on the homogenizing characteristics of one of the major European economic powers, McGrath suggest nationalism might be necessary to counter the homogenizing effect of capitalist expansion. In this view ethnic or cultural nationalism is seen standing in opposition to the cultural logic of the market which seeks to standardize cultural modes and modes of communication. This position echoes Chatterjee’s assertion that nationalism “administer[s] a check on a specific form of metropolitan capitalist dominance” (2).

McGrath's fear is that the new internationalism of the market will produce a "meta-culture" that "will tend to erode the sense of identity and the specifics of local and national cultures" ("Silver Darlings" 154-5). In one sense McGrath is right about this, the homogenizing effects of global capitalism have already proven themselves to be profound. However, the tension between McGrath's avowed socialism and his embrace of nationalism is difficult to reconcile. McGrath claims a socialist ideology, yet his work implies a Scottish national chauvinism. Class conflict was certainly a significant aspect of the Clearances, but McGrath falls into the trap of nationalism when he suggests that Scottish resources need to be preserved for the Scots, this insularity is at odds with the general tenants of international socialism that McGrath advocates.

McGrath writes that he accepted the invitation to perform *The Cheviot* at the SNP convention partly because, "There are many socialists in the SNP, who are there for lack of any party that is not run from London. And it would do no harm for the chauvinists and tartan Tories to get a dose of what we were saying" ("The Year" xxvi). The reception of McGrath's work at the SNP conference, and elsewhere, reflects both confusion and conflation of the nationalist/socialist positions that it presents. On the one hand, as McGrath points out, there was a socialist contingent within the SNP which saw the goal of home rule as an important step towards socialism within Scotland; a London based government would never protect Scottish workers. Thus, as both positions opposed English political and economic domination, nationalist and socialist aspirations were conflated as complimentary means of protecting Scottish interests. On the other hand, as Russell points out, there were times where McGrath's work was overtly nationalist. Even when the nationalism isn't overt, there are moments that can easily be

interpreted as nationalist. For example, throughout *The Cheviot*, McGrath utilizes what he refers to as a “ceilidh form,” incorporates Gaelic language, and returns again and again to the song “These are My Mountains,” by James Copeland, which begins with the lines “For these are my mountains/ And this is my glen” (2). Each of these factors construct a romantic connection with a native home, they create a connection between audience, performer, place and identity that reads as profoundly nationalist, rather than socialist. It appropriates the rhetoric of nostalgia and reinforces identity and affiliation within the imagined community of the Highlands. McGrath’s work is rooted strongly in the legacy of this space, and this history, and these people, fostering an attachment to the landscape and cultural traditions, by dramatizing specific local histories, incorporating traditional songs, and working within the “ceilidh form.” In *The Break-up of Britain*, Tom Nairn writes that “The politico-cultural necessities of nationalism [...] entail an intimate link between nationalist politics and *romanticism*. Romanticism was the cultural mode of the nationalist dynamic” (104). These moments in his work position McGrath and 7:84 in an ambiguous, and at times confusing, relationship to nationalism and socialism within Scotland. If, as Harvie suggests, public response to *The Cheviot* broke ten-to-one in the direction of a nationalist interpretation, what does this suggest about the work itself? McGrath intended *The Cheviot* to be socialist; he’s quite clear on this. Authorial intent aside, the response tells a different story. Harvie relates that a *Scots Independent* journalist approached Billy Wolfe after the SNP performance, asking “How can they put on a play like that and then say they are not Nationalists” (186)? Despite McGrath’s claims to the contrary, the reception of the play suggests that there are deeply nationalist sentiments expressed in *The Cheviot*.

The moment at the SNP conference when Liz squared “up to all 500 of them and deliver[ed] ‘Nationalism is not enough’” typifies the position *The Cheviot* carves out in relation to nationalism and socialism. Despite McGrath’s claims that he would “attack bourgeois nationalism,” this moment of “shattering power” stops short of being an attack. Rather, this moment implicitly validates nationalism as part of a solution to the social problems within Scotland; it fails even to suggest that nationalism is misguided or chauvinist. If nationalism is “not enough” is it still part of the solution, merely lacking some other component to fulfill its promise? Is it just a stepping stone? This shattering claim also leaves other questions unanswered, such as: not enough for what, or whom? Given the context of the performance, McGrath’s attack on “bourgeois nationalism” is timid, validating nationalism and implying the need for a hybrid of nationalism and socialism to undermine the exploitation of Scottish workers and resources. This brings us back to the point made by Arnold Kemp that “it would take much longer to achieve socialism in England than in Scotland.” If Scottish socialists saw nationalism as an instrumental part of their political agenda, it was only as a means to an end. Whether McGrath intended to utilize the romantic, sentimentalized rhetoric of nationalism as camouflage for his socialist ideology and bring people in through the back door, or as scaffolding to build his own rhetoric, it’s problematic because it exploits the narrative of the nation. Interestingly, though, the strategy of an instrumental nationalism is still part of the socialist playbook in Scotland. In the buildup to the 2014 independence referendum, the socialists are similarly piggybacking on nationalist sentiments, looking at independence as instrumental to achieving their own political goals. The Scottish Socialist Party writes, for example, that voting for independence would allow for “a



mighty leap forward towards that goal [of a Scottish socialist republic] by breaking free of the suffocating stranglehold of the British state” (“Building a Better Scotland”).

The tension in McGrath’s work goes beyond the tension between nationalism and socialism; it also resides in the realm of the colonizer and the colonized. Bill Ashcroft, writes that “The most tenacious aspect of colonial control has been its capacity to bind the colonized into a binary myth” which helps to “perpetuate a cultural distinction which is essential to the ‘business’ of economic and political exploitation” (21). McGrath continually falls into this trap of the binary myth, by essentializing both the working class and the Highlanders. Whatever else he may be, McGrath is a member of the English elite. Oxford educated and well off, he is operating within the hegemonic structures of English society. From this position within the dominant center, McGrath wrote *The Cheviot* about a culture that was not his own. In the play, Gaelic culture and language become instrumental pieces of McGrath’s political agenda (and lined his pockets a bit in the process). This is, inescapably, an exploitative act that further binds the Highland people into the binary myth of the backwards Highlander and the civilized Englishman. While this might not work to advance the colonial process, it comes from within the power structures that facilitated that process. There is a further tension created by the fact that, on the one hand, McGrath depicts and condemns the colonial intervention of English interests in the Highlands as the move to exploit the labor and resources of a culture alien to them, and on the other hand McGrath himself exploits that culture to further his political and creative ends. While McGrath may not be intentionally exploiting Highland culture, there is the sense that he’s the inheritor of Samuel Johnson’s legacy. For Johnson the Highlands were a spectacle of incivility, a canvass on which he

could paint his theories of cultural progress and the civilizing influence of English culture. It is perhaps the spectacular nature of the Highland Clearances that drew McGrath to them. What he saw in the Highlands and the Highland Clearances was the spectacle of capitalist accumulation. And, just as Johnson painted his theories of civility and progress on this canvass, McGrath painted his theories of socialism and unequal distribution of resources on the canvass of the Highlands.

Throughout the play, *The Cheviot* utilizes rhetoric closely aligned with nationalism. This nationalist coded rhetoric falls broadly into two categories. McGrath draws heavily on Highland culture to advance the play, incorporating Gaelic language and singing, along with traditional music; he also composed the play in what he refers to as a “*ceilidh* form.” McGrath appropriated the “*ceilidh* form” to present a “native” mode of entertainment intended to engage local Highland communities with what he supposed would be a familiar, and therefore approachable, experience. The cultural rhetoric that McGrath uses, both in content and in form, echoes nationalist claims based on social and ethnic particularism, lifting up Highland cultural forms and artifacts as exceptional and worthy of protection from outside intervention or the homogenizing process of English hegemony. Both *The Cheviot* and nationalist rhetoric position Highland Gaelic speakers as a sovereign social group, complete with its own culture and language, which has come under pressure from external Lowland and foreign agents. Secondly, McGrath’s treatment of the discovery of North Sea oil strongly echoes the position taken by the SNP. In 1972 the SNP launched the “It’s Scotland’s Oil!” campaign, which aimed to protect the economic prospects of offshore oil development from English and other outside interests (Harvie 184-5). In *The Cheviot*, McGrath too is critical of foreign

intervention in the oil fields, claiming that “By 1964 100,000 square miles of sea-bed had been handed out for exploration” and commenting through the character of Whitehall that, “We didn’t charge these chaps a lot of money, we didn’t want to put them off.” In a direct address to the audience, M.C.1. (a role in which one of the actors directly address the audience) adds, “As in all 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries exploited by American business, the raw material will be processed under the control of American capital—and sold back to us for three to four times the price” (*The Cheviot* 62). The concerns expressed about the intervention of American capital can be viewed within a socialist framework, in that the profits generated from this Scottish resource will inevitably be shipped offshore, rather than distributed among the workers. Likewise other of the details included in the play’s treatment of the oil rush are couched in broadly socialist terms. But the overarching effect advocates for the preservation of Scottish resources for the Scots, a chauvinist move that aims to advance the imagined in group community at the expense of the out group.

One of the most evocative characters in the later parts of the play is Texas Jim, a caricature of an American oil tycoon. The gun-toting American capitalist of Scottish descent enters and introduces himself: “my great-great grand-pappy Angus left these calm untroubled shores to seek his fortune in that great continent across the Atlantic Ocean,” and continues “here I am, a free-booting oil-man from Texas, name of Elmer Y. MacAlpine the Fourth, and I’m proud to say that my trade has brought me back to these shores once more” (*The Cheviot* 58). After singing a song in which he gets a bit carried away and lets his exploitative plans out of the bag, Texas Jim addresses the audience explaining that after the British government discovered oil “they didn’t know what to do

about it, and they didn't believe in all these pesky godless government controls [...] so your government gave a little chance to honest God-fearing, anti-socialist businessmen like myself' (*The Cheviot* 61). Despite such moments lampooning capitalism, and citing statistics illustrative of the influence of outside capital, the play turns again and again to cultural concerns. McGrath's argument positions Scottish resources as a coeval inheritance with Scottish, or more precisely Gaelic, culture. But in making this argument McGrath slips into nationalist rhetoric. Any argument that tries to separate Scotland out from the UK to preserve resources and capital solely for the benefit of the Scottish nation engages in a form of chauvinistic national exceptionalism. That is, any claims that point towards the conclusion that "It's Scotland's Oil!" presuppose Scotland as an inclusive political and social entity which is in some essential way distinct from the rest of the United Kingdom. Social and cultural differences within Scotland, particularly between the traditionally Gaelic speaking regions and the Anglophone ones, suggest that politics, not cultural or social ties, are that which binds together the Scottish nation. Oil was initially discovered off the coast of Aberdeen. When the cry went up to protect it from exploitation, it sought to preserve the oil for Scotland, not Aberdeen or Aberdeenshire. If not for national chauvinism what claim do Glaswegian factory workers or Hebridean fisherman have to oil off the northeast coast that London bankers don't share? The answer, of course, is a tricky one. One way to resolve this is by considering the role of the imagined community. Claiming the oil for Scotland generally, rather than Aberdeenshire specifically, suggests that the borders of the imagined community in which the oil was discovered extend to the entire nation of Scotland. While there may be some Aberdonians, who disagree with this sentiment, the suggestion is that there is an

inclusive identification of Scottishness that has limits coterminous with the Scottish nation. This same view sees English interests as interloping in what is, by some natural right, Scottish. Of course there is no discounting that base greed played a hand here while all parties were wrangling to secure the biggest share of the spoils that they could manage.

In explaining their decision to perform at the SNP conference, McGrath expresses that 7:84 “were attacked by comrades on the left for going at all” (“The Year” xxvi). Responding to these attacks, McGrath suggests that, those comrades hadn’t read Lenin’s “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination.” Evoking Lenin in this context suggests that McGrath sees a common thread between nationalist and socialist aspirations in Scotland, that they can be used in conjunction to reach a mutually agreeable end result, or that the one can be used as a tool in service of the other. Lenin argues that “bourgeois nationalism of *every* oppressed nation has a general democratic content which is directed *against* oppression, and it is this content that we support *unconditionally*, while strictly distinguishing it from the tendency towards national exceptionalism” (211). *The Cheviot* does seem to work against oppression and exploitation by raising awareness, yet it treads deeply into considerations of social and cultural distinctiveness that have been the hallmark bourgeois nationalist claims within Scotland. In *The Cheviot*, McGrath appropriates the social and cultural structures of the Highlands and dramatizes the oppression and exploitation of Highland peoples and resources to advance his avowed socialist agenda. As suggested earlier, this approach bears a strong resemblance to the efforts of the nationalists within Scotland. Micheal Keating points out “the suppression of the Highlands eventually strengthened Scottish identity by lessening an internal ethnic

division. Highland symbols were then appropriated by the nation as a whole” (200). For McGrath, as with the nationalists, the struggles in the Highlands become metonymic of the need for change towards both a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and for the protection of both endemic Scottish culture and Scottish resources from external influences. Perhaps most illustrative of McGrath’s view of the potentially symbiotic concerns of nationalism and socialism within Scotland is in a direct address to the audience:

M.C.2. A whole new culture is waiting to be destroyed.

M.C.1. By economic power. Until economic power is in the hands of the people, then their culture, Gaelic or English, will be destroyed. The educational system, the newspapers, the radio and television and the decision-makers, local and national, whether they know it or not, are the servants of the men who own and control the land. (*The Cheviot* 62)

While McGrath turns his attention here to the hegemony of the capitalist system, his expressed concerns are cultural preservation, rather than the advancement of the proletariat. McGrath is content to advocate for ethnic nationalism insofar as it is oppositional to the logic of British capitalism. The advancement of his concerns in this manner again echoes Lenin who suggests that nationalism can be used as a tool for the advancement of “our class goal by *all* possible paths” (211). The question arises, however, what becomes of the tool once it has served its purpose?

### The Lament Syndrome: the Uses of Nostalgia

*The Cheviot* largely forgoes historically dominant narratives about the Clearances that place blame on the church or anti-Gaelic sentiment. One of McGrath's expressed aims for *The Cheviot* was to break out of the "lament syndrome," resolving that "for every defeat, we would also celebrate a victory, for each sadness, we would wipe it out with the sheer energy and vitality of the people, for every oppression, a way to fight back." McGrath's attempt to break from "Beautiful, haunting lament" ("The Year" xxvii-xxviii) marked a shift in the debate over how the Clearances should be remembered and the significance of their legacy in the twentieth century and beyond. Not only did he shift attention towards the pressures of capitalist expansion, but by drawing parallels between the Clearances and contemporary modes of exploitation McGrath injected an immediacy into his work lacking from other treatments of the Clearances. McGrath's intervention sought both to inform and to provide critical tools to recognize and resist capitalist exploitation.

Despite attempting to avoid the "lament syndrome," *The Cheviot* doesn't shy away from history, it takes a hard look at some painful episodes; *The Cheviot* does its share of looking back. Unlike other treatments of the Clearances, McGrath works to make historical struggles relevant to contemporary problems. Gunn, MacColla, and Crichton Smith, who were the subject of the previous chapter, were largely content to leave the past in the past, positioning the Clearances as a moment of historical trauma, relevant mostly because of the material impact of displacement that restructured Highland population and cultural forms, and for the painful memories that linger on.

While Gunn, MacColla, and Crichton Smith may have seen the Clearances as part of a larger process of cultural aggression and myriad social and economic forces, none of them drew specific connections between past injustices and contemporary social issues. It is in this arena that McGrath's work on the Clearances is most significant.

Lamentation or not, McGrath argues compellingly that the Clearances continue to be relevant, not so much because of the collective trauma, but because the social and economic forces that caused them continue to influence society.

One key to the success of *The Cheviot* was tailoring the message to the local community. To the extent that they were able, McGrath and company altered the content of their plays so that historical facts cited were local to the venue and therefore resonated more strongly with the local audience. Throughout *The Cheviot*, McGrath invokes socially and culturally specific historical events to bridge the gap between performer and audience. Early on in the play there are a number of historical readings to be selected "according to where the show is being done." The readings include statistics and emotionally evocative episodes, for example: "Suisinish, Skye. Flora Matheson, aged 96, who could not walk, was evicted while all the able-bodied men and boys were away south to earn money to pay the rent" and "Strathnaver, Sutherland. 'Grace MacDonald took shelter up the brae and remained there for a day and a night watching the burnings. When a terrified cat jumped from a burning cottage it was thrown back in again until it died'" (*The Cheviot* 16-17). The intention of these readings was to draw the audience in, to appeal to regional connections, and to elicit an emotional response by personalizing the trauma.



Though McGrath expressed an intention to break free of the “lament syndrome,” he draws heavily on cultural loss and historical trauma to elicit an emotional response from the audience, and draw them into line with his ideological arguments. *The Cheviot* opens with the M.C. inviting the audience to join in singing “These Are My Mountains.” The song is deeply sentimental, “For these are my mountains/ And this is my glen/ The braes of my childhood/ Will see me again/ No Land’s ever claimed me/ Though far did I roam/ For these are my mountains/ And I’m coming home” (*The Cheviot 2*). This opening verse sparks an emotional response in the audience and sets a sentimental tone that McGrath revises and interrogates throughout the play.

Once the initial singing is over there are a few words from the M.C. and the Gaelic Singer enters and “begins to sing a quiet Jacobite song in Gaelic.” The M.C. speaks over the singing:

It begins, I suppose, with 1746—Culloden and all that.

The Highlands were in a bit of a mess. Speaking—or singing  
—the Gaelic language was forbidden. (*Singing stops.*) Wearing  
the plaid was forbidden. (*SINGER takes off her plaid, sits.*)

Things were all set for a change. So Scene One—Strathnaver  
1813.<sup>6</sup> (*The Cheviot 2*)

The scene continues as two Strathnaver girls enter singing in Gaelic, only to be interrupted shortly by the arrival of James Loch and Patrick Sellar bearing news of impending eviction.

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted here with stage directions in parentheses as per the text

The choice to set the opening scene in Strathnaver is evocative, particularly for a Highland audience. The Strathnaver Clearances are the most infamous, and a local audience would instantly draw on a whole host of associations and collective memories that would establish a sense of indignance, injustice and stir up old hatreds. Strathnaver is one of those locations in Scotland, along with Glen Coe, Culloden, Scone and a few others, that has a deeply inscribed cultural memory and strongly coded associations because of the significance of the events that took place there. It was an incident in Strathnaver that led to accusations of culpable homicide against Patrick Sellar who, along with James Loch, promptly appears in the first scene to deliver news of imminent eviction. When Sellar and Loch arrive they interrupt the two Strathnaver girls and the Young Highlander singing and speaking intermittently in Gaelic. McGrath juxtaposes Sellar and Loch to the villagers by dressing them in top-hats and tails; the Sellar character is instructed to speak in a Lowland accent, again setting him in opposition to the locals (both in the audience and in the scene). Sellar and Loch enter the scene “looking very grand,” Sellar “ignores the women, who are huddled under their shawls” (*The Cheviot* 4). The “two gentlemen” are the vanguard of the incursion of outside interests to the Highlands that will dispossess the mountains and the glens from their inhabitants. While their “grand” outfits, and the reference to Sellar and Loch as “gentlemen” suggests class differences, the conflict that McGrath sets up in these first few pages is largely couched in images of cultural intervention rather than economic alienation and exploitation. As *The Cheviot* progresses, McGrath makes greater claims about economic inequality and the exploitation of labor and resources by capitalist interests, but he continues to

interrogate the conflict in terms cultural intervention as he decries the loss of traditional culture and language.

Once again, rather than being overtly socialist, the opening scene takes a page out of the nationalist playbook. The significance of 1746 and Culloden is the failure of the Jacobite uprising, the military defeat of the Highland regiments at the hands of English and Lowland forces, and the amplification of a program of cultural censorship. The class component to the episode is buried in the association between class and social identification. Historian Michael Keating has pointed out that “the working class are more likely to be self-consciously Scottish” (213) while the upper class is “least likely to identify themselves as Scottish” (211). While Keating’s data is from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, it reflects an ongoing schism that closely ties social identification with access to capital and social advancement. These same characteristics of social identification also help to explain McGrath’s success engaging working class audiences, who would generally be more apt to associate with the displaced, dispossessed and disenfranchised Highlanders than would bourgeois audiences more closely integrated with dominant British culture.

McGrath draws on the memory of collective trauma and displacement through clearance to sentimentalize pre-clearance history and to emotionally engage the audience. He does this by dramatizing cultural images rather than class or economic ones. Cultural censorship is symbolically invoked as the Gaelic singer stops singing, takes off her plaid, and lets it fall to the ground, dramatizing the historical censure of the Act of Proscription. The emotionally evocative “These are My Mountains” heightens the dramatization of a Gaelic indigenous culture. “These are My Mountains” establishes a sense of both

ownership and belonging as the mountains of the Highlands are positioned as social/cultural possession and site of identity formation. “These are my mountains/ And this is my glen” can be read both in the sense of ownership, “these mountains belong to me, I own them” and also in the sense of cultural identification and belonging to them “this is my glen, I belong here, it defines my identity.” As the play progresses McGrath revisits the song again and again, transforming it into an ironic statement about displacement and exploitation, negating the initial interpretations of ownership and belonging, leaving only sentimentality and bitterness. At one point Queen Victoria sings a verse, “These are our mountains/ and this is our glen/ The braes of your childhood/ Are English again.” Texas Jim announces his arrival with another modification of the chorus “Though far did I roam/ Yes these are my mountains/ And I—have come home” (*The Cheviot* 37, 59). Both iterations of the song reshape the nature of the relationship suggested by the phrase “these are my mountains,” reminding the audience that not only are they under the control of England, but that under the pressures of capitalism they are also for sale.

Along with the loss of land and resources, McGrath interrogates the Gaelic prohibition alluded to in the opening scene when the Gaelic Singer stops singing and drops her plaid. Near the middle of the play the Gaelic Singer begins a song, but is interrupted by the M.C. who says “It’s no good singing in Gaelic anymore—there’s an awful lot of people here won’t understand a word of it” (*The Cheviot* 51). The company then directly addresses the audience with musical accompaniment:

M.C.1. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century speaking the Gaelic language  
was forbidden by law.

*Chords.*

M.C.2. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century children caught speaking Gaelic in the playground were flogged.

*Chords.*

M.C.1. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the children were taught to deride their own language.

*Chords.*

Because English is the language of the ruling class.

Because English is the language of the people who own the Highlands and control the Highlands and invest in the Highlands— (*The Cheviot* 52)

While there are clearly several forces at play in the prohibition and disenfranchisement of the Gaelic language, McGrath positions it largely within the frame of capitalist hegemony. McGrath's position represents somewhat of a break with conventional thinking on Gaelic prohibition. T.M. Devine suggests that prohibitions against Gaelic culture after Culloden were largely intended to disrupt the ability of Jacobite supporters to organize (46). McGrath's socialist framework is evident in this assessment as he turns an accusatory eye at the market, rather than political and military concerns. Again, though, McGrath conflates consideration of social and ethnic loss with the complications of economic pressures. Emerging from *The Cheviot* is a hybrid view that complicates conventional treatment of the Clearances and that also undermines the oppositional understanding of the roles that socialism and nationalism can play in Scotland. Whether or not McGrath's version of history is accurate, and while it calls into question certain

general assumptions about the thrust of history in the Highlands, it does propose an elegant model to make sense of a myriad of social pressures within the Highlands.

McGrath dramatized the continuity of the forces of exploitation through his casting decisions. In the initial production, Bill Paterson played four named characters: James Loch, “Sturdy Highlander,” Andy McChuckemup and Texas Jim. In each case Paterson’s character plays the role of the exploiter. Early in the play Paterson enters as James Loch in the midst of negotiations with Patrick Sellar. Speaking of the people of Sutherland, Loch says “They are living in a form of slavery to their own indolence. Nothing could be more at variance with the general interests of society and the individual happiness of the people themselves, than the present state of Highland manners and customs” (*The Cheviot* 7). As the play progresses, Paterson appears as Sturdy Highlander, an agent of the Hudson Bay Company in Canada. Sturdy Highlander addresses the audience directly, “I’m a Sturdy Highlander and I’ve been sent here to till the land for future generations and for Lord Selkirk. While I’m getting on with the planting of the brussel [*sic*] sprouts and the runner beans, I am particularly vulnerable to attack from the rear. So if any of you should see any of those big Red Indians I’ve heard about will you let me know” (*The Cheviot* 25)? After a short while, Sturdy Highlander address the audience again, out of character this time, “we came, more and more of us, [...] and in time, the Red Indians were reduced to the same state as our fathers after Culloden—defeated, hunted, treated like the scum of the earth, their culture polluted and torn out with slow deliberation and their land no longer their own” (*The Cheviot* 29). When Paterson next returns to the stage it’s as Andy McChuckemup “a Glasgow Property-operator’s man” who aims to develop the Highlands into a tourist destination:

So—picture it, if you will, right  
 there at the top of the glen, beautiful vista—The Crammem  
 Inn, High Rise Motorcroft—all finished in natural, washable,  
 plastic granitette. Right next door, the ‘Frying Scotsman’  
 All Night Chipperama [...].  
 And to cater for the younger set, you’ve got your Grouse-a-  
 go-go. (*The Cheviot* 49)

Then, interrupted by Lord Vat of Glenlivet, McChuckemup explains the plan “me and wor company’s got plans to develop this backward area into a paradise for all the family—improve it, you know, fair enough, eh?” (*The Cheviot* 50). When Paterson enters for the final time, as Texas Jim, he starts singing “My Grannie’s Hielan’ Hame” as “oil rigs appear on the mountains,” but when he gets a bit carried away he lets slip “You play dumb and I’ll play dirty/ All you folks are off your head/ I’m getting rich from your sea bed/ I’ll go home when I see fit/ All I’ll leave is a heap of shit/ You poor dumb fools I’m rooking you/ You’ll find out in a year or two” (*The Cheviot* 61). Bill Paterson becomes the symbol, or leitmotif if you will, of oppression and exploitation. In this way McGrath is able to “put a face” on the memory of anger and indignation. The approach also helps to convey to the audience the human scale of exploitation and oppression. No longer are the forces of painful social intervention anonymous; no longer are they too big and powerful to comprehend. This process of humanization scales down the fight to a level that the audience thinks they might be able to win.

“I’m English for Christ’s sake, or Irish”: Who Claims this History?

Discussing the work of René Maran and Chinua Achebe, Eleni Coundouriotis writes that “the story that inaugurates African fiction in French and English is that of the demise of the traditional village community under the repressive influence of the colonial regime” (22). Maran became the first black winner of the Prix Goncourt, his novel *Batouala* was “recognized as authentic by both Parisians and Africans” (5), and saw Maran anointed “the creator of the modern African novel” (Irele qtd. in Coundouriotis 5). Despite the positive reception, Coundouriotis points out that “Maran’s status as the inventor of the African novel is incongruous since, for one thing, he was not African” (5). Maran was “born in Martinique of Guyanese parents. He was educated in France” and “worked in Africa for the French colonial service” (5). Thus the first “authentic” modern African novel was written by a Caribbean born, French educated member of the French colonial apparatus.

There is a similar incongruity in John McGrath’s work. Randall Stevenson claims that McGrath’s 7:84 theater company “redefine[d] both the nature of Scottish theatre [...] and where it could take place” (6). Linda Mackenney writes that “[7:84] made a massive impact on Scottish consciousness, touching nerves hidden deep in the national psyche. [...] it stirred memories and sensibilities concerning injustices both past and present, using the format of the traditional ceilidh in a manner that struck a vital chord with the people’s sense of their own cultural identity” (65). Likewise, Liz Lochhead proclaims



that “*The Cheviot* restored a voice to us all” (interviewed in Brown 108). McGrath’s influence on Scottish theater, like Maran’s influence on the African novel, is incongruous because, for one thing, he was not Scottish. The watershed moment in contemporary Scottish theater was propagated by a man who, in an interview with Olga Taxidou, pointed out “I’m English for Christ’s Sake, or Irish” (“Silver Darlings” 156). Despite being born in Liverpool, raised in Wales and educated at Oxford, McGrath has been accepted as an authentic Scottish voice within the popular imagination, the theater community and the academy.

*The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* largely forged McGrath’s reputation within Scotland. Like the seminal works of Achebe and Maran, *The Cheviot* dramatizes the demise of traditional community at the hands of a repressive regime. McGrath frames this demise in the context of capitalist expansion rather than the anti-colonial narrative of *Batouala* or *Things Fall Apart*, but there is a similar sense of loss and indignation that is developed. Coundouriotis concludes that Maran’s work transcends his exteriority because “*Batouala* is a work of anticolonial protest where the authentic gains legitimacy from the justice of its cause” (24). In a similar assertion, Stevenson writes “if McGrath seems such a thoroughly Scottish playwright, at least to the people of Scotland, it’s partly because he intervened so crucially in the 1970s, and later, in debates which remained specific, and central, to Scottish politics” (77). While the first *authentic* modern African novel and what is generally positioned as the first *authentic* modern Scottish play are both written by authors exterior to the community they are writing about, they are received as authentic because of the timeliness and relevance of their political intervention. Nevertheless it is problematic that in both cases an exterior

agent, an agent in a position of relative power and privilege, was eventually what gave voice to the concerns of the local people.

Among the critiques that Coundouriotis levies of Maran is that “His tendency to ethnographic description has been deemed embarrassing, an indication of his assimilation” (32). McGrath too slips frequently into narratives and dramatizations that suggest an ethnographic perspective. Throughout *The Cheviot*, McGrath integrates information that specifically narrates traditional cultures and the ways that those cultures and folkways have been impeded upon, lost or threatened. At the conclusion of *The Cheviot*, the company makes one of many direct addresses to the audience, telling them, “At the time of the Clearances, the resistance failed because it was not organized. The victories came as a result of militant organization—in Coigeach, The Braes, and the places that formed land leagues” (73). Here, as elsewhere, the dramaturgy relies on recitation of facts and readings of historical documents to paint a picture of the native lifestyle. McGrath and company directly address the audience with statistics and figures that are intended to recreate past struggles and folkways. In this sense the actors play the role of the native informant, providing information and telling stories to the audience to establish a sense of the way things really were (at least through the gaze of colonial power). The actors not only play the native informant in relation to the audience, but in relationship to McGrath who acts as a sort of ethnographer in writing *The Cheviot*.

McGrath revisits this pseudo ethnographer role in *A Good Night Out*, when, in the “Towards a Working-Class Theatre” chapter, he produces a clear and detailed ethnography of “a working-men’s club in Chorlton-cum-Hardy.” In this case there is no question that what is being produced is ethnographic. McGrath describes the scene in

detail, from the surroundings, to the barn like appearance, the layout of the floor, the progression of the evening's entertainment, etc. He tells us "The audience coming in are dressed up, with ties and going-out frocks, but feel comfortable and glad to be out of working clothes" (23). "The first lot of wrestling," McGrath tells us, "takes half-an-hour or so. Tempers flare, excitement, almost hysteria, rises as the stage-managed brutality, the melodramatic aggression works on the audience" (24). McGrath uses the description of the club in Chorlton-cum-Hardy as a template of typical working-class entertainment, from which he derives a theory of working-class aesthetics that he claims reflects "differences between the demands and tastes of bourgeois and of working-class audiences" (54). The nine differences are directness, comedy, music, emotion, variety, effect, immediacy, localism (of setting), and localism (of identity) (54-58). While McGrath may be correct in his generalizations about working-class aesthetics, there is a creeping sense of condescension. Describing the value of directness, McGrath explains "A working-class audience likes to know exactly what you are trying to do or say to it. A middle-class audience prefers obliqueness and innuendo" (54). Continuing to explain the "aesthetic of directness," McGrath adds "Some critics even said they thought we were patronizing the working class; but in fact, they were, because the working-class audiences have minds of their own and they like to hear what your mind is" (54). McGrath's dismissal of the criticism levied against him is a typical moment in accounts of his own work.

Again McGrath shows himself to be assured of his own correctness and the effectiveness of his work and approach, simply dismissing the few detractors and painting a picture of himself as the defender of the working class. At the very beginning

of *A Good Night Out*, McGrath contextualizes his assessment of his own work, saying “This process can become autobiographical, egocentric, even at times megalomaniac, but if you wish a more measured, ‘objective’ approach, I cannot oblige” (1). Largely his assessment proves accurate. McGrath positions himself as the chronicler of working-class aesthetics, but approaches the subject from a privileged viewpoint. Though he attempts to underscore his position as such, McGrath casts his gaze on Scottish and working class audiences as an agent of the dominant culture. His position within the dominant culture is hammered home by the context of *A Good Night Out*, which is based on a series of lectures given by McGrath at Cambridge in 1979, when he served as the Judith E. Wilson Visiting Fellow. In essence the book is the product of an itinerant academic standing before an academic audience relating his most recent adventures in the wilds of Manchester and the Highlands, retelling and speculating about the folkways of the native tribes that he encountered there, as we see in the examples above. Rather than using his position within the academy to break down barriers, McGrath in fact reinforces the in-group/out-group binary by delineating differences in taste and culture between the two groups based merely on his personal observations and assumptions. Rather than being critical of his own position within the dominant culture, McGrath is dismissive of his access to the apparatuses of power. In *The Bone Won't Break*, the book that sprung from his second stint as Visiting Fellow at Cambridge, McGrath refers to his education at Oxford as a process of “ritual alienation” (54) rather than acknowledging the privilege and access to power that it afforded him.

The picture painted of McGrath through the material available is of a charismatic visionary that inspired deep loyalty and appreciation from those that knew him, and who

inspired a new generation of radical political theater in Scotland while helping the working-class reengage with their history. One need not dig far to find examples of this treatment. Adrian Mitchell refers to McGrath as “one of the visionaries without whom there is no progress. He turned his back on the doubters and the snobs and made wonderful theatre for people” (300). Richard Eyre relates that what first attracted him to both McGrath and his wife, Liz MacLennan:

was not only their commitment to theatre or to radical socialism; it was their glamour. They were both—to borrow the clichés of romantic fiction—dashing and handsome, and when I drove with John in his open-topped Chevrolet Corvette (or could it have been a Ford Mustang?) to Pinewood Studios to visit the giant set for *Doctor No*, it seemed bliss indeed to be alive in his company. (xiii)

Stewart Conn tells that he “felt almost embarrassed at how charming [McGrath] was and how deferential and nice and asking about my work. [...] And the aura he had! He was one of the most handsome men that I have ever seen” (Brown 102). John Clifford too refers to him as “this big man, very handsome big man. I’m sure everyone says that about John. He was a lovely looking man and very friendly” (Brown 104).

It seems it was easy to be swept up in McGrath’s energy and charisma. The enthusiasm that he had for his work and the people must indeed have been intoxicating. This excitement and intoxication even now seems to largely take the place of critical treatment and reception. In a discussion of his work in Scotland before *The Cheviot*, McGrath suggests that “we were speaking a different language –on all kinds of levels—and I thought it was a bit imperialist, in the sense that here we were, parachuting in from

London and trying to say to Scottish audiences ‘be involved in this, this is part of you’” (“Silver Darlings” 151). There is a legitimate and troubling question that is presented in this assessment. McGrath suggests that this “imperialist” aspect to his work was resolved through the process of forming the Scottish 7:84 and producing work rooted more strongly in Scottish tradition. McGrath’s own assessment raises serious questions about agency, ideology, privilege, power and hegemony. McGrath’s relationship to the theatre that he produced, and his relationship with the people for whom he produced theater has been largely unexplored. While it is clear that McGrath’s impact on the Scottish theater has been profound, there are far ranging implications to the position that he held in relation to his audiences.

At issue is McGrath’s identity as an outsider with relation to the audiences he aimed to reach, and perhaps more significantly, his position of interiority in relation to the various apparatuses of power. McGrath was born in Liverpool to Irish immigrants, both teachers, raised in Wales and graduated from Oxford. The Museum of Broadcast Communications lists twenty-two television credits as writer, director or both, including most notably the long running *Z Cars*, along with seven film credits as writer, director or producer (Cubitt). McGrath served on the board of Channel 4, and was selected by Robert Redford as the artistic director of Moonstone International Screen-Labs upon its founding. While at Oxford, McGrath met and later married Liz MacLennan, daughter of “Sir Hector MacLennan [*sic*] and his wife Isabel, both doctors” (Bailey and Ingham). In 1966 his brother-in-law, Robert, was “elected as Labour MP for the seat of Caithness and Sutherland,” eventually he would be elected president of the Liberal Democrats in 1994 and “after standing down from the House of Commons in 2001, MacLennan was elevated

to the peerage as Lord MacLennan of Rogart [*sic*]” (Bailey and Ingham). McGrath at various times claims affiliation with the working class, and while his concerns for working class problems and the demands of working class audiences were no doubt sincere, McGrath himself was writing from a position of relative power.

In *A Good Night Out*, McGrath laments the “growth of commercial exploitation of ‘folk-traditions’” (32), yet his reputation as a theater maker is largely based on his work in *The Cheviot*. In *The Cheviot* McGrath appropriates a culture and history that is not his own. While the exploitation of “folk-traditions” in *The Cheviot* may not have been explicitly commercial, McGrath’s financial gains from it were substantial as time went on. *The Cheviot* may not have turned huge profits in its initial run, though the anecdotes of one sold out show after another suggest it fared pretty well, nevertheless huge tracts of McGrath’s later career were directly or indirectly the result of its success. Commercial and financial considerations aside, McGrath’s appropriation of Highland history to advance his socialist agenda presents its own problems. His retelling of the Clearances, his use of Gaelic language and traditions, as well as his speculation about corporate intervention in North Sea oil production was never neutral. So, while McGrath may or may not have been exploiting “folk-traditions” for commercial gain, he was certainly exploiting them for ideological gain.

Addressing the ideological and political content of his work, McGrath contends that “there is a way of handling an intellectually sophisticated notion as part of the structure of a show, without being patronizing or sounding like a schools programme. That way is to show the audience that they *need* this notion as members of a class whose future will be affected by it, or whose present had been shaped by it” (*Good Night* 95).

Given the work of cultural studies, identity politics, postcolonial theory, and contemporary notions of power and privilege, it becomes deeply troubling for a man in McGrath's position to enter into working class and impoverished communities, from which he is socially and materially alienated, and advocate what the audience does and does not *need* to know. If there was indeed an "imperialist" aspect to his work it was this. Given McGrath's social and cultural alienation from these communities, his relative affluence, education and access to the apparatuses of power, this is problematic. Despite McGrath's oppositional politics the ideological content of his work position it within the spectrum of hegemonic rhetoric; it clearly aims to shape the concerns and thoughts of its audience. The spectacle of capitalist accumulation that McGrath identified in the Highlands was part of the process of internal colonial expansion. While McGrath used his cultural capital to shed light on the power structures that undermined Highland society, the very cultural capital that allowed him a voice to speak out and access to an audience came about through the same power structures that he critiqued. I do not intend to condemn McGrath for his relative privilege. McGrath used his voice to expose exploitation and to speak out against cultural antagonisms. However, the power structures that enabled him to do this stemmed from the same systems of exploitation that he spent his life fighting against. Because of his privilege and education, McGrath was able to intervene in the historical narrative in a way not accessible to those swept aside by the Clearances or the incursion of big oil into the Highlands. Part of the postcolonial project is transferring the privilege of narrating history from the colonial center to the margins. While we can celebrate McGrath's legacy in telling this history, we must also



lament that it was not able to emerge from the affected communities without an interlocutor from within the dominant culture.

## **Chapter 4: Remembering the Highland Clearances in Public Space**

### Clearance Monumentalism: a Highland Parallax

If you find yourself on the east coast of Scotland around the Sutherland county seat of Golspie, and you're lucky enough to have clear weather, there's really no way to miss the Wee Mannie. He towers over the surrounding countryside from the top of Ben Bhraggie, looking triumphantly out to sea. "The Wee Mannie," or simply "the Mannie," is the pejorative name for the statue of the First Duke of Sutherland. Properly, the statue is of George Granville Levenson-Gower, Second Marquess of Stafford and First Duke of Sutherland. This statue was erected in 1834, a year after his death. Standing about one hundred feet tall, near the summit of Ben Bhraggie, the statue can be seen for miles up and down the coast. When the statue was raised, the Sutherland family was the wealthiest in the United Kingdom (120). Despite their vast wealth, Sutherland's heirs declared that tenants living in Sutherland were to contribute to the cost of raising the statue. Donald MacLeod reported that the Duke's heirs enlisted the small tenantry to subscribe to the funding of the statue. "All who could raise a shilling gave it, and those who could not, awaited in terror the consequences of their default" (64). The plaque on the statue's plinth dedicates the monument to the "lasting memory" of the late Duke, George Granville:

an upright and patriotic nobleman, a judicious, kind and liberal landlord who identified the improvement of his vast estates with the prosperity of all who cultivated them. A public yet unostentatious benefactor who while he provided useful employment for the active labourer opened wide his hand to the distress of the widow, the sick and the traveller. A mourning and grateful tenantry uniting with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood created this pillar. (“Inscription”)

By the time money was being raised for the statue, the Sutherland family, had been actively clearing, or “improving,” their estate for nearly forty years. The Duke, along with his wife Elizabeth,<sup>7</sup> was the architect of the widespread clearances in Sutherland during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was this Duke that employed James Loch and Patrick Sellar to carry out his plans to transform the estate. The legacy of Loch and Sellar, whose troubling history I discuss extensively in the first chapter of my dissertation, includes not only the death of Margaret MacKay, but a documented effort to undermine Gaelic culture. The small tenants asked to contribute to funding the monument had witnessed, or been subject to, an extensive series of evictions throughout Sutherland. Now these same tenants were being asked to pay tribute to the man responsible for so much of the turmoil around them.

Many tenants that remained in Sutherland were either unable or unwilling to part with the money to support raising the statue. The little money raised from the poorer tenants was given out of fear of retribution. Intended to memorialize the achievements of this great man—Peer of Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Knight of the Garter,

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<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth is alternately referred to as the Countess or the Duchess of Sutherland, she was made Duchess when her husband was elevated to Duke in 1833

ambassador to France, titan of industry—the statue has taken on an entirely different meaning for many local residents. While the statue and its accompanying plaque were encoded as earnest memorials to this pillar of the Empire, the popular imagination has decoded, or perhaps re-coded, the monument in far different ways. The statue has become emblematic of greed, callousness and betrayal. The Duke towers over the countryside, master of all that he sees, his gaze serving as a reminder of power and wealth and surveying the restructured geo-social space around him. In his regalia, he looks out to sea, back turned on the lands cleared by his factors for the greater profits to be made from sheep. His back symbolically turned on the people that he evicted. The inscription burns with irony. The way it idealizes the Duke stands in stark contrast to the experience of many of his tenants. The inscription speaks of a “kind and liberal landlord who identified the improvement of his vast estates with the prosperity of all who cultivated them,” though for the previous two decades he had overseen the removal of entire villages, separating tenants from their homes, farms and communities, often without providing assurance of either housing or employment. The inscription speaks of a “benefactor who [...] provided useful employment for the active labourer opened wide his hand to the distress of the widow, the sick and the traveler.” In reality, however, he forced widows and the ill from their homes with no means to provide for themselves, and who stood by while his agents set fire to homes and fields. Finally, the inscription attributes the memorial to a “mourning and grateful tenantry uniting with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood” though the tenantry had contributed to the funding out of fear of retribution.

The Mannie has become a popular target for vandals and a focal point for attempts at reconciliation about the Clearances. In 1994 a motion was raised in the Highland Council by Sandy Lindsay (SNP), to “replace the 100ft high monument to the first duke on the top of Ben Bhraggie overlooking Golspie with a Celtic cross” (Ross 6). More recently, speculation has arisen that there is a subversive, orchestrated effort to topple the Duke. In November 2011 *The Scotsman* reported that “a number of stones in the plinth has [*sic*] been removed in what officers believe is a new and concerted attempt to bring the statue down. Large blocks of sandstone from three of the four corners of the plinth have been prised free and left lying in the grass at the top of the hill” (“One stone”), and quotes Sgt Keith Robb, of the Northern Constabulary, who says “This is not the first time that this has happened. It has happened in previous years but this seems to be a more sustained vandalism to the statue. Tools would have had to have been involved” (“One Stone”). So far the Duke has weathered all attempts to remove him. In my dissertation, each chapter explores how the present rewrites the past. The argument throughout has been that the Highland Clearances serve as a geography and a time period that allows us to see how the past gets continually remade ideologically and rewritten rhetorically. This chapter focuses on how monuments and museums that memorialize a troublesome past can never be neutral so long as past injustices go largely unacknowledged or remain inaccurately narrated. In this chapter I consider the ways that the controversial history of the Clearances has been negotiated in public space.

Figure 1: Statue of the First Duke of Sutherland



*Reproduced from ScotlandsPlaces.gov.uk*

The Mannie is a popular target because of its size, its imagery and the controversial history that it embodies. Andreas Huyssen writes of a “seductive power of certain forms of nineteenth-century monumentality” tied to “the political needs of the national state and the cultural needs of the bourgeoisie” (191). The statue of the Duke

structures history. The Mannie embodies a privileged mode of narrating history sanctioned by those in positions of power. It insists that we remember the conflict in the Highlands as improvements, rather than clearances. It reflects the values of industry and empire which the Duke spent his life working to expand. And, it pays tribute to the dominant historical narrative told by the powerful and victorious, reminding us that the changes the Duke made in Sutherland were in service of the empire. Contemporary attempts to remove or destroy the monument don't merely reflect anger about the Clearances. They also reflect an attempt to create an alternative narrative, a counter memory of resistance to the "the political needs of the national state and the cultural needs of the bourgeoisie" embodied in the monument to the Duke.

The Highland Clearances have been memorialized in a number of ways, but the most ambitious plan by far was intended to compete directly with the scale and prominence of the Mannie, and to codify a counter memory to the history embodied by the statue of the Duke. In 2002 a group led by Dennis MacLeod, who was born in Sutherland but made millions in the South African mining industry, spearheaded the creation of the Clearances Centre LTD. MacLeod proposed a £5 Million project to "create an international focal point for the commemoration of the Clearances as well as a celebration of the 'Highland Diaspora'" ("Clearances Project"). The monument was the first stage in a larger project with the intention of "initially attracting 35,000 visitors each year by the fifth year of operation, with an ultimate target of 100,000 visitors per year" ("Clearances Project"). The big draw, though, was to be "a statue [consisting] of four bronze figures mounted on a spiral plinth" ("Clearances Project"). Original plans were that the "statue, or clearance icon, [will] be located on top of Creag Bun-Ullidh at a

height of 600 ft above sea level. The complete structure will be about 120 ft high with the statue forming the top 30ft, supported by a 90ft spiral plinth in the form of an ancient hill fort” (“Clearances Project”). The statue would be made accessible by a “10ft wide path winding up the hill from Helmsdale. Standing Stones, each 10ft high, will be located at regular intervals along the access path. They will be stylised versions of the ancient standing stones found throughout the Highlands and will tell the story of the Clearances.” The Clearances Centre was also to include a “Wall of Descendants” that would “record a roll of the names and addresses of those descendants who, by donation, show their support for the project” (“Clearances Project”). Too often,” MacLeod argued:

descendants arrive in the Highlands on a mission of pilgrimage only to wander aimlessly in search of their roots. The Clearances Centre will provide the kinship of common heritage [...]. This will be a project that will commemorate the diaspora of an ancient people and the contributions they made to our world. The project must therefore be on a scale that is a fitting tribute to our people. (“Clearances Project”).

In the end, the scope of the Clearances Centre proved too grand, and in 2006 the original plan was officially abandoned. In a June 16, 2006 article in *Scotland on Sunday*, Jeremy Watson reported that “that the £5m project expected to transform the economic prospects of the area has been abandoned [...] because of a lack of financial support” (11). “The decision,” Watson writes, “has disappointed councillors, local residents and the sculptor, Gerald Laing, who hoped the centre would bring jobs and prosperity to Helmsdale” (11). Watson cites Highland Councillor Rita Finlayson, lamenting that “It was a project that

would have revolutionised the local economy and there is a great feeling of disappointment that it never went ahead" (11).

**Figure 2: Original Design of Clearances Centre Monument**



*Reproduced from Caithness.org*

After the more ambitious program was abandoned, the Clearances Centre project resulted only in the erection of a ten foot statue on the hill just across the river from Helmsdale village. The final result isn't nearly as grand or imposing as the statue of the duke with which it was intended to compete. Positioned on a hill just off the A9 motorway, the statue looks out over the Cromarty Firth and the North Sea. Behind the statue is the Strath of Kildonan, cleared during the extensive Sutherland evictions of 1819-20 (Richards 332). The statue, dedicated to "The Emigrants," stands on the flat top of a low grassy hill. Between the statue and the sea are six flagpoles flying the colors of Scotland, Canada, The United States, Australia, New Zealand, and The UN, intended to



represent the destinations of the emigrants that left from these shores. Conspicuously absent is a Union Jack or Saint George's Cross. The statue itself is comprised of four elements, the same design as the original plan, though scaled substantially down—you could easily drive past without noticing. The statue depicts a family displaced by clearance. The most prominent figure is the father. He is looking out to sea. An expression of determination on his face, he resolutely looks to the horizon, to what lies beyond. He wears a kilt, sporran, and sandals. His unbuttoned shirt billows behind him exposing his muscular chest; his hair too is blown back by the wind. He strides forward, left hand on his son's shoulder, encouraging him onward. The boy, barefoot, wears a kilt and sporran like his father's, his hair tousled about. His hands held are close to his chest, he seems unsure, scared, looking up at his father for encouragement. While the father seems to be moving forward with all of his body, the son's shoulders lean backwards, apprehensive of the changes to come. The mother, clutching a young baby, trails half a step behind the men, barefoot, wearing a simple dress and a shawl over her head. Perhaps an allusion to Lot's wife, she looks back to what is being left behind, to the strath and the old home, a wilderness now where people once lived. The Emigrants Memorial, the scaled back version of the original Clearances Centre project, presents a contrasting history to that which is embodied in the statue of the Duke. The Emigrants memorial tells an alternative history. The father is stoic, the elder son uncertain and scared, and the mother longs after their old life. The triumphalism of the empire is replaced by a range of human emotions, from the almost heroic resolve of the father to forge a new life, to the fear of the son and the sentimentality of the mother. While the Clearances certainly engendered each of these emotions, the statue brings them together in sort of tartan kitsch

that, while it memorializes, also narrates a romantic image of life before the Clearances. In its own way, the statue, and the project that gave rise to it, is exploiting the history of the Clearances. While the image acknowledges the trauma, it also tries to sell the trauma as a consumable part of the heritage industry. The statue was intended to be franchised, and duplicates were to be installed in areas throughout the world that were influenced by Highland immigration. To date only one other copy of the statue has been installed, that one is on the banks of the Red River in Winnipeg (“Clearances Project”).

**Figure 3: The Emigrants Memorial**



*By the author*

Among the goals of the original Clearances Centre plan were to create an “international focal point for commemoration of the Clearances” and to create a

“clearance icon” (“Clearances Centre”). Though it failed in some of its larger aims, such as drawing 100,000 visitors to the northeast coast, perhaps the project was successful in staking an alternative claim to dominance of public memorialization in the eastern Highlands. The statue provides an alternative locus of commemoration. The tone and imagery of the Emigrants Memorial mitigate the domination of the Duke. And, while the imagery of the statue carries in base nostalgia and lament, it successfully creates a memorial geography which undermines the prominence of the Mannie. David Harvey has written that “Britain is rapidly turning from the manufacture of goods to the manufacturing of heritage as its principal industry” (86). The Clearances Centre certainly fits this mold. It was intended not only to memorialize but to capitalize on the legacy of the Clearances, and create a niche heritage market that would spur the local economy with an influx of heritage seekers. It has “proved impossible,” Harvey argues, “to separate postmodernism’s penchant for historical quotation and populism from the simple task of catering, if not pandering, to nostalgic impulses” (87). The Clearances Centre project—from its inception, through its restructuring, all the way to its compromised final implementation—was run-through by nostalgic impulses about the Highland Clearances and Highland heritage.

While the statue of the Duke was borne out of the 19<sup>th</sup> century urge to monumentalize the triumphalism of empire and industry, the Clearances Centre, as originally conceived, was borne of an emergent heritage industry, a pervasive local counter memory and pastiche. The intended scale of the monument was itself a type of historical quotation, intended to borrow the monumental form of the Mannie in order to codify an alternative reading of history. The image that emerged—the “clearance

icon”—is overly sentimental, bordering on kitsch, easily consumable in its drama and pathos. It’s not a site for study, or for critical reflection, but for pitying the poor Highlanders and condemning past injustices. This is the spectacle of clearance in a neat package. In its own way it’s exploitative. It appropriates history and repackages it in the service of the new heritage industry that Harvey identified.

The Wee Mannie and The Emigrants memorial are the most prominent expressions of Highland Clearance history in public space. These monuments constitute what Pierre Nora defines as “realms of memory;” that is, “any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community” (xvii). The two sites together create a sort of parallax. Before The Emigrants memorial, the Wee Mannie dominated focus on the Clearances within public space. Whatever it’s failures, the Clearances Centre project and the resulting Emigrants memorial have drawn some of the focus that had been fixed on the Mannie. The Emigrants memorial stakes a claim to an alternative narrative, an anti-imperial memory that enters into dialog with the ideologies embodied by the grandeur of the Mannie. The Emigrants Memorial focuses on loss rather than progress, the human toll, rather than economic gains, and trauma of the people, rather than the rights of the landholders. The realm of memory created by the Mannie, on the other hand, came to represent the dominance of empire and capital over subordinate cultural modes. Recoding the meaning of the Duke’s statue through “human will or the work of time” has forged a powerful counter memory, a narrative running strongly against the current of conventional history. George Granville, it’s important to remember, was not Scottish. He was English, the Marquess of Stafford before he married

into the Sutherland family and was made duke. Granville had no cultural ties to the Highlands. He was entrenched in the dominant culture of the empire, functioning within its apparatus. His policies of improvement and eviction were part of the systemic exploitation of the periphery by the dominant center. In short his presence in the Highlands, and the erection of this memorial there rather than on one of his extensive English estates, is a monument not merely to empire and industry which Granville championed, but to the internal colonialism within the United Kingdom.

Museum Narration: the Clearances in the core, the Clearances in the Periphery

The texts I've discussed until now have been fairly non-canonical. While McGrath's *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, Gunn's *Butcher's Broom* and Crichton Smith's *Consider the Lilies* were all well received, meeting with at least moderate popular and critical success, they still occupy little more than a niche market among academic specialists and within the Scottish heritage industry. And, while the Wee Mannie towers over Golspie and the east coast, it's far from any major population centers. Though the Mannie and the Emigrants Memorial negotiate the history of the Clearances in public space, the space they occupy is tucked away in a remote corner of the country. And while the monumental presence of the Mannie is hard to miss, its association with the history of the Clearances is revealed only to those who look, or who are attuned to local collective memory. The monumental scale of the Clearances Centre project was intended, at least in part, to create an insistent statement about the

Clearances, one that would reach out and permeate the public sphere, demanding acknowledgement rather than only revealing itself to those that seek it.

Unlike the obscure texts, and rural monuments discussed above, the National Museum of Scotland (NMS), has a far more diverse and robust audience. In 2012 NMS was the most visited cultural site in Scotland, and the most visited in the UK outside of London, drawing nearly two million visitors (“Visitor Figures”). Admission numbers aside, NMS has the privileged position of being the “national” museum. It’s tasked with presenting an accessible interpretation of national history and shaping the national narrative. While the topic of the Clearances does come up at NMS, the complexity of their history is largely lost. This is, perhaps, inevitable at a place like NMS that tries to cover so much ground. Historian Laurence Gouriévidis writes that museum representations of the Clearances tend to be “highly scripted, with an intrusive narrator who presents, analyzes and judges evidence for visitors in a more or less coercive way” (127). The only mention of the Clearances at NMS is made in the context of the “Industry and Empire” collection. There is, however, another collection that houses installations that are relevant to the Clearances. “Scotland Transformed,” another collection at NMS, houses a series of installations representing the Jacobite uprisings, and agricultural improvements in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Jacobite rebels were defeated at Culloden in 1746, after which parliament passed the 1746 Act of Proscription, which, as I discussed in chapter one, marked the moment that the “legislative attack on clanship began” and which saw Highland dress and Highland culture “proscribed as the sartorial symbol of rebel militarism” (Devine 46). The Act of Proscription was a substantial

intervention in Highland and Gaelic culture, codifying the imperial interest in Highland assimilation, and paving the way for the social engineering projects of the Clearances.

Also within “Scotland Transformed” are a series of installations depicting “agricultural improvement” during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century (“Scotland Transformed”). The material presented here outlines the greater productivity and higher profits that landholders were seeing as the industrial revolution increased the market for agricultural goods. The exhibit explains that this increased demand, along with technological advancement resulted in a “rural transformation” (“Scotland Transformed”). While “agricultural improvement” and “rural transformation” are not synonymous for clearance, the terms are closely entwined. In my discussion of the Wee Mannie, I note that the statue was dedicated to “a judicious, kind and liberal landlord who identified the improvement of his vast estates with the prosperity of all who cultivated them.” What the Duke and his heirs viewed as improvement, the evicted tenants viewed as clearance. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, agricultural improvement in the Highlands was as much about accumulation through dispossession as it was about technological advancements. As the internal colonial process gained traction, the core appropriated more and more resources from the periphery. “Rural transformation” was not merely about “improvement,” but about dispossession and expropriation. While the “improved” land may have become more productive, its fundamental use was being shifted from subsistence to capitalist production, this too was embedded in the process of “rural transformation.” The notion of “improvement” is contingent on one’s vantage point. The narrative offered by the museum essentially ignores the traumatic aspects of these transformations, and makes no connection between them and the Clearances.

There is only one collection at NMS that expressly discusses the Clearances, and that is in the fourth floor “Industry and Empire” collection. Among the exhibits housed in this section are: “Innovators” which explores “the contributions of innovative Scots in the fields of science and technology, exploration and travel, politics and the arts”; “Victorians and Edwardians,” which explores “the effect of industry and the rewards of industry on Victorian and Edwardian Scotland”; and “Workshop of the World,” which portrays “how railway engineering, whisky production and shipbuilding carried the name of Scotland across the globe in the 19th century” (“Industry and Empire”). It is within this context, in exhibits called “Scotland and the World” and “Reasons for Leaving,” that NMS makes its only mentions of the Highland Clearances.

Stepping out of the stairwell onto the fourth floor, visitors enter the “Scotland and the World” exhibit. The most prominent feature is a large TV looping the “Scotland and the World” video. The exhibit attempts to explain how and why the Scottish diaspora became so widespread in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The video begins with brief discussions of the Darien Scheme, the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, Culloden and their aftermaths. These events, along with a description of the trend towards urbanization in Scotland, are established as the antecedents to wide-spread Scottish emigration in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. After these events, the installation says, “the Highlands would never be the same.” The narrator relates that “Scotland was undergoing an agricultural and social revolution. Many landowners found that sheep were more profitable than tenants. Throughout the Highlands, people were told to move out. In Sutherland they refused. The Countess was outraged.” A female voice, meant to be the Countess, then interjects, “as the people resist by force, no one can complain if they are brought to reason by the same means.” The



original narrator then concludes, “Homes burned, troublesome tenants locked up, families evicted. The Highlands were transformed” (“Scotland and the World”).

The pathos of the video, such as it is, seems to lie with the Countess as much as with the evicted families and the people “told to move out.” As it’s framed in the video, the people of Sutherland were being unreasonable. It was they who initiated violence, and upon whom justified violence would be visited in return. It’s true that there was resistance in Sutherland, but in Sutherland as in the rest of the Highlands, resistance was the exception rather than the rule. The story we get here, though, is of violent and troublesome tenants that need to be “brought to reason” by a put-upon Countess. While the narrative gestures to a deeper conflict in referring to “homes burned” and “families evicted,” there is no real indication of the trauma or the tidal shift in social and cultural life that these changes initiated. The video seems little more than a justification of Clearance in the service of advancing capitalism and empire. It reproduces the dominant narrative of colonial expansion, justifying the exploitation of the periphery by the core in the name of advancing civilization.

Immediately opposite the video screen are several replicas of ships used to transport emigrants to America and Australia. This exhibit is called “Reasons for Leaving,” and while it focuses on economic opportunity and repeated crop failures as reasons for leaving the Highlands, it does mention the Clearances as factors in emigration. A panel adjacent to the replica ships reads “Not all emigrants went voluntarily. Some Jacobite prisoners of war were sent to the West Indies as Indentured Servants after the 1745 rising, while Australia was originally a penal colony,” adding that “in rural areas famine and eviction often meant that there was no choice but to leave.

Clearance from parts of the Highlands to make way for sheep farming began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1807 and 1821 around 10,000 people were evicted from the Sutherland estates” (“Reasons for Leaving”). Back across the way, next to the TV, a small plaque draws the visitor’s attention to the painting high on a wall to the left, perhaps twenty five yards away past a steam locomotive and a small lobby. The image, *Monarch of the Glen* by Sir Edwin Landseer, is almost certainly the most recognizable Scottish image of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The plaque suggests that the image “represents the Highlands as a sporting playground and romantic wilderness ruled by majestic animals. This was in sharp contrast to the 19<sup>th</sup> century reality of the Highland Clearances—the mass displacement of people in favour of sheep and later deer.” The plaque goes on to point out that “In some areas people were forcibly removed to coastal settlements or to find a new life overseas” (“Monarch of the Glen”). This small plaque, perhaps four inches wide and twelve inches tall, displaying four paragraphs of text, is really the only place in NMS that hints at the real conflict of the Clearances. While “Scotland and the World” suggests that there was resistance to the clearances in Sutherland, it makes no mention of the forceful, sometimes outright violent methods used by the landowners and factors to evict tenants. The use of the phrase “forcibly removed” in reference to *Monarch of the Glen* suggests a different dynamic to the conflict. While “Reasons for Leaving” explains that many tenants were given “no choice but to leave,” it makes no mention of the methods used to carry out the evictions, and troublingly conflates the expatriation of criminals with the eviction and expatriation of cleared tenants. The “Scotland and the World” video attributes violence to the tenants, showing an image of the Countess overlaid with an image of Highland tenants, fists raised in anger, backed by

a soundtrack of chaotic shouts; the violence depicted as originating from below. This is how the Clearances are represented in the National Museum.

The Strathnaver Museum (SM), which I briefly introduced in the previous chapter, sits on the northern coast of mainland Scotland. In the village of Bettyhill, near the mouth of the river Naver, the museum sits within sight of the sea, in a region completely remade by clearance. The museum is housed on the lower floor of the former “Parish Church of St Columba, Farr” which was built “about 1700” (*Strathnaver Museum*). Strathnaver, the valley of the river Naver, was the site of some of the most infamous of the Clearances. Strathnaver was cleared through a series of evictions in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was in Strathnaver that Patrick Sellar rose to infamy, earning a reputation as the most hated man in Scotland because of his treatment of the tenants there, and particularly his role in the untimely death of Margaret MacKay.

The collection at SM consists of a “wide range of exhibits from a Neolithic cist and pot dating back to approximately 1800BC, to a plastic fishing buoy” (“Strathnaver Museum”). While the museum presents ancient artifacts and information about the natural history of the strath, the big draw is its treatment of the Clearances from a local perspective. Entering the main room of the museum, the visitor finds a glass case along the wall to the left. This case displays models of several local pre-Clearance villages. Above the case are a series of signs, hand illustrated in crayon by local school children, which narrate local life before and after the Clearances, and offer some commentary about the controversy. The narrative interpretation of the Clearances at SM unfolds through these illustrated panels. The first panel relates that “Between 1812 and 1819 thousands of people were evicted from their blackhouses and holdings to make way for

sheep.” The second panel questions the Clearances in a way noticeably absent at the NMS saying that “controversy has raged over two issues: 1. Whether life was better or harder as a result of the evictions; 2. The manner in which the evictions were carried out.” The third panel describes the life of a pre-clearance Strathnaver resident, saying “Let us imagine life before the clearances. You would: 1. Live in a blackhouse; 2. Keep black cattle to sell to the drover; 3. Have a large family; 4. Grow—oats, barley, corn, kale, and potatoes; 5. Speak Gaelic at all times—though you might have a smattering of English; 6. Know how to make—illicit whisky, to help pay the rent and to buy meal with this cash to help feed your family through the winter.” The fourth panel continues the pre-Clearance narrative, stating that “You would be among the poorest peasants in Europe but you were happy with your lot. Your people served in the British Army in France, Canada and America.”

The next two panels contrast the poverty of the Strathnaver residents with the wealth of their landlords. The fifth panel begins by saying that “You would be a tenant of Elizabeth, Duchess of Sutherland,” and continues by describing the ostentatiousness of the Sutherland family’s wealth, who, according to the illustration “owned 1.5 million acres by the 1820s—an area not equaled in the British Empire” and noting that “Queen Victoria, visiting them in their fabulous residence, Stafford House, is reported to have said, ‘I am come from my house to your palace’.” These panels reinforce the plight of the evictees by contrasting the simplicity and precariousness of their lives with the opulence of those responsible for putting them out.

The series of panels concludes with two statements of the conditions of life after the clearances. The penultimate panel displays the text “Life after the evictions—one

view—the factors viewpoint: 1. They are transformed; 2. They have begun to cultivate their lots with industry; 3. Many of them, with great boldness, have taken to catch cod and ling; 4. They have become as expert boatmen as any in the world.” The final panel reads: “Another economic viewpoint: 1. The lots were too small to be viable units; 2 Fishing was a new art not quickly mastered; 3. Kelp failed; 4 Cattle prices failed; 5. wool prices fell.”

What emerges when comparing the treatment of the Clearances at the National Museum and at the Strathnaver Museum is another sort of parallax like that which exists between the Wee Mannie and the Emigrants Memorial. The NMS addresses the Clearances as part of the sweep of Industry and Empire. The official narrative emerging from NMS justifies the exploitation of the periphery by the core in the name of advancing industry. The Strathnaver Museum, however, acknowledges an alternative narrative oppositional to the one officially sanctioned by the dominant culture. The Strathnaver Museum presents the Clearances with the acknowledgement that, while the narrative might still be inaccurate, or incomplete, there are people outside of the dominant center the people who have a different history to tell.

#### A non-Narrative Memorial: the Churchyard at Croick

On June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1845, *The Times* of London ran an anonymous article chronicling the immediate aftermath of the clearing of Glencalvie, in the southern Highlands. At Croick Church, the unnamed *Times* correspondent found some eighty people taking shelter in the churchyard, writing that “A fire was kindled in the churchyard, round which the poor

children clustered. Two cradles, with infants in them, were placed close to the fire, and sheltered round by the dejected-looking mothers” (“Clearances of the Highlanders”). The people of Glencalvie had been evicted, and most had nowhere else to go. No alternative accommodation was offered, and the landlord made no attempt to assimilate the tenants into a new economic system. The tenants of Glencalvie were simply meant to go away. In the half-century or so since the Clearances began in the north of Scotland outright eviction was not a terribly uncommon thing. What set Glencalvie apart from many similar clearances was the way the people responded to eviction. In early 1845 the Glencalvie people were notified of impending clearance. Rather than merely accepting the inevitability of eviction they decided to “appeal directly to the general public through the newspaper” (Richards 16). The Glencalvie people “got up a petition, and, with the sponsorship of five Free Church ministers, placed it in the *Scotsman*. It sought public subscription for their future re-settlement” (16). Predictably the petition failed to drum-up either adequate political support to prevent eviction, or sufficient funds to provide the people of Glencalvie with the means to resettle elsewhere. However, Richards writes that the “pathos of the Glencalvie petition made a strong impression on the public mind in the south and the newspapers recognised that it had the makings of an excellent story” (17). The direct appeal to the sympathies of the public was the first unusual step taken by the Glencalvie people; it was this appeal that prompted the *Times* to dispatch a correspondent to the north to report first-hand on the conditions in Glencalvie.

The Glencalvie people were also in a position to exploit a sea change in the Scottish social and political landscape. In May of 1843 the Church of Scotland was fractured in what has become known as The Disruption. Tom Devine writes that the

“national church virtually broke in half, with over two-fifths of the clergy and around 40 per cent of the laity seceding” (283). This secessionist bloc formed the Free Church of Scotland. Devine states that a major conflict “which racked the Church from 1833 to the final rupture of 1843 was patronage or who should have the final authority in the appointment of parish ministers” (374). In the Church of Scotland, “the Patronage Act of 1712 [...] granted individual patrons (mainly landowners) the right to present their candidate to vacant church offices” (374), however Devine writes that beginning in the 1750s this presentation became “viewed as a mere formality as the Church courts increasingly upheld the rights of patrons” (375). Deference of the church to landowning patrons meant that ministers interested in maintaining their congregations needed to stay in the good graces of landowners, even if that meant supporting policies of eviction. Ministers were beholden to their patrons.

As I discuss in the second chapter, the Church played a significant role in enforcing clearance policy by reinforcing the ideology of the dominant culture, and pacifying congregations subject to eviction. The role of the Church in evictions throughout the Highlands disillusioned many people as they watched their ministers siding with the interests of power and money. The complicity of the Church is condemned, for example, in Neil Gunn’s *The Butcher’s Broom* when he writes “the Church will help the law in the matter. [...] Every [minister] will threaten their people with the fires of hell, if they don’t go peaceably,” (168) and in Donald MacLeod’s *Gloomy Memories* when he writes “The clergy, too, were continually preaching submission, declaring that these proceedings were foreordained of God” (5). Many of the ministers, it seemed, knew which way the wind was blowing, and acted in their own self-

interests rather than defending their flocks from the whims of the landlords. This led to alienation between the people and the Church, such as what we see dramatized in Iain Crichton Smith's *Consider the Lilies*, as we watch Mrs. Scott turn away from the church which she once clung to, but which turned her away feeling "completely desolate" (77) when she asked the minister for his help.

The newly formed Free Church "vindicate[ed] the principle of spiritual independence from the state" (Devine 377). In practice this meant that the Free Church ministers were not subject to the whims or reprisals of secular patrons. Freed from the specter of landlord patronage, the Free Church ministers were more willing to come to the aid of parishioners threatened with eviction. The evictions at Glencalvie were the first well documented episode during the Clearances that the ministers publically stood with their parishioners against the landlords. These newly emboldened ministers presented a threat to the established social structure in the Highlands. Some landlords refused "to release sites for the building of free churches which forced some Highland congregations to worship for a time in caves and on bare hillsides" (283). This was the scene that the *Times* correspondent found when he visited Glencalvie on a Sunday morning, writing that:

I drove over on a Sunday to the parish church of Croick, which is near Glen Calvie. [...] the whole of these poor people, and the inhabitants of one or two neighbouring straths, were assembled to hear one of their elders read the Psalms to them. They numbered about 250 persons. They



were all seated in the Gaelic fashion, on the hill side, in a circle [...] this was the Free Church.<sup>8</sup> (“Clearances of the Highlanders”)

The *Times* correspondent continued, writing that “There was a simplicity extremely touching in this group on the bare hill side, listening to the psalms of David in their native tongue, and assembled to worship God—many of them without a home” (“Clearances of the Highlanders”). Among the 250 souls on that hillside were the cleared Glencalvie residents that had taken up residence of the churchyard at Croick, which remained affiliated with the Church of Scotland.

Directly appealing to the public for sympathy and financial support was by itself an unusual step for a community to take when faced with clearance. Though, without the sponsorship of the Free Church ministers they likely would not have been in a position to take this step. But, despite the publicity generated by the various newspaper articles, and the unprecedented attempts by ministers and the public to alleviate the burden on the community, the enduring legacy of the cleared Glencalvie residents lies on the east window of the church, etched into the glass. Glencalvie and Croick have become landmarks, not merely because of the pathos of their petition, and of the encampment described and by the *Times* correspondent, but because of the impromptu memorial that was scratched into the diamond shaped panes of the east window. That impromptu memorial has maintained its poignancy through the years because it provides a link to the humanity of clearance victims that other forms of memorialization are unable to reproduce. The graffiti memorial scrawled on the window consists of a series of names,

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<sup>8</sup> The names “Glencalvie” and “Glen Calvie” are used alternatively in various sources. I use the single word form following the usage on the official website of Croick Church, though I maintain the two word name in citations where that form is used.

dates and short phrases. Among the legible etchings are the following: “Glencalvie tenants residing here”; “The Glencalvie tenants reside in the Kirkyard in May 24 1845”; “Glencal peopl was in the churchyard here May 24 1845”; “John Ross 1845”; “May 24 1845”; “Croick”; “John Ross Shepherd Croick the Glencalvie... here May 24<sup>th</sup> 1845”; “Glencalvie is a wilders... below sheep that... to the... Croick”; “this house is needing repair”; “Glencalvie people the wicked generation” (“Words scratched”).

As a memorial to the Highland Clearances, Croick Church functions on several levels. The museum installations narrate the history of the Clearances, telling a story and interpreting historical events in the context larger national narrative. The statue of the Duke casts its shadow on the countryside, reminding all who pass of the greatness of his deeds and the scope of the changes he wrought. The Emigrants memorial panders to the romantic nostalgia of the Highlands. In contrast, Croick Church quietly records names, dates and places with a poignant simplicity. This record creates an index of the people, locating them in a place and time; it condenses the scale of the Clearances from the grand to the human, and bears witness to the trauma of displacement. Whether the writing on the window was motivated by a Beckettian desire to be recognized and remembered, the frustration of being caught up in the sweeping changes that the Clearances brought, or the idle boredom that living in the churchyard must have wrought, we can see in this gesture the desire to be remembered, the desire to assert an identity amid the anonymous functioning of power in the Highlands. The memorial becomes the more profound for the silence and stillness thereafter. It indexes the diasporic moment as the people were forced away, the moment in which Glencalvie transitioned from home to history. In his article “The Church at Croick,” reproduced on the Croick Church website, author P.A.

MacNab writes of his first visit to Croick. He relates that “Its adjacent manse is now the keeper’s house its only neighbour a small sheep farm. Although the church and its precincts are well tended, there is a forlorn air about the place. Where are the people and houses to justify its presence in this remote glen” (MacNab)? While the church still stands, and offers occasional services throughout the summer months, its primary visitors are tourists. “Despite its distance from the main roads,” the Croick Church website states that the church “is visited throughout the year (and remains open at all times) by many hundreds of people from all parts of the world” (*Croick Church*). When it was built in 1827, “the Church served a community of over 200 souls” (*Croick Church*), though now the glen stands virtually uninhabited. The silence of the church and its desolate, cleared surroundings remind us of what was lost when the glen was cleared. Though the majority of the congregation at Croick joined the Free Church after the Disruption, the church nevertheless stands as a reminder that there was once a community here vibrant enough that over two hundred members came to raise their voices in worship every week. Now there is only silence punctuated by the bleating of the neighbor’s sheep. The etchings serve as an epitaph for both the people and the community, all lost in a single stroke.

Roland Barthes, in his discussion of photographic images, describes an aspect which he calls the *punctum*. The punctum, Barthes writes, is the “element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow” (26), it “designate[s] this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument [...] it also refers to the notion of punctuation” (26) and it is “that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)” (27). Expanding Barthes’ notion beyond the photographic image, Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer suggest that “images, objects, and memorabilia inherited from the past”

function as “‘points of memory’—points of intersection between past and present, memory and postmemory, personal remembrance and cultural recall” and that a “point of memory” is “both spatial—such as a point on a map—and temporal—a moment in time; and it thus highlights the intersection of spatiality and temporality in the workings of personal and cultural memory. [...] A point is also small, a detail, and thus it can convey the fragmentariness of the vestiges of the past that come down to us” (358). The etchings on the east window of Croick Church function as such points of memory. These small details connect us to the time and space of the evictions at Glencalvie, they punctuate the moment in history, drawing our attention back to it again and again. For Barthes, the punctum doesn’t merely draw our attention though. He writes that “However lightning-like it may be, the *punctum* has, more or less potentially, a power of expansion. This power is often metonymic” (45). When we see John Ross’s name scrawled in a slanted script, we recognize that he was not alone, nor were the Glencalvie people alone in being evicted. They were part of a larger community, their eviction part of a larger process. The etchings at once call to mind the specific evictions at Glencalvie and expand to become metonymic emblems for all clearances and their victims. Beyond the metonymic function, Barthes identifies a second expansion of the punctum which, he argues, is that “while remaining a ‘detail,’ [the punctum] fills the whole picture” (45). Again in the case of the east window at Croick Church we can see this expansion functioning. The graffiti memorial etched into the glass of the window, preserved now for more than a century and a half, has eclipsed the church itself. The presence of the memorial, and the history that it preserves, now “fill the whole picture” at Croick.

There is more to the memorial at Croick than the punctum, however. While John Ross and the other Glencalvie people have been remembered because of the epitaphs scrawled on the east window—“John Ross Shepherd Croick the Glencalvie... here May 24<sup>th</sup> 1845,” “Glencal peopl was in the churchyard here May 24 1845”—the memorial at Croick doesn’t merely record the presence, and subsequent absence of the Glencalvie people in the churchyard, it also makes a commentary and forces us to consider the relationship between the people and the Church. Two etchings in particular that go beyond bearing witness are “Glencalvie people the wicked generation” and “this house is needing repair” (“Words scratched”). As we have seen, throughout the era of the Clearances the church frequently reinforced the clearance policies advanced by landlords and estate managers, preaching that evictions were the will of God, judgment for the sins of the people. The Church and its ministers acted as an ideological state apparatus (ISA) reinforcing the will of the dominant culture. Fionn MacColla dramatizes this type of ideological reinforcement near the beginning of *And the Cock Crew*, when Maighstir Tormod spurs his flock to compliance, shouting “What would you do, O people? Would you resist God’s judgment? Submit! Submit! Submit! before a worse thing befall you’ (*Cock* 11). In Althusser’s terms, the Church was teaching “know-how,” which “ensure[d] *subjection to the ruling ideology*” (133). The Church was preaching compliance, that it was the people’s own wickedness that brought clearance upon them. The influence of this rhetoric is laid bare in the phrase “Glencalvie people the wicked generation” (“Words scratched”). We can read this etching in two ways. First is as a sincere expression of the beliefs of its author, that the Glencalvie people were indeed wicked and deserved their fate. This would suggest that the Church successfully

transmitted the “know-how” of the dominant culture, that the notion of wickedness and of the divine righteousness of clearance, both of which reinforced the dominant ideology, had been successfully transferred to the people. We can also read this etching cynically, as an ironic commentary on the rhetoric that the Church used to justify the Clearances. Either reading reflects the role of the church as an ISA.

The other etching that demands to be read in a wider context is “this house is needing repair.” This phrase stands out. It’s neither autobiographical nor memorial as the others are. It doesn’t draw attention to Glencalvie, or the people encamped in the churchyard. Rather, it draws attention to the church itself. It gestures to a different relationship with its potential audiences, insisting not on memorial, but on transformation. I read this etching as commentary on the failings of the Church of Scotland, as an indictment of the Church for supporting the capitalist ideology of the ruling class rather than protecting its flock from enforced social change. To repair the house in this sense would be to re-evaluate and to re-consider the values that led the Church to side with power rather than with the people. This reading is particularly appropriate contextualized within the rift between the Glencalvie people, who overwhelmingly joined the Free Church, and Croick which maintained its association with the Church of Scotland.

It’s tempting to look at Croick Church as a sort of organic memorial, one that emerged from an earnest expression of the Glencalvie tenants desire to be remembered, and that provides us with a direct link to that moment in history. There are, however, incongruities that undermine this straightforward reading. Even if we take the etchings at face value, it’s obvious that they were not all made in May of 1845. For example, in

addition to the inscription attributed to John Ross in 1845, the name John Ross appears three other times, once dated 1854 and twice in 1869. Other etchings read “July 5<sup>th</sup> 1870” and “July 1871” (“Words scratched”). These dates don’t seem to mark any particular events, perhaps they are merely visitations, moments that John Ross or some other visitor passed by. There is, however, one historically significant inscription clearly made after 1845 which reads: “Greenyard Murder was in the year 1854 March 31.” “Greenyard Murder” refers to another nearby clearance. The events at the Greenyards created a public outcry. The name “Greenyard Murders” has stuck, even though it seems the claim of murder is hyperbolic. Eric Richards writes that during the Greenyard evictions “a body of baton-swinging police had indeed ploughed into a crowd of women, and they inflicted severe, almost fatal, wounds upon them” (274). Clearly this was a dramatic incident, and one worthy of memorialization. Clearance of the Greenyards, however, came well after the eviction at Glencalvie, and though they were carried out under the authority of the same landlord, Croick Church played no direct role in the events at the Greenyards. That the reference to the Greenyards would appear here, on the east window at Croick, suggests the church took on a larger role in the memorialization of the Clearances than bearing witness to the Glencalvie evictions.

Aside from the anachronistic dates, it’s even more puzzling that there are no markings on the window written in Gaelic. We know that the evicted Glencalvie tenants were Gaelic speakers. The *Times* correspondent writes that on Sunday morning the Glencalvie people gathered “listening to the psalms of David in their native tongue,” and that upon his departure, “the poor people crowded around me, and held out their hard, labour-worn hands [...] Their Gaelic I could not understand, but their eyes beamed with

gratitude” (“Clearances of the Highlanders”). Of the few scholars that have written about Croick, most ignore this contradiction, while others ascribe it prescience. John Prebble writes, “They wrote in English, as if acknowledging that their own tongue would pass with them and would not be understood in time” (225). Even if Prebble is right to ascribe their use of English to prescience, it doesn’t account for the fact that there’s not a single word out of nearly one hundred legible on the window, not one, that is written in Gaelic (“Words scratched”).

Some question has also been raised about why the Glencalvie people took shelter in the churchyard rather than the church itself. The historical marker at Croick speculates that to them taking shelter in the church “might have been sacrilegious” (“Croick Old Parish Church”). P.A. MacNab adds that that the refugees took shelter amongst the gravestones rather than inside the church because “In those days this would have been regarded as desecration of a holy place, and even under such necessity, and if invited by the minister, they would probably have refused” (MacNab). We are then to accept that the same people who chose to camp in the churchyard rather than desecrate a holy place proceeded to desecrate that same holy place by scratching graffiti into the window?

Prebble, MacNab and the interpretive material at the church all uncritically accept the authenticity of the etchings at Croick. I’ve found one source that questions the etchings, it’s an online travel guide called *Undiscovered Scotland*. Though it’s not a scholarly source, *Undiscovered Scotland* poses some problems about Croick that bear further scrutiny. Because of the language discrepancy, the range of dates represented on the window, and the question of desecration *Undiscovered Scotland* suggest that “until some of the loose ends about the inscriptions can be tied up there has to be some doubt



about whether they were really placed there by the people the Times [*sic*] correspondent met in May 1845” (“Croick Church”).

Incongruities about Croick are further compounded because, as I noted previously, the vast majority of its congregation left for the Free Church during the Disruption of 1843. The congregation of Croick Church was reduced “to two families” (*Croick Church*) after the Disruption. For the people of Glencalvie, Croick was no longer their church. They had left it *en masse* in 1843. Why then would they come back to it under these circumstances? Why write in English? Why the multiple dates? Unfortunately there are no clear answers to these lingering questions, but the questions force a more textured understanding of the site. We can take the site at face value, as a memorial that maintains a direct connection with the Glencalvie people as they experienced the trauma of eviction and that was added to in the intervening years as members of the community sought a venue to memorialize later events. Alternatively, we can interpret the site as an attempt to claim the historical cachet of the Glencalvie clearances.

My research into the authenticity of the etchings at Croick has been inconclusive. The earliest references that I’ve found to them have been well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I find the question of authenticity intriguing, though I’ll leave further exploration to archivists and forensic scientists. The more interesting question to consider is what purpose those etchings serve. Why, if they are authentic, aren’t they discussed in the literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? And if they are fraudulent, why have so few scholars questioned them, what need did they serve to the people who created them and what need do they continue to serve? The value of a site like Croick needn’t lie in its authenticity;

rather it lies in the spontaneous expression of identity, or of memory. The significance of Croick's history exists in the moment of creation. Whether it's recalling the past, or projecting into the future, it eschews the banality of narrative. The monumentalism of the Mannie overwhelms, it reminds us that we are insignificant and anonymous obstacles in the sweep of industry and empire. The Emigrants memorial panders to the bad taste of nostalgia and the heritage industry. The museum representations of the Clearances are mired in the dueling narratives of core and periphery as they negotiate an acceptable rhetoric of internal colonialism. Somehow the memorial at Croick transcends these other conflicts while presenting questions of its own.

## Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation I have traced the ways that the Highland Clearances emerged into public consciousness through both primary and secondary cultural artifacts. The Highland Clearances are an instructive historical episode, embodying a range of class, cultural and colonial antagonisms. Through my analysis, I have illustrated both the logic that led to implementation of clearance policies, and the processes by which the legacy of the Clearances have been negotiated in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Within this negotiation is a spectrum of political and cultural debates which work to come to terms, not only with a controversial episode in Scottish history, but also with the ways that power and exploitation continue to shape the geo-social fabric of the Highlands.

The Highland Clearances aimed to drastically reshape northern Scotland by uprooting extant social structures and supplanting traditional economic systems. Motivation for these changes, while primarily born from the economic self-interest of the upper class, was justified by dehumanizing the local inhabitants and carried out under the banner of advancing civilization. Despite the presence within the Highlands of clear parallels to the mechanisms of colonial expansion, many critics and observers continue to dismiss claims that aim to position Scotland, or the Highlands more, within the discussion of colonialism. As I have argued, such perspectives adhere too rigidly to a view of the colonial process in terms of absolutes, suggesting that a cultural intervention, even where it bears striking similarities to the mechanisms of the colonial process, is colonial in the absence of certain privileged markers of colonialism.

I've pointed several times to the claim by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin that inclusion of Scotland within the colonial discussion has been hedged and qualified amid a sense that "complicity in the British imperial enterprise makes it difficult for colonized peoples outside of Britain to accept their identity as post colonial [*sic*]" (33). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin don't dismiss claims that Scotland was a site of British colonial expansion, but in this assertion they rhetorically position "colonized peoples outside of Britain" as arbiters of postcolonial identity within Scotland. Establishing "colonized peoples outside of Britain" as gatekeepers of postcolonial identity undermines one of the primary aims of the postcolonial project, which is to create a space for dominated peoples to claim their own history and the agency to assert their own identities.

In his discussion of the unhomely, Homi Bhabha suggests that the unhomely moment entails a flash of recognition that "the personal-*is*-the political" (*Culture* 11). The alienation of the unhomely arose from the colonial incursion that cast light on the intricacies of the relationship between the personal and the political. The notion that the personal is the political—weathered though it may be from years of use—demands we acknowledge that identity and culture are just as much political as the functioning of state power or class domination. Moreover, the functioning of state power and other modes of cultural domination, such as we see in the Highland Clearances, shape identities and local cultures in many ways, some of which are obvious and some of which are not. The legacy of these changes is most obvious in depopulated landscapes and disseminated communities. However these more obvious changes are accompanied by the legacy of trauma and domination which continue to shape Highland identity in innumerable ways. It's this legacy that leads vandals to act out of continued anger in attempts to topple the

statue of the First Duke of Sutherland, a man now dead for nearly two centuries. The legacy has not gone away, the collective memory of trauma and injustice has not dissipated. Highland identities continue to be shaped by this incursion, and by the alienation of the unhomely. Attempts to destroy the statue of the Duke are symbolic attempts to undo colonial alienation, and to reassert a perception of sovereignty over the social space of the Highlands. This lost sense of sovereignty over the domestic space, whether it reflected a real sovereignty or not, was undermined when entire social structures were unmade at the whims of the landed class. Accepting that “the personal is the political” forces us to recognize the importance of social and cultural perceptions of history from within the groups that have been affected. Identity, and therefore perception, is shaped by innumerable political forces. If the perception from within communities affected by the Clearances is of being colonial subjects, and that perception exists within the context of such striking parallels to other colonial sites, then the project of postcolonial theory demands that we take seriously their claims and experiences, rather than ceding this aspect of Highland identity to “colonized peoples outside of Britain.”

It’s widely acknowledged that most markers that we’ve come to associate with Scottish identity had their roots within the Highlands and were appropriated as an affectation. Historian Hugh Trevor-Roper traces this phenomenon to 1822 when George IV visited Edinburgh. Sir Walter Scott was one of the dignitaries tasked with making preparations for the king’s visit. The result, Trevor-Roper writes, was “a bizarre travesty of Scottish history” (30) during which Walter Scott, “Imprisoned by his fanatical Celtic friends, [and] carried away by his own romantic Celtic fantasies,” declared that the royal visit was to be “a gathering of Gael” (30). This royal visit occurred very near the height

of the Highland Clearances, the time during which, in Donald MacLeod's phrase, Highlanders were being driven "root and branch from the land of their birth" (9). The height of the colonial incursion into the Highlands corresponded with the moment that Highlanders and the Highlands were being most exoticized and romanticized by Scott and his circle, and during which "Scottish identity" was being remade in the image of Highland culture. This was the double edged sword of colonialism within Scotland. On the one hand, Highland communities were being completely devastated by clearances which were fueled, at least in part, by cultural antagonisms and prejudice. On the other hand, Walter Scott and King George himself were dressed up in the very clothing that, after the Jacobite Rebellion, had been outlawed and "proscribed as the sartorial symbol of rebel militarism" (Devine 46). Cultural appropriation went hand in hand with material and economic appropriation. And so it goes today.

While tartan, bagpipes, the Gaelic language and "traditional" Highland culture have become the center of a massive culture and tourism industry, they have become musealized. That is, by Adorno's definition, "objects to which the observer no longer has a relationship and which are in the process of dying" (175). While these cultural forms continue to exist, they exist in a strange form, frozen in time and made consumable to tourists, sold in material form on the Royal Mile and in the base nostalgia of innumerable varieties of narrative. They also continue to exist as political tools.

In 2014, Scottish voters are going to be asked a simple question: "Should Scotland be an Independent Country." The Scottish National Party (SNP) has continued to argue that Scotland should be an independent country because of cultural differences from England. The SNP's cultural arguments are predicated on the use of Highland

identity as metonymic of Scottish identity as a whole. This is problematic because it is both disingenuous and exploitative. In the build up to the referendum, voters will have to reflect on three centuries of second-class status within the United Kingdom, but also recognize that domination and exploitation don't merely come from beyond Scottish borders. John McGrath's claim that "Nationalism is not enough. The enemy of the Scottish people is Scottish capital as much as the foreign exploiter" ("The Year" xxvi) resonates here. Severing the political union with England and the rest of the UK will not be an end to domination. It will merely reshape the mechanisms through which the core will dominate the periphery; independence in itself is not a solution. The way forward is not clear, but it must entail an unflinching look at the modes of domination that have shaped Highland identity as savage, backwards, and at odds with the modern order of civil society while at the same time romanticizing, exoticizing and instrumentalizing that identity for political gain.

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