Edited by Murray Stewart Leith and Duncan Sim

THE MODERN SCOTTISH DIASPORA

Contemporary Debates and Perspectives

The Modern Scottish Diaspora

To Scott, Donna & Graham,
all part of the least heralded diaspora
MSL

To the late Andrew Sim,
a reluctant member of the diaspora
DS

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Murray Stewart Leith and Duncan Sim

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DS
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Contributors

Alan Bairner is Professor of Sport and Social Theory in the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences at the University of Loughborough, England.

Jenny Blain is an independent researcher, recently retired from being Senior Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Psychology, Sociology and Politics at Sheffield Hallam University, England.

Edward J. Cowan is Emeritus Professor of Scottish History at the University of Glasgow, Scotland.

Ewan Crawford is Lecturer in Journalism in the School of Creative and Cultural Industries at the University of the West of Scotland in Hamilton, Scotland.

Mike Danson is Professor of Enterprise Policy in the School of Management and Languages at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Michael Fry is a historian and freelance writer.

Euan Hague is Professor and Chair of the Department of Geography at DePaul University, Chicago, USA.

Murray Stewart Leith is Senior Lecturer in Politics in the School of Social Sciences at the University of the West of Scotland in Paisley, Scotland.

Jim Mather is a former Scottish Government Minister and is now Visiting Professor at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland.

Andrew Mycock is Reader in Politics in the School of Human and Health Sciences at the University of Huddersfield, England.

Michael Newton is Technical Lead for the Carolina Digital Humanities Initiative at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA.

Duncan Sim is Reader in Sociology in the School of Social Sciences at the University of the West of Scotland in Paisley, Scotland.

Kim Sullivan is an independent researcher and writer. She gained her doctorate from the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand.

Stuart Whigham is Lecturer in Physical and Sport Education in the School of Education, Theology and Leadership at St Mary's University College, Twickenham, London.

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The Gaelic Diaspora in North America

Michael Newton

Introduction

The Scots who emigrated to North America were never a homogeneous group: the diaspora consists of distinct streams carrying linguistic and cultural features specific to their place and moment in time. Neither the source communities in Scotland nor the transplanted communities in North America have been static but have developed certain aspects of their inherited traditions, embraced certain internal innovations, resisted certain impositions and been subject to certain assimilative pressures. The ways in which the encounters between these different lineages of Scottish tradition have been portrayed, and the ways in which contests over the authority to define tradition and authenticity have been negotiated, reveal much about who has access to power and privilege, especially in formal institutions.

Scottish Gaels – the native population of the Highlands and Western Isles – are a distinctive group within the diaspora and, in particular periods, formed a significant proportion of Scottish emigrants. Although there are features which distinguish particular communities (religious affiliation, dialect, variations of vernacular culture, leadership), Gaels perceived themselves as a cohesive ethnic group in Scotland who contrasted with the people of the Lowlands. Self-perceptions of Highland distinctiveness continued in North America for as long as the Gaelic language has survived (Newton 2011). The question of language is central, for it is integral to other aspects of Gaelic cultural expression.

Some Gaelic emigrants in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – often from the same locale – reconstituted themselves as cohesive communities forming a strong sense of identity and rootedness to new territory in North America, at least for the first few generations. These North American *Gàidhealtachdan* later experienced large-scale outmigration triggered by economic factors. For many families whose ancestors settled

those areas, the sense of belonging to Glengarry (Ontario) or Antigonish County (Nova Scotia), for example, is stronger and more immediate than the sense of being Scottish in origin.

There is a recurring motif that diasporic communities are more conservative than those of the original homeland. One of the earliest examples about Canadian Gaels comes from an early nineteenth-century account about Prince Edward Island:

> I have known many who might with more propriety be called genuine counterparts of the Highlanders who fought at Culloden, than can now, from the changes which have during the last fifty years taken place, be found in any part of Scotland. (MacGregor 1828: 70)

Similar claims have been expressed to the present, especially regarding the conservatism of Gaelic music and dance in Cape Breton (Shaw 1988; Dembling 2005; Herdman 2008). This trope of fossilisation needs to be understood critically, as it can obscure as much about change as it can reveal. There is insufficient space in this chapter to explore the complexities of tradition and authenticity in detail; for the purposes of the present discussion, the continuity of cultural expression as negotiated within Gaelic-speaking communities according to their own aesthetics and for their own purposes is central to these concepts. The continuity and cohesion of Gaelic communities in Nova Scotia in particular has enabled a strong belief in the fidelity of their vernacular forms.

North Americans wishing to be engaged in Gaelic culture – whether in its linguistic, literary, musical or choreographic aspects – are presented with a choice between 'Scottish' traditions or 'North American' traditions (with regional variants). Learning and performance experiences now happen not only physically but virtually (over the internet), and while many North Americans will automatically seek out possibilities in Scotland, others choose a North American option which may be not only geographically but also genealogically closer to them. While these divergent visions of Gaeldom sometimes coexist peacefully, conflicts around authenticity and authority can erupt when imported contemporary Scottish forms encounter vernacular forms practised in Gaelic-speaking immigrant communities, especially in Nova Scotia.

This chapter will provide an overview of the contrasting developments of selected Gaelic cultural expressions in Scotland and North

America, the settings and organisations in which these expressions have taken place and the history of contention which has surrounded them. Although this chapter is based partially on historical sources (texts and audio recordings) produced by people no longer living, it also draws from the author's experience as an observer and participant in Gaelic events in Scotland from 1992 to 1999 and in Nova Scotia from 2008 to 2013.

Institutions, Contexts and Cultures

The sophisticated secular institutions that supported elite Gaelic culture in Scotland were increasingly undermined from the early seventeenth century onwards and replaced by anglocentric ones controlled by the urban elite of the Scottish Lowlands or London by the late eighteenth century (Newton 2009). The pillar of vernacular Gaelic culture, the *céilidh* ('house-visit'), remained relatively resilient until the early twentieth century in both Scotland and Nova Scotia. The *céilidh* was important not just as a venue for sustaining the numerous mutually reinforcing and interpenetrating genres of vernacular culture but also as a means of maintaining communal solidarity and of mediating external stimuli.

> Storytelling, in its varied settings, has also functioned in a more practical way, serving as an effective means of affirming and maintaining distinctive cultural values, promoting social cohesion, situating the community and each individual within a larger Gaelic interior oral historical record, socialising children and teaching them about the world of adults, and maintaining the Gaelic intellectual life that had continued even after the aristocracy stopped supporting professional performers, some three centuries ago. In a culture that had only rarely received any support from formal institutions – and where physical punishment for speaking Gaelic in the schoolhouse is still recalled – oral performance in the language in an intensively supportive social context functioned as an effective antidote to cultural pressures from the English-speaking world and as a means of regularly affirming group identity while avoiding direct confrontation. (Shaw 2007: xvii)

Although native 'culture brokers' participated in the emergence of Highlandism and the repackaging of Gaelic culture for a non-Gaelic audience in Britain, these phenomena reflect the subordinate status of

Gaeldom and its corresponding inability to maintain its own cultural resources or participate equitably in its self-representation. It is commonly assumed that Highland Societies and Highland Games were established to preserve aspects of Highland culture but landed gentry orchestrated these organisations and events to enhance their own image as the natural leaders of Highland society, to project a romantic image of themselves and their estates, and to underscore their commitment to the British Empire by promoting a narrow role for Highlanders as loyal soldiers. Highland Games were crafted to highlight Highlanders as brawny rustics eager to win the approval of their superiors, to the exclusion of other cultural pursuits. In other words, these activities were part of a series of measures designed to transform selected elements of Highland tradition into palatable commodities agreeable to the tastes and fancies of the 'respectable' classes of British society, and to orient Gaels toward meeting the demands made of them by the British State and away from their development as a separate people (Jarvie 2005; Newton 2010).

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the anglophone elite, whose social status gave them *de facto* authority to define tradition and repurpose it according to their own agendas, compartmentalised cultural expressions extracted from Gaelic culture and assigned them to formal institutions. Their activities, informed by the norms and aesthetics of urban anglophone culture, inevitably decontextualised genres and broke the connectivity between them (as illustrated by case studies in the sections below). Of course, not all departures from tradition were due to such external impositions.

The Highland Society of Canada was founded in Glengarry in 1818 (Fairney 2010) and some form of Highland Games may have been held as early as 1836 in New York (Redmond 1971) but such institutions and activities did not become widespread or prominent in North America until after they were embraced by Queen Victoria. In other words, few Gaels who migrated to North America before the later nineteenth century had any acquaintance with Highland Games.

From the 1860s onwards, Highland Societies and Highland Games, and the associated pageantry and iconography, were imported to North America, waxing and waning according to social conditions. While no longer constrained by the British elite and their agendas in the 'New World' setting, they continued to act as conduits for new Scottish formulations of Highlandism and their proponents. Such developments

have resulted in the widespread misrepresentation of Gaelic culture in popular anglophone culture, and have also undermined the perception of the legitimacy of vernacular forms in their native communities: 'We need only look at the previous century to see that Gaeldom has been vulnerable to varieties of runaway cultural engineering which have deeply affected its concept of itself' (Shaw 2003: 46).

An Comunn Gàidhealach was founded in 1891 in Scotland. The organisation has a range of aims, including the teaching of Gaelic in schools, but since 1892 it has been best known for organising the Royal National Mòd. Modelled on the Welsh Eisteddfod, the Mòd consists of competitions of Gaelic song, poetry, music and dance, held at regional and national levels. An Comunn Gàidhealach was deliberately apolitical, compromising its ability to lobby on behalf of Gaelic and its native community from the outset (Hutchison 2005). In a bid for 'respectability', the Mòd adopted the

> musical tastes of polite drawing room society of the late Victorian age. The entire event was conducted through the medium of English, and the Mòd spared no effort in encouraging the adoption of quasi-operatic singing styles with pianoforte accompaniment or, occasionally, the accompaniment of the newly revived harp. (Kennedy 2002: 137)

The Mòd model was adopted by the Scottish Celtic Society of New York in 1893 and taken over by the Scottish Gaelic Society of New York, which held them until at least 1897. Discussion about creating a North American Mòd circulated in 1902 but came to naught (Newton 2003). The Vancouver Gaelic Society established a Mòd in 1934 which continued annually until 2007 and several other Mòds have been established around Canada and the US since the 1980s.

A. W. R. MacKenzie founded the Gaelic College in 1939 in Cape Breton, four years after emigrating from Scotland. Despite its name, the college's commitment to Gaelic and local traditions was weak; language instruction was offered but it tended to be a marginalised option until the late twentieth century.

> Unfortunately, MacKenzie had a very poor understanding of what those traditions were and was far more interested in the romantic, theatrical aspects of Highland culture that he had absorbed in his native Scotland. Through the 1940s, '50s and '60s, the College

> gradually turned away from the natural expression of Gaelic Culture found in Nova Scotia and toward imported stereotypes. The focus shifted from local Gaelic cultural development and education to attracting visitors to a romanticized presentation of a largely imaginary Highland culture. (Kennedy 2002: 247)

The Gaelic College formed a Mòd on the Scottish model; some Gaels were supportive of this effort to raise the profile of and support for Gaelic (Dembling 1997) but the imported musical forms did not find fertile ground (Kennedy 2002; Sparling 2011).

The ideological landscape for minority languages such as Gaelic has improved with the gradual loosening of the anglocentric hegemony and appreciation for multi-culturalism and multi-lingualism but only after the core Gaelic community in Nova Scotia has reached a critical state. There are positive signs of renewal, albeit on a small scale. The Office of Gaelic Affairs (in Nova Scotia) was established in 2006, the first governmental office to support the language in North America. In 2011 the Gaelic College came under new management with greater dedication to Gaelic than in the past, although proposed changes to the curriculum have stirred controversy (as discussed below).

Language

As a disenfranchised minority subsumed within assimilationist states, Gaelic has survived best in the most self-sufficient communities at the furthest remove from official institutions. In Scotland, the islands of the Outer Hebrides and the associated dialects of Lewis, Harris, the Uists, Barra and Skye (as well as Islay, Tiree and Lismore of the Southern Hebrides) have fared best to the present. A majority of those employed in the infrastructure for developing Gaelic which has emerged since the 1990s – primarily Gaelic-medium education and mass media (BBC Radio nan Gàidheal and BBC Alba) – come from just a few regions of the Outer Hebrides. Gaelic revitalisation has made significant strides across Scotland but there are concerns that register and dialect variations are being displaced by a pan-dialectical form of the language (Lamb 2011).

Gaelic died as a community language in the Carolinas in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century; in Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Glengarry County (Ontario), Bruce County (Ontario) and the Eastern Townships of Quebec it seems to have given way

to English during the first half of the twentieth century. The conclusions of Lori Cox's 1994 article are specific to Cape Breton, but formal institutions have played a similar linguicidal role in many communities:

> Gaelic in the Cape Breton schools has been discouraged on three different levels: exclusion of the language as a medium of communication; exclusion from the curriculum of both the language and the culture which it embodied; and, in taking these actions, transmission of negative attitudes concerning the value and usefulness of the language and culture to the community at large. Without doubt, negative attitudes like these have been entirely responsible for the shift to English in the last fifty or sixty years. (Cox 1994: 36)

Intergenerational transmission of Gaelic in Nova Scotia plummeted sharply in the late nineteenth century (Dunn 1991; Dembling 2006), causing mainland dialects to become effectively extinct in the 1980s (Campbell 1999), but a small number of native Gaelic speakers in Cape Breton still exist.

The high proportion of Catholic emigration from regions such as Lochaber and Western Inverness-shire to Nova Scotia was one factor which produced a range of dialects unlike those now remaining in Scotland; in fact, some are effectively extinct in Scotland. While dialectical differences do not cause serious communication barriers for fluent speakers, they can be a source of confusion and frustration for learners. As in Scotland, how to negotiate the desire to maintain local distinctiveness and the need to facilitate wider communication in Gaelic is an unresolved issue.

Although Nova Scotian dialects are derived from specific communities in Scotland, some features have spread beyond their original usages. The best example of this is the *glug Eigeach*, a broad L which is pronounced as [w] (Watson 2010). On top of intrinsically divergent trajectories, Gaelic dialects are subject to influences of lexicon and idiom from the different varieties of English spoken in Scotland and North America, engendering further mutual departures (Campbell 1936).

Gaelic literacy may have been more common in previous generations than many now realise, despite its neglect in formal education (Dunn 1991; MacLellan 2000; Nilsen 2002). The creation of Gaelic resources is instrumental for the modern revitalisation of the

language and culture but orthography is an additional complication in the interface with Scotland. The reform of Gaelic spelling conventions was initiated in 1976 and the first recommendations for Gaelic Orthographical Conventions (GOC) were published in 1981. Despite some protests, educational and publishing authorities in Scotland have adopted and require the use of a narrow interpretation of them (Black 2010).

Writers in Nova Scotia, by contrast, have continued to use a more conservative orthography that, among other things, preserves important vowel distinctions. Sìol Cultural Enterprises has been prolifically publishing new books and revised editions of older material as well as reprinting books long out of print. The University of Cape Breton Press has printed several Gaelic volumes and is planning several more. Nova Scotian enterprises are under pressure to adopt GOC, given that grants from Scottish funding agencies and acceptance in the Scottish market require it.

Literacy is a low priority for many adult Gaelic learners in Nova Scotia, however. In 2004 Scottish language activist and leader Fionnlagh MacLeòid visited the province and initiated 'Total Immersion Plus', an informal, conversational approach to teaching Gaelic conducted in homes. This has encouraged the participation of community members at a grassroots level, usually concentrating on local dialects. The more intensive *Bun is Bàrr* master–apprentice programme was initiated in 2011, modelled after a method for revitalising Native American languages (Hinton 2001) created by University of California at Berkeley linguistics professor Leanne Hinton, who visited that year.

Adult learners of Gaelic are not confined to vestiges of immigrant communities. An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach (ACGA) was established in 1981 by Dr Ian Cameron, a native of Kingussie, Scotland. ACGA began in the greater Washington, DC area but it acts as an umbrella organisation for local initiatives all over North America. It holds an annual immersion weekend which features Gaelic teachers from Scotland and Nova Scotia, and an annual Mòd judged by the winners of the previous year's Royal National Mòd in Scotland. One of the most dynamic Gaelic organisations is Slighe nan Gàidheal of Seattle, Washington, which holds regular immersion weekends and a biennial gathering that spotlights tradition-bearers from Scotland and Nova Scotia (Newton 2005). The Atlantic Gaelic Academy was founded in Nova Scotia in 2007 but holds online classes for students around the world.

Song

The Gaelic song traditions of North America remain under-researched, although field recordings exist in many archives (Nilsen 2000; Conn 2012). Immigrant communities, regardless of their location, were never completely disconnected from developments in Scotland: songs composed in Scotland in the late nineteenth century (such as those by Màiri Mhór nan Òran and Niall MacLeòid) can be found on 1914 studio recordings of Duncan Angus MacRae of Glengarry, Ontario, in Helen Creighton's recordings from Cape Breton (between the 1940s and 1960s) and in Sidney Robertson Cowell's fieldwork in the San Francisco area from 1938 to 1940. While printed books and periodicals may account for some of these importations, travel and human contact must have been more consequential (MacLellan 2000). Some themes, subjects and motifs may have resonated more strongly in some locales (or particular audiences within locales) than others but there were no impermeable boundaries preventing the sharing of songs and styles between regions, however far-flung.

Traditional Gaelic singers are knowledgeable about the origins of the songs they sing and make distinctions between 'old-country' songs (originally composed in Scotland) and local songs. Nova Scotian communities have been important repositories for tradition originating in Scottish regions which have been despoiled by depopulation or language loss (particularly those of the mainland or Inner Hebrides). There is little evidence, however, that repertoires diverged until very recently in more robust communities, such as those in the Outer Hebrides, as John Lorne Campbell observed:

> There were quite a few old songs our Cape Breton friends sang to us that we had not heard at home; but on going through them with my Barra friends, I find that most of them had heard them at some time or another. There were some songs of which the better versions came from Cape Breton and others of which the Old Country versions were better. (Campbell 1999: 26)

Old-country songs were not preserved in aspic but have been subject to the 'domesticating' influences of the immigrant context. A choral song in praise of Ailean Mùideartach composed no later than 1715 and transcribed in the Hebrides in the mid-nineteenth century, for example, contains twenty-six lines and is purely aristocratic in orientation (Newton 2009). A variation recorded in Cape Breton in

1975 contains a lengthy ten-line interpolation about a man's sweetheart leaving him for another, mentioning her linen apron, hair and ribbons (MacLellan 2000). While instances of conservatism of the Gaelic repertoire of Nova Scotia can be cited, revisions such as these demonstrate a living tradition adjusting itself to a new environment.

Gaelic songs belong to different genres with distinct origins, literary registers, social associations and functions (Newton 2009). The range of active genres and the size of individual repertoires of Gaelic singers in Scotland diminished during the twentieth century (MacInnes 2006): in general, the high-register songs of elite origin (especially those in the *dàn* and *iorram* metres) have given way to lower-register choral and/or lyrical songs of popular origin with a greater emphasis on musical form than literary content.[1] This shift is at least in part due to the linguistic demands of high-register songs and changes in musical, literary and social fashions.

High-register song genres have also weakened in Cape Breton for similar reasons (MacLellan 2000; Sparling 2005). The *céilidh* has survived in Scotland, albeit in modified form, but the *luadh* 'milling frolic' is now the primary social context for the sharing of songs in Nova Scotia, a transition facilitated by the inclusion of men in a previously female practice (Sparling 2005, 2011; Conn 2012):

> Cape Breton Gaelic culture is defined both in relation and in opposition to Scottish Gaelic culture. Thus, Cape Breton Gaels conceive of milling frolics as related to and evolved from Scottish waulkings while taking pride in the uniqueness of their milling practices. (Sparling 2005: 200–1)

Some compositions that did not originate as milling songs have been altered to fit the milling style. The strong preference for the 'lift' associated with social dance music has also affected song aesthetics in Nova Scotia (MacLellan 2000; Sparling 2005).

Instrumental Music

Highland bagpipe tradition emerged in the ranks of the Gaelic professional classes and in the context of Gaelic music and song traditions (MacDonald 1995; Cheape 2009; Newton 2009). It was later co-opted by the British military and bagpiping organisations which imposed new standards in the training of bagpipers and the judging of competitions (Gibson 1998; Donaldson 2000), effecting a shift away

from Gaelic musical aesthetics and aural transmission to an intentionally obfuscated and anglicised musical style and written notation. Although the older Gaelic form survived in some enclaves into the mid-nineteenth century and beyond, it was increasingly marginalised by the 'improvers' whose social clout enabled them to define musical standards as they saw fit. As Donaldson notes,

> The commentators who shaped the official view came from a highly but conventionally educated professional elite so deeply conditioned by 'modern' society that they assumed its cultural conventions to be axiomatic. They knew little of oral transmission or what it might imply, and failed to appreciate that the simultaneous co-existence of multiple variants might be a normal and healthy condition. They interpreted it as a sign of disintegration and decay, and concluded – quite wrongly – that the tradition was at risk and that they must intervene to preserve it. (Donaldson 2000: 463–4)

Bagpipers trained in the non-Gaelic style began encroaching on the aesthetics of Gaelic immigrant communities, even in rural Nova Scotia, by the late nineteenth century, especially as teachers of young bagpipers and judges at Highland Games competitions (Kennedy 2002; Shears 2008):

> Scottish pipers (mostly from the Lowlands) trained in the new non-Gaelic style began to appear with surprising consistency in Canada, including Nova Scotia. They were granted almost instant authority over piping matters virtually from their first arrival in the province. (Kennedy 2002: 176)

Ironically enough, the Gaelic College itself promoted the non-Gaelic style. The most (in)famous imported 'authority' was Seumas MacNeill of the Glasgow College of Piping, whose misconceptions still mislead the unwary (Kennedy 2002; Shears 2008). Although traditional Gaelic bagpiping more or less came to an end in Nova Scotia in the middle of the twentieth century, some pipers are now working to reconstruct it.

Cape Breton is renowned for its fiddle music. It is often portrayed as a relic of the eighteenth century, uncorrupted by modern external influences (Dembling 2005; Herdman 2008), but such claims ignore hybridisation before and after emigration. The fiddle and associated

social dance music were brought to the Highlands in the late seventeenth century during an era of cultural flux and evolved in tandem, and interacted, with related musical forms in other parts of Western Europe (Dunlay 1992; Newton forthcoming). *Puirt-á-beul* (mouth music) was the response to this new musical stimulus, a reflection of the assimilation of Gaelic speech rhythms within instrumental dance music. Other genres of Gaelic song were transferred to the fiddle, although some musicians disdained the new instrument (Newton 2009). As the fiddle music tradition has been intertwined with other aspects of Gaelic culture, including song and speech, it is little wonder that Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia have strong opinions about the impact of the loss of the language on the fiddle style (Shaw 1992–3; Kennedy 2002; Graham 2006).

Traditional Scottish fiddlers were not recorded until the 1930s – over a century after the earliest immigration to Nova Scotia and after many changes had already occurred – so it is not possible to have a detailed understanding of early Highland fiddle tradition. Puritanical religious attitudes in the Highlands attenuated dance and dance music traditions in the later nineteenth century and musical 'improvers' such as James 'Scott' Skinner (1843–1927) altered dominant styles (Dunlay 1992; Kennedy 2002), leading some to doubt if a distinctive and continuous Highland fiddle style has survived in Scotland.

Although rural Nova Scotia enjoyed some isolation from outside influences, there is evidence of innovation and hybridity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Gaels travelled between home and New England, bought and played commercial records, began using written musical notation, embraced the tunes of Skinner (and his peers), and introduced jigs into the fiddle repertoire (Graham 2006; Herdman 2008; MacKinnon 2009). The keyboard – first the organ and then the piano – began to accompany fiddle music in the early twentieth century (Kennedy 2002; Graham 2006; MacKinnon 2009). The piano technique must owe something to contemporary American music, especially 'stride piano', a bouncy Afro-American style popular on the east coast in the 1920s and 1930s.

In short, social dance music has been cultivated by fiddlers in a continuous line of evolution in Gaelic immigrant communities in eastern Nova Scotia from the era of emigration to the present, largely in line with Gaelic musical aesthetics and the requirements of dancers but incorporating many external stimuli.

Dance

The French court was the dynamic innovating centre for elite fashion in late medieval and early modern Europe, not least where dance was concerned. The Scottish court was closely connected with and influenced by the French court, and over the course of three centuries French dance forms were transferred to Scotland, including Gaelic regions, displacing the medieval forms that had existed previously (Newton 2009, forthcoming).[2] Probably the first French dance style to impact Scotland was the *hay d'Alemaigne*, which arrived in England and Scotland around 1500. It came to be known as the 'reel' in Scotland and was the most popular form of social dance (in many variations) in many Scottish communities into the early twentieth century (Flett and Flett 1972).

By the early eighteenth century, French-trained dancing masters were teaching French dance fashions, as well as manners, etiquette and the French language, to those who aspired to ascend the social ladder. Along with the dances themselves came music, played on portable fiddles brought into the Highlands in the late seventeenth century, often played by the dancing master. By the mid-eighteenth century, dancing masters had established themselves in virtually all the major towns of the British Isles and made at least passing visits to smaller villages, even in the Highlands. One of their new specialities was choreographed solo dance stressing agile and exact foot and leg movement (Flett and Flett 1996; Newton forthcoming).

In nineteenth-century Scotland, these choreographed dances were increasingly subsumed within Highland Games as standardised athletic competitions. The Maclennan brothers of Fairburn, Ross-shire, were instrumental in this process; William studied ballet in Paris and Rome, and Donald, who called himself the 'Professor of Dancing', studied ballet in London. Complaints about changes to dances recur throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The appropriation of Highland Dance tradition by non-Gaels was complete in 1925 when the Scottish Pipers' Society met in Edinburgh to regulate the dance form. The resulting dance form – regulated, ossified, freed of local variations, limited to performance or competition – is the antithesis of the vernacular folk dance, although pseudo-historical tales have been fabricated to validate its authenticity (Kennedy 2002; Newton 2012).

Gaelic dancing masters were among immigrants to Nova Scotia and some formal dance schools survived into the early twentieth century

(Kennedy 2002; Melin 2012). In general, however, formal choreographic structures were broken down and modern step-dance is the result of vernacularising the component parts. Wooden floors and hard shoes, luxuries beyond the reach of most Gaels in Scotland, facilitated the genre as well (Newton 2009; Melin 2012). Some steps have been borrowed from dances in North American popular culture: twisting leg movements, for example, were taken from the Charleston, the first international dance fad (1926–7). Popular tap dancers (such as Gene Kelly and Shirley Temple) in Hollywood films also inspired steps.

In the early 1900s, Nova Scotians returning home from New England introduced 'square sets' and these quickly took the place of the reel as the most popular form of social dance. Square sets were 'Gaelicised' as travelling steps were adopted from step-dance and traditional musicians accompanied the dancing – although jig tunes had to be imported or composed to suit them (Kennedy 2002).

Contrary to popular belief, Gaelic dance traditions of Cape Breton are more innovative than conservative (no currently popular forms pre-date the later eighteenth century) and have absorbed much North American influence. Regardless, the common roots of Irish and Scottish step-dance from the French dancing masters in the late eighteenth century on Gaelic soil has caused some modern observers to believe that Cape Breton step-dance was borrowed directly from Acadian or Irish neighbours in North America (Graham 2006; Kennedy 2002; Melin 2012). As absurd was the lament of the founder of the Gaelic College that immigrant communities had allowed Highland Dancing to die out. MacKenzie immediately set about hiring teachers to 'revive' the 'lost' art, leading to resentments which smoulder to the present (Kennedy 2002; Shears 2008).

Conclusions

This chapter has briefly surveyed some of the most celebrated forms of Gaelic cultural expression and their divergence from the homeland in the diaspora. Some changes, such as the spread of dialect features and the accentuated 'swing' in the Nova Scotia song style, are due to processes entirely internal to Gaelic communities; some changes, such as the holding of Mòds, the replacement of reels with square sets, the formation of step-dance, the integration of the piano in social dance music and the narrowing of Gaelic song genres, represent the community's response to external factors; other changes, such as the replacement of Gaelic bagpiping by non-Gaelic forms and the prominence of

Highland Dancing, indicate the imposition of external standards on Gaelic communities, especially via Highland Games. Divergent developments in Scottish Gaeldom itself can be seen as parallel processes of conservation, hybridity and assimilation.

Although Gaelic cultural expressions could be found in communities scattered across North America at the beginning of the twentieth century, the hegemonic pressures of anglo-conformity have taken their toll over the last few generations and Nova Scotia is now the only region in which they can still be found as integrated aspects of a folk culture. The strong and enduring sense of belonging, and the embedded social networks through which knowledge and skills have been transmitted and embodied, allow Nova Scotia to offer a diasporic Gàidhealtachd to which many families feel as attached as others do to Scotland.

Nova Scotia's traditions, especially fiddle music, have enjoyed widespread popularity since the 1990s. Performers and tradition-bearers from the province now have a salient presence at events in Scotland and North America and are usually perceived as having as much legitimacy as their Scottish counterparts, if not more. In the wake of many attempts to correct the presumed error of their ways, however, Nova Scotian Gaels have become wary of 'experts' making pronouncements about the quality or authenticity of their vernacular cultural expressions. Misguided notions of authenticity and a lack of familiarity with the development of Gaelic cultural forms have allowed differences between modern Scottish and Nova Scotian traditions to be misinterpreted as archaisms or as foreign borrowings. A knowledge of the Gaelic language and of the wider body of tradition is needed to understand the origins, meanings and functions of the cultural expressions of Gaelic communities, native Gaelic aesthetics and the means by which Gaels have negotiated between their inherited repertoire and the creative possibilities offered in North America.

The vernacular cultural expressions of Gaelic communities in Nova Scotia are not stuck in a 'deep freeze' that allows them to be restored to Scotland, but are local variants of a region which has constantly evolved under its own sets of influences. The recent movement to 'repatriate' fiddle and dance tradition to Scotland on the assumption that they are emigration-era fossils is naive at best; the most extreme interpretation is that 'non-Gaels are using Canadian Gaels to tell Scottish Gaels how to be Gaelic' (Dembling 2005: 191).

There are renewed efforts in Scotland to reclaim and reassert the Gaelic language and culture after centuries of repression

and stigmatisation. Universities and cultural organisations draw American and Canadian students who want to learn about, participate in and contribute to Gaeldom in the 'Old Country'. Despite this, the many millions of North Americans who have Gaelic-speaking ancestors and the groups teaching and promoting Gaelic, some Scottish diplomats have shown surprising ignorance about and even disdain for the language.

At the same time, Gaelic institutions in Nova Scotia are being reinvigorated and are also wooing the descendants of the Highland diaspora. On 23 November 2012 the Gaelic College in St Ann's, Nova Scotia, unveiled a strategic plan to rededicate itself to the Gaelic language and the vernacular cultural expressions of the region. This commitment is not appreciated by all, however. In response to the possibility that some subjects might be discontinued, the president of the Federation for Scottish Culture in Nova Scotia is quoted as remarking,

> There is an isolationist element in the Gaelic community that is disavowing cultural traditions like Highland dance and competitive piping that borders almost on xenophobia. We are one people with one common culture and, while it's important to focus on language, it shouldn't come at the cost of Highland dance or piping. (Macintyre 2011)

Such basic misunderstandings of the complex relationships between Gaeldom and Scotland, and the denial of the cultural sovereignty of the Gaelic community, on the part of those who claim authority to define and represent it is troubling but fits a long-standing pattern. Other similar reactions suggest that immigrant communities will continue to be challenged over the legitimacy of their cultural expressions.

Scotland and Nova Scotia offer differing visions of Gaelic culture that appeal to different audiences: Nova Scotia is in North America, presents a (real or imagined) rural, egalitarian, pioneer ideal, and has in fact absorbed many modern influences from Anglo-American popular culture; Scotland, by contrast, has many visible layers of European civilisation (Neolithic monuments, medieval castles and so on), is still strongly affected by the legacy of the aristocracy and is directly influenced by European issues and concerns. Gaelic is currently buoyed by a nation-building exercise in Scotland, providing a social rationale not ideologically feasible in former British colonies. These distinctions

may consciously or unconsciously influence where North Americans choose to go to learn about and experience Gaelic culture as much as any claimed notions of tradition or authenticity. Geographical and genealogical proximity, however, may also prove to be prevailing factors.

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