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Caraid nan Gaidheal and ‘Friend of Emigration’: Gaelic Emigration Literature of the 1840s

The publication of *The Emigrant's Guide to North America* in 1998, a translation of Robert MacDougall's 1841 publication, *Ceann-Iuil an Fhir-Imrich do dh'America Mu-Thuath*, serves to remind us of the existence of an unexplored body of Gaelic emigration literature from that period.¹ Robert MacDougall was able to write about North America with authority, having experienced it first hand. Originally from Perthshire, he had settled in the Huron Tract in Upper Canada in 1836 where two of his brothers were already settled, and he spent three years there before returning to Scotland. In his book MacDougall offers advice to prospective emigrants, describing the type of person who would be well suited to the rigours of pioneer life, and goes on to depict various parts of Upper Canada, in addition to offering practical advice about fares, land, agriculture and live-stock. He points out in his introduction that despite the existence of many books on the subject of emigration there is no such book aimed specifically at Highland emigrants. Although MacDougall's guidebook is the first of its kind, that is not to say that it is unique in offering Gaelic speakers information and advice about emigrant destinations.

This study focuses on Gaelic emigration literature which was published in the aftermath of the Highland potato famine of 1836–37 and before that of 1846–50. The pattern of emigration from the Highlands in the course of the nineteenth century has received fairly extensive treatment by such historians as J. M. Bumstead and Eric Richards.² The end of the eighteenth century had witnessed a steady flow of emigrants out of the Highlands in response to a complex mix of factors, including landlord pressure, population growth and the prospect of a more prosperous future elsewhere. This flow was to slow significantly, albeit temporarily, as a result of the 1803 Passenger Vessels Act, legislation prompted by Highland landlords' alarm regarding the exodus of

¹ E. Thompson (ed.) *The Emigrant's Guide to North America* by Robert MacDougall (Toronto, 1998).

² J. M. Bumstead, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America* (Edinburgh, 1982); E. Richards, *History of the Highland Clearances. Volume II: Emigration, Protest, Reasons* (London, 1985).

tenants from their estates and the resulting fall in rental income. The 1803 Act, while purporting to protect prospective emigrants from over-crowding and inhumane conditions on board ships, conveniently for proprietors, resulted in a significant reduction in the numbers emigrating from the Highlands and Islands. Landlord resistance to emigration weakened after 1815 in the face of demographic pressures and the failure of the kelp industry. The situation was brought to a head by tenants' dependence on the potato crop, which failed in both 1836 and 1837, causing widespread suffering. By the 1840s the attitude of proprietors towards emigration had reversed completely and many viewed emigration as the only viable long-term solution in order to avoid repeating the crises of 1836–37. This coincided with an upturn in demand for labour in Australia and the decision of the British government to subsidise the passage of those willing to emigrate for Australia. Until then North America had been the most common destination for emigrant Gaels, with some areas proving particularly popular. Cape Breton, for instance, attracted close to 20,000 Gaels between 1802 and the early 1840s.³ It is estimated that between 1837 and 1840 Dr Boyter, the government emigration agent for Australia, had arranged for the emigration of some 5,200 Scots, the majority of them Highlanders.⁴ It is at this point that we find an unprecedented amount of literature written in Gaelic relating to, and indeed promoting, emigration. Most of this appeared in the monthly periodical *Cuairtear nan Gleann* which was published between 1840 and 1843.

Contemporary emigration literature in English has been discussed by Marjory Harper in her study of emigration from the north-east of Scotland.⁵ Identifying the main sources of information for would-be emigrants – including newspapers, periodicals, guidebooks and correspondence, in addition to that made available by emigration and shipping agents – she has argued that the function of these sources tended not to be formative, rather they 'had a positive supportive role in offering apparently attractive alternatives, and delineating the means by which they could be obtained'.⁶ The local newspapers constituted the most accessible source of information, incorporating reviews of guidebooks, advertisements for ships' sailings and assisted passage and letters from emigrants. There were numerous guidebooks available: for instance, James Flint's *Letters from America* (1822), John Howison's *Sketches of Upper Canada* (1822), Andrew Pichen's *The Canadas* (1832) and John Mathison's *Counsel for Emigrants* (1834), of which three editions were published. Harper's study highlights the range of information common to such guidebooks: means and cost of travel; geography and topography; population; wages and prices; climate; agriculture and

³ E. Richards, *The Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh, 2000), 63.

⁴ Richards, *History of Clearances*, ii, 242–4.

⁵ M. Harper, *Emigration from North-East Scotland Vol. I: Willing Exiles* (Aberdeen, 1988). Chapter 2 offers a detailed examination of the various contemporary sources.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

mineral resources.⁷ In addition, advice was commonly given regarding those who were and those who were not best suited to life in a new destination and warnings issued about unscrupulous agents and the dangers of deception on arrival at a new destination.

Emigration literature in Gaelic is obviously more limited in quantity than that in English, but as was the case with the sources of information in English, it took various forms. An example of an emigration agent appealing to Gaels survives in a poster from 1822, produced by Nahum Ward, and inviting Gaels to emigrate to his native Ohio.⁸ Echoing the Gaelic proverb 'Crann à coille, bradan à sruth, 's fiadh à fireach' (*A tree from a wood, a salmon from a stream and a deer from a forest*), Ward tells readers that in Ohio, 'Is iad na tuaidh luchd-uailse na duthcha. Tha iad gun mhàl 's gun bhacadh seilge ... cha bhacair iad ann am fiodh-ghearradh no 's an t-iasgach' (*The tenantry are the gentlemen of the country. They pay no rent and there is no restriction on hunting ... they are not prevented from cutting wood or from fishing*). He proceeds to inform readers that a ship is ready to sail from Greenock to Marieta in Ohio if fifty people commit themselves to the journey.

Letters home from those who had emigrated were another means of disseminating information among the Gaels. One instance of such a letter survives from c. 1834 sent by William Hendry in Megantic, Quebec (Lower Canada) to his mother who remained in Arran. Relating the experience of his cousin's family he tells his mother:

agus tha mi creudsinn gu maith gu biod iad na bhear en so na tha iad agus moran a thullie orra ach cha neil mi toirt misneach do dhuine air bith teachd air en uairs oir tha moran tigheachd nach eil toilite don atie so agus cha neil mi fein ra thoilite don atie so fathast.

(and I can well believe that they would be better here than where they are, and many other people besides, but I am not encouraging anybody to come at the moment, for many are coming who are not pleased with this place, and I'm none too pleased with this place myself as yet.)⁹

According to Charlotte Erickson's study, *Invisible Emigrants: The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in 19th-Century America*, it was private letters such as these which proved most influential in the decision-making process of those considering a future abroad.¹⁰ In the case of John MacLean, Bàrd Thighearna Cholla, who had settled in Barney's River, Pictou County in Nova Scotia in 1819, it was song rather than letter which captured his initial American experience and was sent home to those he had left behind in Tiree:

⁷ *Ibid.*, 58ff.

⁸ N. Ward, *Eisdibh! Eisdibh! Eisdibh! Rabhadh dhoibh-san d'am miann a dhol a dh'Ohio ann America* (Stirling, 1822).

⁹ R. I. M. Black, 'An emigrant's letter in Arran Gaelic, 1834', *Scottish Studies*, xxxi (1993), 63–87, at 73 and 75.

¹⁰ C. Erickson, *Invisible Emigrants: The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in 19th-Century America* (London, 1972), 35.

Gur h-iomadh caochladh 'tigh 'nn air an t-saoghal
 'S ro bheag a shaoil mi nuair 'bha mi thall;
 Bu bheachd dhomh nuair sin mu n' d'rinn mi gluasad
 Gum fàsainn uasal nuair 'thiginn ann.
 An car a fhuair mi cha b' ann gu m' bhuannachd,
 Tigh 'nn thar a chuain air a chuairt bha meallt',
 Gu tìr nan craobh anns nach fheil an t-saorsainn,
 Gun mhart, gun chaora, 's mi dh' aodach gann.¹¹

(*Many a change is coming over the world and little did I think when I was over yonder; It was my belief then before I moved, that I would become a gentleman when I came here. What happened was not to my advantage, journeying over the ocean under false pretences, to the land of the trees where there is no freedom, without a cow, without a sheep and short of clothing.*)

MacLean's friends in Tiree were so moved by the poet's experience that they offered to pay his fare home, and MacLean of Coll offered him a piece of land free of rent, offers which he did not take up. As the Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair commented in his edition of MacLean's poetry, this song must have been something of a disincentive to those in Tiree contemplating emigration.¹²

In addition to these sources of information, there is a distinctive body of emigration literature which remains unstudied, and which provides the focus for this article. This material dates to the period between the famines of the later 1830s and of the later 1840s and reveals how a small number of writers sought to promote emigration to Gaelic speakers. The emigration literature under discussion here appeared in print between 1840 and 1843 in the periodical *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, established and edited by the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod (known by the sobriquet Caraid nan Gaidheal – Friend of the Gaels). *Cuairtear nan Gleann* was not his first venture into publishing, having been preceded by *An Teachdaire Gaelach* between 1829 and 1831. Emigration was not, however, a subject upon which this earlier periodical touched with any frequency.

Norman MacLeod was a native of Morvern who was, from 1835, minister of St Columba's, Glasgow. He had been active on behalf of the Gaels during the famine of 1836–37. Along with John Bowie, agent for Lord MacDonald, he had travelled to the main English cities in his efforts to raise funds to aid the famine-stricken Highlands. In a speech delivered at the Mansion House in London in March 1837 he attempted to convey the desperate position of many Highlanders:

There are many parishes in these island districts without meal, and having no more potatoes (their sole subsistence) than sufficient to keep the people in existence for a few weeks while a fearful proportion of them are without peat (or turf) for fuel, or an article of food to maintain life except the miserable substance obtained from shell-fish and sea-weed collected at

¹¹ A. MacLean Sinclair, *Filidh na Coille* (Charlottetown, 1901), 51.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

low water: huddled together for want of blankets or bed-clothes, under a covering of dried ferns or rushes.¹³

In the same speech he asserted that, 'if emigration could be avoided I would be the last man on earth to advocate it; they are a valuable population, and to part with them if they could be profitably employed at home would be parting with so much of the national strength'.¹⁴ After this meeting at the Mansion House MacLeod's deputation was visited by the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, a Scot resident in Australia who campaigned for a systematic emigration scheme which would bring skilled workers to this colony. Lang was a politically active and controversial figure who published widely on Australia as well as travelling extensively and promoting emigration on lecture tours. He informed MacLeod that there existed a sum in the region of £200,000 in the New South Wales treasury for funding emigration to Australia. The result, as recorded by Lang himself, 'was that eighteen shiploads of the destitute highlanders and islanders, amounting to upward of four thousand individuals, were carried out at the expense of the colony to New South Wales and Port Philip'.¹⁵ MacLeod's contact with John Dunmore Lang is interesting, demonstrating the network of contacts which MacLeod built up in the process of raising money for the Gaels and revealing something of the influences which may have had a bearing on the increasingly pro-emigration stance which he was to take.

The fund-raising in which he had involved himself was highly successful, raising some £200,000. We are told by MacLeod's biographer, his son John MacLeod, that in the wake of this famine, MacLeod and others reached the conclusion that in order to avoid a similar crisis occurring again the only possible solution was large-scale emigration.¹⁶ This concern seems to have been one of the main factors behind MacLeod's decision to establish *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in 1840 at a price of 6d. monthly, in order to make information on British colonies available to Gaelic speakers. During its short existence no less than twenty-eight articles which dealt specifically with emigration or emigration destinations appeared in the pages of the periodical, a figure which does not include briefer news items on such topics. In the first issue of the journal, MacLeod states his intention of providing potential emigrants with reliable information:

Cha 'n eil leabhar no litir mu dhéibhinn nan cearnabh iomallach sin nach fheuch sinn a rannsachadh, an fhìrinn a tharruing asda, agus so a chur fo bheachd ar luchd-dùthcha. Tha luchd-eòlais measail againn anns gach cearna do 'n t-saoghal d' am bheil Gàidheil a' triall, agus uapasan

¹³ J. N. MacLeod, *Memorials of the Rev. Norman MacLeod (Senr) DD* (Edinburgh, 1898), 128-9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁵ A. Gilchrist (ed.), *John Dunmore Lang: Chiefly Autobiographical, 1799 to 1878, Cleric, Writer, Traveller, Statesman, Pioneer of Democracy in Australia* (Melbourne, 1951), 221.

¹⁶ MacLeod, *Memorials*, 171.

feuchaidh sinn fiosrachadh fhaotainn as am faodar earbsadh agus a chuireas sinn a mach anns a' mhìosachan bheag so – na litrichean thig dhachaidh uapasan a dh' fhalbh, gheibh gach aon is airidh dhiubh àite sa' *Chuairtear*.¹⁷

(*There is no book or letter about those distant areas that we will not endeavour to search out, draw the truth from them, and provide this for the consideration of our countrymen. We have respected acquaintances in every part of the world to which Gaels are travelling, and from them we will seek to get reliable information which we will publish in this small monthly – the letters which come home from those who have left, every one of them which is worthy of it will find a place in the Cuairtear.*)

Of the eight pieces of writing of any length in the first issue of the journal, emigration is central to four: MacLeod's own foreword; a letter seeking advice on emigration; a dialogue between two crofters, one of whom is intending to emigrate; and an essay describing New Zealand.

John Bowie, who like MacLeod had been involved in raising money to help relieve the famine crisis in 1837, gave evidence in 1841 to the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Condition of the Population of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. In his evidence he observed:

There is at the present moment a great desire existing in the Highlands to leave the country, if they are only aided. This desire has been very much increased from the circumstances of a Gaelic periodical now publishing monthly under the direction of Dr. Macleod, and distributed throughout the Highlands, giving information, not with reference to one colony only, but all the colonies.¹⁸

The periodical referred to is MacLeod's *Cuairtear nan Gleann*. Bowie related to the Committee his own experiences when dealing with Lord MacDonald's tenants in Skye where people were wary of emigrating to Australia. Bowie found himself unequipped to answer prospective emigrants' questions and so he familiarised himself with the subject of their questions and accumulated some twenty-four pages of notes which he claimed 'led to the great emigrations there'.¹⁹

Two months after the setting up of *Cuairtear*, MacLeod spoke at a meeting in Glasgow which was concerned with British sovereignty in New Zealand. He announced that he was there as 'the friend of emigration' and that he saw emigration as 'the cause of humanity and I will say, of Christianity; and I feel that I am in the way of my duty in promoting that great and beneficial object'.²⁰ There is no doubt that MacLeod, although resident in the Lowlands, was all too aware of the condition of the Highlands, receiving information from fellow ministers and from those affected Gaels who had reached Glasgow. His son described 'the constant succession of visitors, making his house resemble a hotel', and

¹⁷ *Cuairtear nan Gleann* [CnanG], no. 1 (1840), 3.

¹⁸ *Parliamentary Papers* [PP] 1841 VI, 14–15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁰ MacLeod, *Memorials*, 176.

commented that 'no consul in a foreign port could have more applications from distressed countrymen'.²¹ In the light of this unremitting exposure to those who had suffered during the famine years it is not hard to accept that he genuinely believed that the cause of humanity and Christianity was best served by emigration. The fact that this happened to coincide with the interests of Highland landlords should not in itself be taken as explicit support of landlords. For those, however, who seek to prove that the Highland landlords were supported by the clergy, MacLeod is not entirely immune to such criticisms. Norman MacLeod was among those who gave evidence to the 1841 Select Committee. When asked about his journal he informed the Committee:

One great object of the publication at present, is to instruct the people on the subject of emigration; they have been deceived by private adventurers, they become jealous of private adventurers... I came to attend a meeting of Highland proprietors in Edinburgh, and I recommended that we should continue the periodical, giving emigration a prominent place; but that every article on emigration should have the signature of the editor, that is my own, so that I should be responsible for the information. I am happy to say that their prejudices are greatly removed; they are crying out for emigration, and my table is loaded each week from all parts of the Highlands, and the announcement of this Committee has sent me a great many letters, imploring me to give information in the next number of the publication which must be very cautiously done.²²

The evidence of both Bowie and MacLeod to the Select Committee is unequivocal in its confirmation of the pro-emigration stance of *Cuairtear nan Gleann*. Just as revealing is the disclaimer which MacLeod places in the seventh issue of his periodical in 1841:

Fhuair sinn litir no dha a' feòraich an robh sinn air ar pàigheadh leis a' chomunn ann an Sasunn air son Gàidheil a chur imrich, agus 'gar diomoladh airson a leithid. Tha againn ri ràdh nach 'eil aon fhocal firinn anns na tha iad mar so a' cur as ar leth. An comunn air son Gàidheil a chur do *America*, do *Australia*, do *New Zealand*, no do dh-ait air bith eile, cha do cheannaich uiread agus aon Chuairtear uainn, ni mò thug iad sgillinn ruadh seachad chum a chosd a dhìol.²³

(We have received one or two letters asking if we were paid by the society in England for sending Gaels abroad and criticising us for this. We must say that there is not one word of truth in what they are accusing us of. The society for sending Gaels to America, to Australia, to New Zealand or to any other place has not bought so much as one Cuairtear from us, nor have they given us a single penny to offset the cost.)

Clearly, for some readers the pro-emigration literature contained in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* was virtually indistinguishable from that of agents who were paid by their various governments to promote emigration.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 200-1.

²² *PP 1841 VI*, 82.

²³ *CnanG*, no. 7 (1840), 168.

While MacLeod may have been able to distance himself from these agents, it can be argued that he himself was an agent for Highland landlords. An earlier quotation makes reference to a meeting with Highland proprietors in Edinburgh at which he committed himself as editor of the periodical to 'giving emigration a prominent place'. His evidence to the Select Committee further underlines his position with regard to Highland landlords which at best might be classed as deferential to them and at worst as supportive of them. When asked if he thought that landlords, in creating larger farms, should have considered how the people should be removed, he responded with the words, 'it is not for me to say what a landlord should do'.²⁴ As to whether Highland proprietors should share in the expense of a system of emigration he states:

I do not think the evil has been brought on by them, and I believe that they can, by the common law of the land, remove the people in the same way as any proprietor in the kingdom can remove cattle or men from his estate if he thinks proper.²⁵

There is nothing particularly surprising about the views of Norman MacLeod, a minister of the established Church, at a time when ministers depended on the patronage of the landed classes. His biography relates that in his youth in Morvern 'there was no restriction as to shooting, the Duke of Argyll having given full permission to the family'.²⁶ The association with the duke of Argyll was further strengthened for MacLeod, married as he was to Agnes Maxwell, daughter of James Maxwell, the duke's chamberlain. It is worth bearing this in mind when we read that he spoke of 'the humanity of the proprietors to the people' to the Select Committee and more specifically:

The late Duke of Argyll has to my knowledge shed tears over the distress of the island of Tyree; his answer was 'These people wish to remain, they are devotedly attached to that island and I cannot think of removing them; they were my fencible men and I love them'.²⁷

MacLeod can hardly be said to be unbiased in his evidence. That is not to say, however, that he did not genuinely have the best interests of Gaels at heart. Rather, the evidence relating to MacLeod's role in promoting emigration conveys something of the complexity of the clergy's position at the time, placed as they were between tenants and landlords.

In *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, MacLeod certainly mentioned the Select Committee:

Chuala sinn ainmeannan nan daoine'-uaise Gàidhealach tha 'dol suas, agus cha b'urrainn iad daoine bu tuigsiche, a b' fhirinniche agus bu

²⁴ *PP 1841 VI*, 71.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁶ MacLeod, *Memorials*, 15.

²⁷ *PP 1841 VI*, 71.

chairdeala a thaghadh – daoine aig a bheil barrachd spèis agus gràidh a thaobh an luchd-dùthcha, no barrachd tograidh chum maith a dheanamh dhoibh.²⁸

(We have heard the names of the gentlemen who are going there, and they could not have chosen more sensible, more truthful and more benevolent men – men who have more regard and love for their countrymen or men who have more desire to do well by them.)

Once again, his view is hardly an unbiased one given that both he and his brother were among those giving evidence, specifics which he omits in this account, although his evidence to the Committee itself indicates that it was widely known that he was to appear to give evidence.

His first journal, *An Teachdair Gaelach*, had been established in 1829 in order to provide reading material for the increasing number of Gaels being educated in Highland schools. While not containing emigration propaganda, the journal was primarily concerned with providing spiritually and morally uplifting reading material. The authoritative voice of MacLeod and other ministers which pervades the writing sets the tone for this and later publications, an authority which is present in the writing on emigration published in *Cuairtear nan Gleann*. It is not possible to identify with certainty all the contributors to MacLeod's periodicals. More than half of the contributions were anonymous while, for those which were not, it tended to be the authors' initials only which were printed. While it is likely that MacLeod himself penned a sizeable portion of the contents, identifiable contributors include the Rev. Alexander MacGregor of Kilmuir, Lachlan MacLean, a Glasgow shopkeeper from Coll, and Dr Robert MacGregor, a Glasgow doctor. There were also regular contributions from a writer using the pen-name 'Eilthreach' (*Emigrant*) who lived in Pictou and the occasional emigrant letter is published for readers' edification. Interestingly, Robert MacDougall, author of *Ceann-Iuil an Fhìr-Imrich*, was employed in the office of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* from its inception until 1841 when he emigrated to Australia, therefore it may be that he was behind some of the anonymous contributions.²⁹

While some of the emigration literature published in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* appears to be emigrants' first-hand accounts of their experiences abroad, some of the writing was not based on personal experience. Writers such as MacLeod would have had two main sources of information available to them, namely letters and guidebooks published in English. They would have been in contact by letter with Gaels who had settled in North America and Australia. The Rev. Alexander MacGregor's father, the Rev. Robert MacGregor, for instance, remained in contact with at least one former parishioner who settled in Prince Edward Island. Writing in July 1830 to one Allan Macdonald who had settled in Orwell Bay, MacGregor thanks Macdonald for his letter and

²⁸ *CnanG*, no. 13 (1841), 28.

²⁹ Thompson (ed.), *Emigrant's Guide*, p. viii.

says how pleased he is that 'the face of the country pleases you'.³⁰ Published accounts in English were also available to these writers. Alexander MacGregor, for example, in writing essays about Canada for a later periodical, *Fear-Tathaich nam Beann*, in 1848, drew heavily upon John MacGregor's *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America* published in 1828. MacGregor makes no reference to his English source. However, not only is it evident that the bulk of his information and the structure of his essays are very similar to that of the 1828 publication, but most telling of all are sections where Alexander MacGregor's account is virtually a translation of that of John MacGregor.³¹

Information on emigrant destinations was not, therefore, hard to come by for those who were contributing to *Cuairtear nan Gleann*. The question which begs answering is how they then chose to use this information. Broadly speaking the writing can be loosely grouped under the headings: encouraging passivity; offering spiritual comfort; and promoting emigrant destinations. The genres which writers used also fall into three main categories: prose dialogues between characters; letters from emigrants; and essays. The dialogues and letters in particular offered a personal and authoritative dimension to the writing. Dialogues were particularly popular with contemporary Gaelic writers – most notably with Norman MacLeod himself – for the discussion of social issues, with writers consciously employing characters associated with authority to expound establishment viewpoints.³²

MacLeod's best known piece of writing 'Long Mhòr nan Eilthreach' (*The Emigrant Ship*) encompasses the first two categories mentioned above by both encouraging passive acceptance of emigration and by offering a sermon to those contemplating emigration. This is set on board an emigrant ship about to depart from Mull and depicts the poignant scene of one family leaving their elderly father and grandfather behind. A minister then boards the ship and preaches to his departing flock, based on contemporary practice in the Highlands, and most probably on MacLeod's own experience of boarding departing emigrant ships to offer final words of comfort. The old man accepts the situation, albeit unhappily, 'cha-n 'eil mi 'cur iomchoir ort, 's cha mhò tha mi gearan' (*I do not blame you, nor am I complaining*), as he is parted from his only living family.³³ The minister also diverts thoughts away from

³⁰ J. M. MacLennan, *From Shore to Shore* (Edinburgh, 1977), 31.

³¹ For a more detailed discussion of MacGregor's use of *Historical and Descriptive Sketches*, see S. M. Kidd, 'The prose writings of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor, 1806–1881' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1999), 84–5.

³² For a discussion of the uses of the Gaelic dialogue in the 19th-century, see S. M. Kidd, 'Social control and social criticism: The nineteenth century *còmhradh*', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, xx (2000), 67–87.

³³ N. MacLeod, *Co'chruinneachadh air a chur r'a chèile air iarrrtas Comuinn Ard-sheanadh Eaglais na h-Alba: arson an sgoilean, air feadh Tìr-mòr agus Eileana na Gaeltachd* (Glasgow, 1828), 82.

complaint and protest instead focusing on God's omnipresence and invoking the example of Old Testament heroes:

Am bheil sibh a' dol na's fhaide o Dhia na bha sibh riamh? Nach e'n Dia ceudna 'dh'fhosgail rosgan do shùl an diugh 's a dhùisg thu á suain na h-oidhche, a tha 'g oibreachadh taobh thall an t-saoghail? Cò 'sheas le Abraham 'n uair a dh'fhàg e 'thir 's a dhaoine? Cò a thaisbein e fèin do Jacob, 'n uair a dh'fhàg e tigh 'athar, 's a chaidil e 'muigh air an raon? Mo nàire! a dhaoine; c'ait' am bheil 'ur creidimh?³⁴

(Are you going any further from God than you ever were? Is it not the same God who opened your eyes today and woke you from the night's sleep as is working on the far side of the world? Who stood by Abraham when he left his land and his people? Who revealed himself to Jacob when he left his father's house and slept out on the plain? Shame on you, people; where is your faith?)

Interestingly, 'Long Mhòr nan Eilthireach' was first published in 1828 in a reader for schools which MacLeod compiled under the auspices of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which was actively engaged in establishing schools throughout the Highlands. Thus the message of passivity was in this instance specifically aimed at the young, and at shaping their views on emigration at an early stage, and in the pre-famine years at that.

Encouraging passivity manifests itself in two ways in the writing in *Cuairtear nan Gleann*. One is complete avoidance of mentioning clear-ance and famine and the other is promoting acceptance of the situation. The following excerpt from an essay by the Rev. Alexander MacGregor is typical of the way in which writers gloss over the factors underlying the social crisis in the Highlands:

Cha 'n eil comas air, – agus o'n dh'fhàs iad co mòr ann an àireamh, 's nach 'eil tuineachas freagarrach air an son ni's faide 'nan dùthaich fein, 'se 'n gliocas dol far am bi cothrom aca air solar iomchuidh a dheanamh air an son fein, agus air son an teaghlaichean. Dh'eirich mòran uireasbhuidh agus bochduinn air feadh na Gàidhealtachd, trid lìonmhoireachd an t-sluaigh, agus cha 'n 'eil seòl air cur as do so gu h-ìomchuidh, ach le mòran a dhol air imirich do dhùchannaibh eile!³⁵

(It cannot be helped, – and since they have grown so large in number, and since there is no longer a suitable home for them in their own country, it is wise for them to go where they will have a chance to make a proper living for themselves and for their families. Much want and poverty arose throughout the Highlands as a result of the multitude of the population and there is no way of dealing with this property but with many emigrating to other countries.)

The implication here is that the Gaels themselves are to blame for over-population, with no mention of landlords opposing emigration in

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 86. See also D. Meek, 'The Bible and social change in the nineteenth-century Highlands', in D. F. Wright (ed.), *The Bible in Scottish Life and Literature* (Edinburgh, 1988), 179–91.

³⁵ *CnanG*, no. 7 (1840), 146.

the very early years of the century and of them allowing the sub-division of land in order that there be a growing population to work on the kelp and add to their own income. It is in dialogues that the message of passive acceptance is most evident. In one of Norman MacLeod's conversations between Fionnla Piobaire, Màiri and Para Mór, which appeared in the first edition of *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, Para Mór explains to his friends that he is being evicted and that he and his family are emigrating. Instead of criticising landlords or even complaining, Para is portrayed as a submissive character, as for example when he states, 'Cha 'n eil mise 'coireachadh neach air bith, b'e 'n cuid féin a bh'ann, cha d'rinn iad ach ceartas ach O! tha 'n ceartas air uairibh cruaidh; ach c'arson tha mi 'gearan! Cha robh còir agam air iochd'.³⁶ (*I blame no one, it belonged to them, they only did what was right, but O! that which is right is sometimes harsh; but why am I complaining! I was not entitled to compassion.*)

In a similar vein is a letter attributed to 'Eoghan Og', who claims to be seeking advice from the journal about emigration, a letter which seems likely to have been written by MacLeod himself in order to project the idea that the *Cuairtear* can be trusted to give sound advice concerning emigration. Eoghan is at pains to make it clear that he does not hold the landlord or factor responsible for his predicament. Instead his view is a fatalistic one:

Tha Tighearna againn nach 'eil air uachdar an t-saoghail nas fearr – tha Bàilli againn cho firinneach, 's cho tròcaireach 's a rugadh; ach ciod is urrainn iad a dheanamh ruinn? Ma chuireas tu barrachd uibhean fo chirc na 's urrainn dhi chòmhdach feumaidh gu'm bi iomadh ubh-deachamh ann, agus theid ianlaith an adhair fein far fairge 'nuair thig fuachd a's gainne.³⁷

(*There is no landlord in the world better than the one we have – we have a factor as honest and merciful as was ever born; but what can they do for us? If you put more eggs under a hen than she can cover, there are bound to be many eggs go bad, and even the birds of the sky will go overseas when cold and scarcity come.*)

With a preponderance of the writing in *Cuairtear* coming from the clergy it is not entirely surprising that some of the writing places emigration in a spiritual context. MacLeod's introduction to the first issue reminds readers:

Cha 'n fhaod sinn dhì-chuimhneachadh gu bheil imrich gu mór is cudthromaich' ann tha feitheamh oirnn gu léir, imrich air an éiginn duinn dol agus o nach 'eil saorsadh aig neach a rugadh le mnaoi. Tha sinn uile 'nar luchd-cuairt san t-saoghal-sa, 's oilthirich sinn gu léir, dachaidh bhuan cha 'n eil aig a h-aon'.³⁸

(*We cannot forget that a much more important journey awaits us all, a journey which we must make and from which no person born of woman is exempt. We are all travellers in this world, we are all pilgrims, not one of us has a permanent home.*)

³⁶ *CnanG*, no. 1 (1840), 11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

In the second issue of *Cuairtear*, an anonymous article offering a parting word to those embarking on their journey instructs Gaels to put their trust in God who will be with them both in their travels and in their new land.³⁹ Another means of offering comfort through spiritual reassurance is evident in Alexander MacGregor's writing when he gives America God's seal of approval, 'tha e taitneach gu'n do sholair Freasdal an Tighearna àite freagarrach dh' ionnsuidh am feúd iad dol'.⁴⁰ (*It is good that the Providence of the Lord has provided a suitable place to which they may go.*) In the same vein, a letter written by Duncan Cameron in New South Wales in 1841 observes, 'Si mo bharail gur h-e'n Dia uile-thròcaireach féin a dh-ullaich an dùthaich àghmhor so airson dhaoine bochda Bhreatunn'.⁴¹ (*It is my opinion that it is all merciful God himself who provided this pleasant land for the poor people of Britain.*)

The third category of emigration writing, that of promoting emigrant destinations, is something of a catch-all grouping. It encompassed descriptions of places; deliberate attempts to play on disillusionment with life in the Highlands; an emphasis on continuity with the life Gaels already know; and, of course, news of those who had prospered abroad. The remit of this category of writing most approximates to the 'positive supportive role' which Harper identified in contemporary English emigration literature. The enticement of emigrants is touched on in Kerry Cardell's and Cliff Cumming's recent study of the Gaelic evidence relating to emigration to Australia.⁴² Here the risks of the lengthy sea voyage were played down, while, by contrast, the availability of land and employment were given prominent emphasis. Such features are evident in the material published by Norman MacLeod.

In describing foreign destinations, superlatives abound, as for instance in the description of New Zealand which claims, 'cha 'n eil glinn air thalamh is àille, is feuraiche 's is toraiche na 'tha 'm measg nam beannta mòra so'.⁴³ (*There are no glens on earth more beautiful, more grassy and more fertile than are among these great mountains.*) In another anonymous contribution about New Zealand the writer enthuses:

Cha 'n eil bàgh no caolas no abhuinn nach 'eil làn éisg, na h-uile seòrs éisg agus maoraich a tha san Roinn-Eòrpa 's na ceudan eile nach facas riamh 's na cearnaibh so. Tha na fiasgain a th' ann an cuid a dh' àiteachan os-ceann troidh air fad; tha 'n rionnach mu na cladaichean agus cho pailt 's gu 'm faodar le lion-sgrìobaidh an toirt gu tràigh 'nam mìltean, uiread 's a's urrainear a chaitheamh dhiubh.⁴⁴

(*There is not a bay or strait or river which is not full of fish, every sort of fish and shellfish which Europe has and hundreds of others which have never been seen in these parts. The mussels in some places are more than a foot in length; the mackerel*

³⁹ *CnanG*, no. 2 (1840), 28.

⁴⁰ *CnanG*, no. 7 (1840), 146.

⁴¹ *CnanG*, no. 23 (1840), 321.

⁴² 'Gaelic voices from Australia', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, xix (1999), 21–58.

⁴³ *CnanG*, no. 1 (1840), 14.

⁴⁴ *CnanG*, no. 2 (1840), 41–42.

around the shores are so plentiful that you could bring them to shore with a drag-net in their thousands, as many of them as you could use.)

Of the Falkland Islands, readers are told:

Cha'n eil pòr, bàrr no bun, tha fàs san rìoghachd so, nach fàsadh sna h-eileanabh luachmhor so ... cha'n eil daoine fiadhaich, no beathaichean annta; cha'n eil créutairean beò annta, ach crodh reamhar, a's caoirich, a's gabhair, a's eich, deas réidh chum an cur gu feum.⁴⁵

(There is not a grain crop nor root crop growing in this country which would not grow in these excellent islands ... there are no wild people or creatures there; there are no living creatures there except for plump cattle and sheep and goats and horses ready to be put to use.)

Some writers seem to be consciously playing on disillusionment with life in the Highlands in the early 1840s, alluding to the threats of future famines or of eviction. The contributor of one essay on Canada laments that more Gaels have not yet chosen to settle there, 'far an suidheadh gach aon fo sgàil a chraoibhe figis féin gun eagal bàirlinn no maoir'.⁴⁶ *(Where each one might sit under the shade of his own fig tree without fear of eviction notice or ground officer.)* New Zealand benefits from an ideal climate for the farmer according to *Cuairtear*.

Tha fàs agus cinneas feòir agus mheasan agus luibhean san eilean so na's làidire 's na's reachdmhoire na ann an aon àit eile air a' bheil cunntas againn. Cha chualas iomradh air tart loisgeach 's cha mhò a chualas gu 'n d'fhàilnich bàrr no fogharadh riamh le dìth àitidheachd no drùchd.⁴⁷

(The growth of grass and fruit and plants in this island is stronger and more productive than in any other place of which we have heard tell. There has been no report of fierce drought nor has it been heard that the crop or harvest ever failed with lack of rain or dew.)

It is particularly evident in descriptions of Canada that writers were at pains to emphasise that Gaels would still be able to continue with their familiar way of life after emigrating. Discussing winter in Upper Canada, one writer, while not denying that winters are harsh, focuses on the social life which Gaels can expect to enjoy there:

'Se so an t-àm as cridheala 's a's aighearaich' air feadh na bliadhna; cairdean a' falbh 's a' tighinn, sùgradh agus suilbhearrachd, taghall agus céilidh eadar bhailtean, pailteas r'a fhaotainn 's r'a sheachnadh, agus tha 'n aoidheachd agus an fhialaidheachd a's cairdeala dol air aghaidh ... tha ceòl agus dannsa, òrain agus fleadhachas cairdeil a' dol air aghaidh; agus mar so, le leughadh agus seanchas, tha 'n oidhche gheamhraidh a' dol seachad.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *CnanG*, no. 23 (1842), 304.

⁴⁶ *CnanG*, no. 2 (1840), 31. The allusion is biblical, Micah, 1:4: 'But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it'.

⁴⁷ *CnanG*, no. 1 (1840), 15.

⁴⁸ *CnanG*, no. 2 (1840), 31.

(This is the most cheerful and most joyful time of the whole year; friends coming and going, merriment and hilarity, visiting and ceilidhing between homes, plenty to be had and to be spared, and the friendliest entertainment and hospitality to be had ... there's music and dancing, songs and friendly revelry going on; and it is like this, with reading and tales, that the winter night passes.)

Having created this reassuring picture of community life continuing in much the same way as it was in the Highlands, and thus allowing readers to enter imaginatively into the emigrant experience, the writer goes further by pointing out that Gaels will not be among barbarians, but among their fellow countrymen who will welcome them with outstretched arms. Going further still, he somewhat ominously suggests, 'cha 'n eil teagamh nach bi 'Ghàilig ann an ùine ghoirid air a labhairt ann an America mu-thuath le barrachd dhaoine na th'ann an Gàidhealtachd na h-Alba'.⁴⁹ (*Doubtless Gaelic will soon be spoken by more people in North America than it will in the Highlands of Scotland.*)

The success stories are prominent in Gaelic emigration literature in the *Cuairtear*, although MacLeod seems to have been aware that readers might view the information with some scepticism. A letter received by 'MacTalla' – a pen-name used by Lachlan MacLean – from Duncan Cameron in New South Wales is published relating his arrival in Australia four years previously with only seven Scots pence to his name. He now earns £150 a year and expects this to rise to £200 the following year and proclaims 'ma's fada beò mi, cha bhi farmad agam ri tighearna Gàelach'.⁵⁰ (*If I live long, I will have no cause to envy a Highland landlord.*) MacLeod appends a note stating that if anyone doubts the veracity of this letter they are welcome to read it, just as he himself did.

One Donald MacDonald who had settled in Wellington, New Zealand, wrote to Norman MacLeod, and his letter in English was translated into Gaelic for publication in the *Cuairtear*. MacDonald echoes Cameron's words when he comments that he is as well off as some Highland landlords.⁵¹ Reports from Canada are equally encouraging. The hardships and difficulties of pioneer life are readily overlooked with such sweeping generalisations as:

'S minic a thainig teaghlach a stigh do choille cho dlùth 's nach robh solus na gréine r'a fhaicinn, agus an ceann beagan làithean, a bha ann an tigh seasgair, blàth, taitneach, tre chuideachadh càirdeil na feaghnach a bha thall romhpa.⁵²

(Often did a family come into a wood which was so dense that sunlight could not be seen, and in a few days they were in a warm, comfortable, pleasant house, thanks to the friendly assistance of those who went over before them.)

In common with contemporary emigration literature in English, the description of America as 'dùthaich an duine bhoichd' (*the poor man's*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *CnanG*, no. 23 (1842), 321.

⁵¹ *CnanG*, no. 19 (1841), 201.

⁵² *CnanG*, no. 4 (1840), 79.

country) becomes something of a mantra in the pages of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in the 1840s, a country in which those who are strong, hardworking, and sober could not fail to prosper, if the writers were to be believed. An account of Upper Canada from the second issue of the *Cuairtear* asserts:

Tha sinn 'ga innseadh mar fhirinn gu bheil daoine san dùthaich sin [Canada] aig nach robh aona pheighinn an latha chaidh iad air tìr, gun sgoil gun ionnsuchadh; ach stuama, riaghailteach, seasmhach, saothaireach, agus ann an ceann trì bliadhna, aig an robh leth-dusan mart, mucan, eunlaith agus na h-uile goireas a b' urrainn doibh iarraidh. Ma thogras duin' air bith an ainm fheòraich, bheir sinn duibh an ainm 's an sloinneadh agus an t-àit as an d' fhalbh iad.⁵³

(We are telling it as a fact that there are people in that country [Canada] who did not have a single penny the day they landed, unschooled, uneducated; but they were abstemious, disciplined, steady and hardworking, and in three years they had half a dozen cows, pigs, fowl and every implement they could want. If anyone wishes to ask their names we will give you their names and patronymics and where they left from.)

Despite the overwhelmingly pro-emigration nature of the material under discussion, there are occasional instances of writers offering words of caution to prospective emigrants. There is mention of unscrupulous emigration agents, as in one dialogue between Eachann and the *Cuairtear* himself. Eachann likens these agents to drovers taking oxen and heifers to market and suggests that the average Gael is confused as to which destination he should choose. Thus the reason for consulting the *Cuairtear* whom he can rely upon for sound advice.⁵⁴ There are warnings about those who may seek to deceive them on their arrival in Canada.⁵⁵ Specific advice is given about the Canadian weather. Hunters should ensure that they are warmly clothed lest they lose their fingers or their nose with the cold.⁵⁶ The lazy are advised against going to Canada by MacLeod: 'cha 'n eil Canada a' toirt mil a's bainne do gach neach gun saothair, mar a bha tìr na h-Eiphit o shean'.⁵⁷ (*Canada does not give one milk and honey without labour as the land of Egypt did long ago.*)

The only destination which MacLeod's periodical advises Gaels against is Van Diemen's Land. In a letter from a correspondent writing under the name of 'Cuairtear nam Bruidhachd', readers are told of a shortage of water there and that crops do not thrive. It would take about a year and a half for new settlers to get land and when they do, they are advised that sheep farming is most likely to be profitable. For those who manage to acquire land, it will be convicts whom they will employ as shepherds, thus requiring them to be on their guard. The writer

⁵³ *CnanG*, no. 2 (1840), 33.

⁵⁴ *CnanG*, no. 3 (1840), 58.

⁵⁵ *CnanG*, no. 16 (1841), 105.

⁵⁶ *CnanG*, no. 4 (1840), 80.

⁵⁷ *CnanG*, no. 16 (1841), 105.

concludes that wherever he were to advise Gaels to go he would strongly urge them not to go to Van Diemen's Land.⁵⁸

Cuairtear nan Gleann is also used to appeal for practical support for those emigrating. A lengthy letter from the Rev. Alexander MacGregor was published in 1840. Between 600 and 700 people were about to leave Trotternish for Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton. They lacked suitable clothes for the long, cold winters of North America and were too poor to buy any. MacGregor appeals to readers for assistance, citing the successful efforts on behalf of the Gaels of Norman MacLeod in 1836–37. The letter indicates that MacGregor was all too aware of the irony of the situation:

Ged a chithear a' chaora mhór ach gàn an uile sgìreachdaibh na h-Alba, le gnuis aoidheil, agus le a rùsg mìn, ag ionaltradh ann an aois-làrachaidh nan tighean anns an d'àruicheadh iomadh curaidh treun, an déigh sin uile, tha a' chuid a's mò do na Gaidheil eu-comasach air uiread do na rùsgaibh sin fhaotuinne 'sa sgeadaicheas iad gu dol mar bu mhiann leo, gu tigh Dhé a dh'éisdeachd r'a fhocal an sin air a shearmonachadh.⁵⁹
(Although the big sheep is to be seen in almost every part of Scotland, with its cheerful face and its soft fleece, grazing in the ageing ruins of the houses in which many a strong hero was raised, after all that, most of the Gaels are incapable of acquiring enough of those fleeces to clothe them as they would wish for going to the house of God to listen to his word being preached.)

This is as close to criticism as any of the writing in MacLeod's periodical comes.

What it is not easy to ascertain is the impact which this body of emigration literature had upon the Gaels. In the first place, despite the expansion of education in the Highlands in the first decades of the nineteenth century, it is unlikely that most Gaels would have been able to read unfamiliar material such as appeared in *Cuairtear nan Gleann*. In addition, given that contemporary reports indicate that thousands of Gaels could not afford to purchase Bibles, it is unlikely that they could afford 6d. a month for the *Cuairtear*.⁶⁰ It is likely that these periodicals were in fact read aloud to listeners by the more literate members of the community, such as the minister and the schoolmaster, further emphasising the authority of what was written.

This flurry of emigration literature in the wake of the famines of the late 1830s is of most interest for what it reveals about the writers, prominent among them the clergy. Alexander B. Mearns has discussed the attitudes displayed by the Highland clergy during the Clearances with particular reference to Sutherland, as he considers how deserving the clergy were of the 'odium' which was heaped upon them. He discusses a spectrum of responses from those ministers who were anti-clearance, to

⁵⁸ *CnanG*, no. 11 (1841), 256.

⁵⁹ *CnanG*, no. 7 (1840), 147.

⁶⁰ *Abstract of the Report of the Committee of the General Assembly for Increasing the Means of Education and Religious Instruction in Scotland* (1827), 10.

those who supported estate plans. Norman MacLeod he places among those who regretted the suffering of Highlanders but who supported clearance as a necessity.⁶¹ The evidence of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* and the emigration literature contained in it lend weight to this argument. The writing of MacLeod and his contributors is tempered with both concern for the Gaels and a genuine belief that emigration was in the Gaels' best interests. Norman MacLeod and other ministers such as the Rev. Alexander MacGregor occupied a position between landlords and tenants which required something of a balancing act in attempting to serve two masters. This position as an intermediary is evidenced by Norman MacLeod's fund-raising in which he forced the plight of the Highlands upon the social conscience of the outside world, and by his publishing of *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, in which he sought to enable Gaels to make an informed choice about emigration, by providing them with information about potential destinations in their native language.

The Gaelic emigration literature of the 1840s which appeared in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* provides a contemporary perspective on the forces at work in promoting emigration to Gaels. In response to the famine of 1836–37, writers like Norman MacLeod sought to inform readers about emigrant destinations, depicting them in terms which could not have failed to appeal when contrasted with their audience's experience in the preceding five years. 'Dùthaich an duine bhoichd' (*the poor man's country*) must have echoed in an audience's mind long after the journal had been set aside.

⁶¹ A. B. Mearns, 'The minister and the bailiff: A study of Presbyterian clergy in the northern Highlands during the Clearances', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, xxiv (1990), 53–75, at 72–4.