

# The Ear of the Beholder: John Mackenzie of *The Beauties*

RONALD BLACK

The primary purpose of this article is to present what is known of the life of the celebrated Gaelic anthologist John Mackenzie (1806–48). Within each section of the life, the opportunity is taken to assess the nature and importance of the work produced in that period. The section ‘Gairloch and Skye: birth, early years and character’ provides the basis for certain judgements relating to Mackenzie’s personality that arise from his works. The last section of the article proper is devoted to his legacy, including the American edition of *Sàr Obair*. Following this is an appendix in which Mackenzie’s thirty-three publications are listed.

*Sar-Obair nam Bàrd Gaelach; or The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry, and Lives of the Highland Bards*, first published in 1841, is probably the most influential secular work ever printed in Gaelic. Singers adjusted their songs to match its texts, storytellers their stories to match its ‘lives’ (Bennett 1989: 60; Gillies 2000: 55). It is ironic, then, that the life of the man so often referred to as ‘John Mackenzie of *The Beauties*’ is much less well known. He is not seen as another *Caraid nan Gaidheal* (‘Friend of the Gael’), even though he helped bring before the public the work of the man upon whom that most honourable of nicknames was bestowed. Despite the unique nature of his contribution he is not mentioned in the same breath as those other towering Victorian pioneers, John Francis Campbell and Alexander Carmichael. In fact, although he was born and died in the nineteenth century and *Sàr Obair* was first published four years after Queen Victoria came to the throne, he is scarcely thought of as a nineteenth-century figure at all.

There are, I think, two reasons for this. One is that his life was cut short – instead of living to become a patriarch of Gaelic scholarship in the era of the Crofters’ War and the campaign for the Celtic Chair, in the way that Carmichael became the doyen of Edinburgh Gaels in the years around 1900, Mackenzie died rather miserably at the age of 42. The other is that he was an individualist and a rebel. He never subscribed to what became the archetypal Victorian ideals of Bible-based morality, imperialism, thrift and free trade. The only Victorian virtue to which he laid claim was hard work, and it killed him. On the other hand, as a believer in Jacobitism and liberal values, he would have been at home in the eighteenth century, and as a man who took enormous pride in Gaelic literature he would have been at home in the twentieth.

The biographer of John Mackenzie has two main sources. One is his own publications – far from being a man of one book, he was a man of thirty – and also therefore those works, notably Maclean 1915 and Ferguson and Matheson 1984, through which his publications may be accessed. The other is a substantial memoir published in 1877 by a relative of his own, the redoubtable Alexander Mackenzie (1838–98), historian and genealogist, editor and printer of *The Celtic Magazine*. As our memorialist shared a common surname with his subject I will refer to him, and to his memoir, as Clach (short for Clachnacuddin), the nickname by which he was universally known in Inverness. A corrected version of the first half of the memoir was published thirteen years after Clach’s death, presumably having been found among his papers (Mackenzie 1911); it

was followed in due course by a Gaelic version of the entire piece (MacLeòid 1934–35), then by a more thoughtful Gaelic reassessment in which some significant new material was introduced (Murchison 1947–48). There is also an English summary of this (Murchison 1956). Where no source is cited in what follows, however, it is to be understood that my information comes from Clach – Mackenzie 1877, occasionally as corrected in Mackenzie 1911.

### **Gairloch and Skye: birth, early years and character**

John Mackenzie, Iain Alastair Òig, was born 17 July 1806 at Mellon Charles (*Meallan Theàrlaich*) in the parish of Gairloch. He was *Iain, mac Alastair Òig, mhic Iain Òig, mhic Iain Mhóir, mhic Alastair, mhic Alastair Chaim, mhic Alastair Bhric Tighearna Gheàrrloch*. His great-great-great-grandfather, Alastair Cam, was fourth son of Alexander, fifth Mackenzie of Gairloch. Of Alastair Cam, who received his epithet from having lost an eye fighting for King Charles at Worcester in 1651, Alexander Mackenzie tells us in his *History of the Clan Mackenzie* (1879: 329):

His descendants are still well known in Gairloch as “Sliochd Alastair Chàim,” or the descendants of Alexander the One-eyed, one of them being the late John Mackenzie of the “Beauties of Gaelic Poetry,” who was fifth in legitimate male descent; as also the Author of this History, who is, both on the male and female side, sixth in succession.

John’s mother was Margaret, daughter of Alexander Mackenzie of Badachro by his wife Janet, who was a daughter of the Rev. James Robertson of Lochbroom (c.1701–76) by his wife Mary (or Janet), who was a daughter of Murdoch Mackenzie of Letterewe (Mackenzie 1879: 358; Mackenzie 1911: 162). The Badachro family were also a near offshoot of the Mackenzies of Gairloch, so Clach was able to say of John as of himself (p. 201) that he ‘was as closely connected with the parent tree on the one side as on the other’.

John’s grandfather Iain Òg was one of seven brothers known as *Clann Iain Mhóir*, described by Clach as ‘the most powerful men in Gairloch in their day’ (Mackenzie 1879: end-paper). He had a tack of all the lands on the north side of Loch Ewe that belonged to the lairds of Gairloch, but appears to have spent a good deal of his time on one of his remotest farms, Loch a Druing. As a drover, he bought cattle between Poolewe and Little Loch Broom for sale at the Crieff and Falkirk markets. John’s brother James recalled him as ‘an old Hielan’ man, with his blue bonnet and old Hielan’ coat’ (Dixon 1886: 206). Of his wife Janet (Jessie), a daughter of Miles Macrae, Osgood Mackenzie tells the following story (1980: 186–87):

The best-known Gairloch fairy of modern times went by the name of the Gille Dubh of Loch a Druing. How often did I hear of him when I was a boy! His haunts were in the birch-woods that still cluster round the southern end of that loch and extend up the sides of the high ridge to the west. There are grassy glades, dense thickets, and rocky fastnesses in these woods that look just the very place for fairies. Loch a Druing is on the north point, about two miles from the present Rudha Reidh lighthouse.

The Gille Dubh was so named from the black colour of his hair. His dress, if dress it could be called, was merely leaves of trees and green moss. He was seen by very many people and on many occasions during a period of more than forty years in the

latter half of the eighteenth century. He was, in fact, well known to the people, and was generally regarded as a beneficent fairy.

He never spoke to anyone except to a little girl called Jessie Macrae, whose home was at Loch a Druing. She was lost in the woods one summer night. The Gille Dubh came to her, treated her with great kindness, and took her safely home again next morning. When Jessie grew up she became the wife of John Mackenzie, tenant of Loch a Druing farm, and grandfather of the famous John Mackenzie who collected and edited the *Beauties of Gaelic Poetry*.

It was after this that Sir Hector Mackenzie of Gairloch invited Sir George Mackenzie of Coul, Mackenzie of Dundonnell, Mackenzie of Letterewe, and Mackenzie of Kernsary, to join him in an expedition to repress the Gille Dubh. These five lairds repaired to Loch a Druing armed with guns, with which they hoped to shoot the fairy. Most of them wore the Highland dress, with dirks at their side.

They were hospitably entertained by John Mackenzie, the tenant. An ample supper was served in the house. It included both beef and mutton, and they had to use their dirks for knives and forks, as such things were very uncommon in Gairloch in those days. They spent the night at Loch a Druing, and slept in John Mackenzie's barn, where couches of heather were prepared for them. They went all through the woods, but they saw nothing of the Gille Dubh!

Recent research suggests that the Gille Dubh is likely to have been an unfortunate human being suffering from certain mental and physical disabilities – some such condition as PKU, homocystinuria, progeria, dwarfism, or, most likely of all perhaps, one of the mucopolysaccharidosis syndromes – who had been left to fend for himself in the wild (Eberly 1997: 239–45, see Black 2005: liii–liv). Further detail is to be found in Campbell of Islay's manuscripts. His father was said to have been a man from Assynt called Mac an Air, and the circumstances in which Jessie encountered him were as follows. Her father, who lived in Sand (*Sannnda*), took his cattle every summer to the shielings around Loch a Druing. One of the cows went missing, and his wife went to look for it. There was no sign of her coming back, so a servant girl nicknamed *an Coisiche Mór* ('the Big Walker') took off after her. Being left alone, little Jessie promptly went to look for them both. Soon she was lost in the woods (Campbell 1940: 480):

Thachair an Gille Dubh rithe le currachd mór chóinntich, air a ceangal le crios luachrach mu a cheann. Lion e a h-uchd làn de lusan, agus thuir e rithe gun robh a màthair agus an Coisiche air dol dachaidh leis a' bhoin. An sin chuir e air an rathad dachaidh i gu sàbhailt.

("She met the Gille Dubh wearing a great headdress of moss tied around his head with a belt of rushes. He filled her lap full of plants, and told her that her mother and the 'Walker' had gone home with the cow. Then he set her safely on her way home.")

Alastair Òg inherited his father's tack. As was the custom, he sub-let some of the best farming ground, *Meallan Theàrlaich*, in small crofts. Although he had the lion's share of the land, all he

himself paid in rent was fourpence, exacted by Sir Hector Mackenzie for the sole purpose of preserving his rights of superiority, the vast bulk of the rent being paid direct by the crofters to the laird. Despite this huge advantage, as Clach expressed it (p. 202), ‘Alastair Og’s unbounded hospitality, and the style of living then fashionable among the better class of tenants, reduced him in circumstances so much, and the land was so neglected, that the laird was ultimately obliged to take the latter into his own hands, with the exception of a small portion which was left in the possession of Mackenzie, free of any rent in future, on condition that he would pay up some trifling arrears’.

Judging from the ‘Genealogy of the Author’ tipped in at the end of the *History of the Clan Mackenzie*, Alastair Òg and his wife Margaret had two sons, James and John (in that order), and several daughters. The impression conveyed by the table that James was older than John is contradicted both by Clach himself, who says (p. 201) that John, born 1806, was the eldest son, and by J. H. Dixon (see below). We know the name of only one of their sisters, Mary; James and Mary survived at least to 1886, for both were still living when Dixon published his classic work *Gairloch* in that year. Dixon devotes an entire chapter to James’s stories (in English only), introducing him like this (1886: 201):

The following stories have been related to me by James Mackenzie of Kirkton, along with many traditions and facts embodied in other parts of this book. James Mackenzie is an enthusiastic lover of family history and local folk-lore, and whilst disowning superstitious fancies is quite alive to the charms of romance . . .

James Mackenzie was born in 1808, and consequently remembers several of the bards and pipers already mentioned. His elder brother was John Mackenzie, so celebrated amongst Gaelic speakers as the compiler of the “Beauties of Gaelic Poetry,” and James shared with his brother the fund of old stories which, in the days of their youth, they loved to listen to at the “ceilidh,” or social meetings, then so generally held during the long winter nights.

James Mackenzie, who is a direct descendant in the sixth generation from Alastair Breac, fifth laird of Gairloch, has been a sailor during much of his life, and still affects the blue neckerchief and dark serge clothes of the sea-faring man, topped with a Highland bonnet of the Prince Charlie type. He is short in stature, and has very expressive features. He has the true Highland *esprit*, combined with refined courtesy and faithful attachment to his chief,—qualities which many think are destined soon to become extinct.

When education in the Highlands consisted in equal parts of a good ceilidh-house and a good school it was superb. In the brothers’ case it was arguably better still, for there were three elements – while Dixon speaks of the ceilidh-house, Clach speaks (p. 202) of not only school but tutors. Alastair Òg was so anxious for his children to be educated that he got the services first of a young man called William Falconer, son of the gardener at Brahan Castle, and then of Donald Dunbar, from Tain, as family tutors. When they were a little older John and James were sent to school at Isle of Ewe, and finally to the parish school of Gairloch – eighteen miles from home, but ‘then, as now, a well conducted school’.

Magnus Maclean claimed (1902: 356), wrongly in T. M. Murchison's opinion (1947–48: 126), that John went on to Tain Academy. One way or the other, the result was a mind filled with the matter of the ceildh-house and supplied with the means to process it into the written word. Almost from childhood he took a great delight in reading everything within his reach, and he himself tells us (Mackenzie 1841: iii\*):

I had frequent opportunities of witnessing the influence of poetry over the mind, and uniformly found, that cheerfulness and song, music and morality, walked almost always, hand in hand. Thus nurtured, and thus tutored, the intrinsic excellence of the poetry which I was accustomed to hear in my younger days, made such an impression on my mind, that neither time, distance, nor circumstances, have been able to obliterate. I was therefore bred with an enthusiasm which impelled me, as I advanced in life, to dig deeper and deeper into the invaluable mine.

He had a good ear for more than language and poetry. As a boy he showed an extraordinary aptitude for music, and made musical instruments, as well as all sorts of wooden ornaments and utensils, with no other tool than his pocket-knife. When still a child he made himself a fiddle, and later produced a set of bagpipes, on which Clach says he became 'an excellent performer', correcting this later (Mackenzie 1911: 163) to 'a fairly good performer'. He could also play the flute and several other musical instruments. Murchison claims (1947–48: 126) that he could play the piano, and Clach adds (p. 202): 'He collected and wrote down several popular Highland airs, as yet unpublished, but of which the manuscript is still extant.'

Noticing his talent for woodworking, John's parents got him apprenticed to an itinerant joiner called William Ross. If Magnus Maclean is to be believed (1902: 356), his workshop was in Dingwall. Travelling around the countryside gave John a perfect opportunity for noting down Gaelic songs and tales, which he found more congenial than acquiring the humdrum skills of his trade.

In the summer or autumn of 1823, when seventeen years old, John was one of a number of artisans and labourers building an extension to Gairloch manse (Murchison 1947–48: 126). The minister at the time was the Rev. James Russell (Dixon 1886: 68, 70–71). Among the masons was none other than Hugh Miller from Cromarty, four years John's senior, who in 1854 published an account of his sojourn (1993: 236–78). It is unfortunate that Miller chose to make no mention of the young carpenter's apprentice or of the event which would change his life so utterly – John fell off a wall that was being built and sustained a blow on the head which left him unable to work. After a while he recovered and went to Conon Bridge to complete his apprenticeship with a joiner there, but it turned out, says Clach (p. 203), that the injury 'was of such a permanent nature as quite unfitted him to follow the profession any further'.

With few regrets, Iain Alastair Òig laid aside his hammer and saw forever. Of the precise medical grounds for his inability to function as a tradesman we know nothing. Did the injury affect his eyesight? His balance? His personality? That he behaved strangely or aggressively at times is not in doubt, and I consulted a medical friend, Dr Christopher Cameron, Kelso, on this point. He replied that by far the most common sequel to head injury is not personality change but (secondary) post-traumatic epilepsy, which he has seen several times. However, he pointed out

that eyesight can be damaged, either by frontal/facial injury or by trauma to the occipital lobes at the back of the brain, where the visual cortex is situated; balance can also be disturbed. In addition he states (e-mail, 28 February 2003):

I have sounded out a psychiatric ex-colleague on the question of the possible relationship of personality/character change to preceding head-injury . . . My colleague confirms that the site of head-injury most likely to cause emotional and personality change is one or other of the two frontal lobes of the brain – about whose role in brain activity little is known save that it seems to be involved particularly in imparting qualities of ‘human-ness’ to the field of human relationships, particularly qualities like empathy and understanding of the emotions of others . . . The frontal lobes are . . . the ‘quiet’ areas of the brain, whose functions are only hinted at when damaged.

Clach offers two anecdotes (pp. 208–10) which demonstrate that John’s personality was a curious mixture of the clever and the peculiar.

John, when only nineteen years of age, played a trick on a half simpleton of the name of John Fraser, which will illustrate his good-natured, mischievous disposition. A man, by name Macrae, borrowed a horse from Patrick Morrison, Kernsary, for the purpose of sending oysters from Poolewe to the south, and while returning home with the animal, it died at the end of Inverewe barn. The boys in the district teased poor Fraser, and charged him with having eaten part of the horse. At the time, Macleod of Macleod, of Dunvegan Castle, and his son, were fishing on the River Ewe, and Fraser, who was an inveterate snuffer, thought that he might get a few coppers from these gentlemen to buy snuff with, if he could secure a good introduction to them. With this object he called on Mackenzie, who was even then considered, in his own peculiar way, a very clever young man, who could do anything in the way of writing. He at once consented, and wrote out the following introduction to Macleod, with which the simple Fraser went away perfectly delighted:—

*I am the beast that ate the horse—  
Excuse me if you can—  
I ate it all except a bit  
I left to make a ham.*

*Macleod, he promised me a goat  
If I would go to Skye,  
With the carcass of the brute,  
To make the rooks to cry.*

Macleod perused the document, laughed heartily, asked Fraser to give him the precious production, and handed him half-a-crown.

That must have happened in or around 1825. Our other ‘clever but peculiar’ anecdote dates from about five years later, presumably the period 1830–33 when John’s *Òrain Ghàèlach, le Uilleam Ròs* (see Appendix, no. 1) was written but he had not yet moved to Glasgow. James told Clach that John was travelling through the islands at the time as the representative of the *Inverness Courier*, collecting sums of money owed to the paper and gathering material for *Sàr Obair*. He called at one of the banks in Portree to deposit the cash in his employers’ account, and the banker hospitably invited him to spend the night in his house.

Following a good meal and some liquid refreshment John took a stroll down to the pier. We may visualise him for ourselves now that he has reached manhood. ‘Slenderly built, fair-haired, sharp featured, with a sallow, delicate-looking complexion’, he was wearing a long surtout which nearly reached his heels, and whatever else was necessary to emphasise the dignity of his occupation – top hat, silk cravat and a pair of shiny boots, I dare say. We know that he could afford to buy such things, because Clach tells us (p. 201) that when he decided to publish Ross’s poems, Sir Francis Alexander Mackenzie, the young laird of Gairloch, not only gave him substantial help in his efforts to collect them, but guaranteed the expenses of publication and ‘generously presented him with the portmanteau and other necessary articles to fit him out for his journey’.

John now began what Clach candidly called ‘his usual eccentric performances’ – looking up to the heavens and other antics which suggested anything but great wisdom in the eye of the beholder. Then he spotted a female figurehead on a ship lying along the quay. He proceeded to stare at it with such intensity that the captain, happening to be on deck, remarked to him conversationally: “Is she not really a very beautiful woman?”

“Oh, yes! I wish you would sell her to me.”

“You had better buy the ship!” said the captain.

“Oh, I cannot,” says John. “It’s not every man who could buy the ship, and it’s her figurehead I want.”

The captain had taken him for a simpleton as soon as he saw his peculiar stare. Eying the long surtout, he said, “I have seen many a man with a shorter coat than yours who could buy her.”

“Well, if she’s cheap,” said John, “I would like to buy her for the figurehead. Have you any cargo in her?”

“Yes, I have five hundred bolls of meal in her, and, what do you say? You shall have the whole for £300.”

John jumped aboard, handed the skipper a five-pound note on account, and said, “The ship is mine as she stands, cargo and all. Come up to the bank at twelve o’clock tomorrow and you shall have the money.”

It was only now that the captain realised what kind of man he was dealing with – that, as Clach puts it, the simplicity and apparent foolishness were put on. Not surprisingly, a little knot of sailors had gathered on deck to watch their future being bartered, and the agonised skipper asked if they thought the man could pay for the ship. “You may rest assured,” said one who had sailed the seven seas, “that if he could not, he would not have left you his five pound note.”

John went straight back to the banker and told him what had happened. He had bought the ship for £300, he said, and left a deposit. “We must watch, so that the captain will not get away with the ship and the five pounds.”

The banker asked him if he had any money of his own. “No,” says John, “but she is a good bargain. The cargo alone is worth much more than I gave for her.”

Enquiries were made, and the banker agreed that he would pay for the ship, take her over himself, and make John a substantial payment for his part in the bargain. Later that evening they went back to the captain and offered him the money. By now he was in great distress and begged to be released from the agreement which he had so unwisely made. Finally, he offered John sixty pounds for himself if he would give up his right to the ship. “This sum,” says Clach (p. 209), “he very foolishly, we think, but most magnanimously, declined.”

John asked for his five-pound note, and on receiving it gave up his rights to the ship. He advised the captain in no uncertain terms to be more careful in future, and not to tease a person who had no intention of interfering with his person or his property. “Above all,” he concluded, “do not ever judge a man by his appearance, or by the length or cut of his coat.”

I have to say at this point that I am a little bit suspicious as to the origins of this story and to the real identity of its hero. Even if these suspicions are correct, however, it speaks volumes as to how John was regarded in his own community. The most famous of all Highland fools, Gilleasbaig Aotrom (Archibald Matheson), is well known to have flourished during the incumbency of the Rev. John MacGregor Souter as minister of Duirinish, 1814–39. This is the period of John’s alleged visit to Portree. Gilleasbaig’s scathing wit made him so popular – and so feared – that although he spent his days wandering around the countryside, he never lacked good clothes or a meal. Neil MacLeod described him (MacLeod 1975: 237) as wearing *ad àrd, deise dhubh, agus léine gheal* – ‘a tall hat, a black suit, and a white shirt’.

One of the many stories about Gilleasbaig tells how, at a cattle market in Portree, he bumped into a gentleman who had often shown him kindness. The gentleman remarked to him that he wanted to buy a particular horse, but that the seller, a stranger, was asking more than he was willing to give. “How much are you willing to pay?” says Gilleasbaig.

“I would go the length of twenty pounds.”

“Give me fifteen,” says Gilleasbaig, “and I’ll get the horse for you.”

The gentleman thought he might risk it, and handed over the money. Gilleasbaig went along to the seller and asked him how much he wanted for the animal. Perhaps the question was accompanied by ‘eccentric performances’, because the stranger appears to have taken him for the wrong sort of fool, and retorted: “How much will you give?”

“I’ll give you thirteen pounds,” said Gilleasbaig.

The stranger thought he would give the crowd around the horse some fun and cried out: “Down with the money then and he’s yours.”

“Done then, in the presence of witnesses,” said Gilleasbaig. He counted out the money, took possession of the horse, and rode it up to his friend’s house in triumph. In a familiar-sounding touch, J. G. Mackay concludes his telling of the anecdote (1919–22: 171): “Though offered it, the remaining £2 he would not take on any account.”

Neil MacLeod tells another story about Gilleasbaig (MacLeod 1975: 234–35) which portrays him in exactly the same way that James Mackenzie was to portray his own brother John – taking a stroll down to the shore at Portree. The vessel that caught Gilleasbaig’s eye, however, was a fishing-boat. She had just come in with a good catch, and the crew had gone straight up to the village for a dram, so, with no one looking, Gilleasbaig helped himself to a prize cod.



He went straight up to a particular gentleman's house and rang the bell. Who appeared but the gentleman himself. *An ceannaich sibh trosg math?* says Gilleasbaig. "Will you buy a fine cod?"

*Ceannaichidh*, replies the gentleman, *agus taing air son fhaotainn. Ciod a' phrìs a tha thu ag iarraidh air?* "Yes, and thank you for obtaining it. How much do you want for it?"

*Tha*, says Gilleasbaig, *tastan agus gloine uisge-beatha*. "A shilling and a glass of whisky."

*Gheibh thu sin, ma-tà*, says the man. "That you will have, then."

When Gilleasbaig had been paid in full he put down the glass and remarked, *Nis, bho nach eil a bheag agam fhéin ri dhèanamh, théid mi chun an uillt agus glanaidh mi dhuibh e*. "Now, since I don't have much to do, I'll go to the burn and clean it for you."

*Ro mhath*, said the man. "Excellent."

Gilleasbaig went off with the cod and sold it in seven other houses for the same price. Then he brought it back down to the boat, where he found the crew busy cleaning their catch. He threw the cod down among the other fish, saying: *Siud agaibh, a ghillean còir, bhur trosg, agus ma phàigheas e sibhse cho math 's a phàigh e mise, is math am beathach e*. "There, my fine lads, is your cod, and if it pays you as well as it has paid me, it's a fine beast."

These three Portree stories clearly have much in common. They demonstrate a little more, I think, than the obvious fact that John's brother James – a seaman himself, we should remember, and therefore more than usually exposed to the stories seamen told – was, in Dixon's words, 'quite alive to the charms of romance'. They show that Gilleasbaig Aotrom was seen as close to being a wise man, and that the learned editor of *Sar-Obair nam Bàrd Gaelach* was seen as close to being a fool. This is how Clach deals with the issue (p. 208).

Mackenzie . . . was, from his youth upwards, considered quite a character in his native district. The very idea of a man going through the country, enduring much fatigue, and, as far as the would-be-considered-wise people of the district could see, with no apparent useful or sensible object, collecting old songs and foolish stories, was enough to stamp him as one who was not altogether wise, and his manner of answering questions, and his peculiar sayings, only strengthened this idea of the ignorant regarding him.

As one of many possible instances of his mannerisms of speech, Clach cites the following (p. 208). John was spending the evening in a particular house when one of the womenfolk came in with a bucket of water from the well. The man of the house asked her: *An do thuit an oidhche, a Cheat?* "Did the night fall, Kate?"

*Thuit, tha i dìreach an déidh tuiteam*. "It fell, it's just after falling."

Hearing this, John looked amazed, pretended to be terrified, and exclaimed, *Gun gléidh an sealbh sinne! Gu dé dh'éireas dhuinn? Càit an do thuit i?* "Providence preserve us! What will happen to us? Where did it fall?"

It would be good to have some more examples, because an 'agenda' is coming across here which we can recognise today. John cared about the Gaelic language, and, as a Wester Ross man, knew it at its best. In Easter Ross, on the other hand, it was in decline. He had a satirical turn of mind and was not afraid to offend. The idea of night 'falling' has no place in good Gaelic, so John chose to make a linguistic point by ridiculing it. The point was perhaps lost on his hosts that night; it may even have been lost on Clach. One is reminded of Professor Watson's story from Easter

Ross (1925–27: 316) of the father who went to the door at night, and, seeing a fine display of stars, called to his little son, “Geordie *m’ eudail*, come oot till ye see the *ronnags*.”

His wife, who, says Watson, was a bit of a purist in matters of language, reproved him, saying: “Don’t be learning bad English to the bairn. Could ye no say, Geordie *m’ eudail*, come oot till ye see the stairs?”

### Wick: adventures in love and orthography

John appears to have spent the years 1830 and 1831 in Wick, presumably acting as the *Inverness Courier* agent for Caithness. One of the reasons we know this, I am happy to say, is that he fell in love. The young lady, as Clach helpfully tells us (p. 207), was Mary Sudge, daughter of an innkeeper in the town. It is fair to guess that his was the inn in which John had his lodgings, because we can be pretty sure that had he not been staying there when he met her, he would have quickly taken advantage of her father’s profession to change his abode. He made a song for her which, eight years later, he chose to include in his collection of Highland love-songs *An Cruiteara Gàelach* (App., no. 8) with a little footnote: “The above song was composed by the Editor on Miss Mary S——, in the Town of Wick, Caithness-shire, A.D. 1830.” I reprint it exactly as it stands, along with my attempt at a translation.

*Oran Sugraidh.*

*Hoireann o gur mi tha tursach,  
Thriall mo mharan, dh’ fhad mo lùgh mi  
Cha ’n eil cail agam gu sugradh,  
Gus a faic mi ruin mo chéille.*

’S truagh nach robh mo chaileag ghreannar,  
Mar rium fein fo’ sgeith na ’m beanntan;  
Far am biodh a chuthag Shamhraidh,  
Seinn sa’ ghleann an am dhuinn eiridh.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

Laidhinn oidhch’ sa’ choill ri ceo leat,  
Far nach cluinneadh Goill ar comhradh  
Barrach nan crann ga nar codach,  
Gus an eireadh deo na grein’ oir

*Hoireann o, &c*

Bheirinn ruaig a bhuainn nan cno’ leat,  
(A ghuanag a ghluasaid mhodhair)  
Far am bidh coileach na smeoraich,  
Cuir failt’ air an lo ’sna géugan,

*Hoireann o, &c.*

Tha do ghruaidh mar shnuadh nan rosan,  
Cha chuir sin ort uaille no mor-chuis,  
Ged’ is gil’ thu Luaidh, no ’n t-oinean,  
’Sna canach nan lon sa’ chéitean.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

*A Courting Song.*

*Hoireann o it’s I who am sorry,  
My joy has gone and my strength has left me,  
I cannot have the desire for amusement  
Until I can see the one whom I love.*

O what a shame that my beautiful lass  
Was not with me in the shade of the mountains  
Where the summertime cuckoo would sing  
In the valley when we were arising.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

I would lie with you for a night in the woods  
Where Lowlanders could not hear us talking  
With nothing but branches of trees to cover us  
Till the gleam of the sun would arise upon us.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

I’d forage with you to harvest the nuts,  
O my fun-loving girl who’s gentle in movement,  
In the place in which the cock of the song-thrush  
Will bid the day welcome amongst the branches.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

Upon your cheek is the colour of roses —  
That does not make you vain or conceited,  
Although you are whiter, my love, than the daisy  
And than the bog-cotton of meadows in May.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

THE EAR OF THE BEHOLDER: JOHN MACKENZIE OF *THE BEAUTIES*

B'è mo mhiann a's trian de m'aileas,  
Teannadh dian ri bial do mharain,  
Cha n'èil ciall, no rian, nach fag mi.  
Mar a tar mi bho na Chléir thu.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

Tha thu aoidheil, caoimhneil, cairdeil;  
Gu'n ghiomh, gun uabhar, gun ardan,  
Ged do fhuair mi'measg na graisg thu,  
Bhiodh san t-saile taruinn eisg as.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

Gu'n dh' *fhuadaich* iad mi 's tu araig,  
Gu cosan nan creug mar ardach;  
'S bu cheol duinn fuaim nan tonn gaireach,  
Ruith gu traigh gu cair-gheal, béucach!

*Hoireann o, &c.*

'S trom mo chridh' an diugh ga t-fhàgail  
Aig na Gallaich b'è mo chàs e,  
'S nach earbainn thu ri mo bhrathair,  
Ga h-é mac mo mhathar féin e.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

Ge do thar mi nise triall bh'uat,  
Air m'fhacal cha be mo mhiann e,  
B'fhearr leam thu no nighean Iarla,  
Gu'n dad ga do dhion ach leine!

*Hoireann o, &c.*

Ach a ruin cha doir mi fuath dhut,  
A dhain'èin na their an sluagh rium,  
Ge do thogadh iad ort tuaileas,  
Their mise gur buaitheam bréig e.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

It's my desire and a third of my wishes  
To be thrusting against your flirtatious mouth —  
I will take leave of my senses and faculties  
If I cannot get the Clergy to marry us.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

You are welcoming, kind and friendly,  
Without fault or vainglory or surfeit of pride,  
Although I found you amongst the rabble  
Who spent their time pulling fish from the sea.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

They drove us away from them, you and me, darling,  
To take to the holes in the rocks as a dwelling,  
With the sound of the murmuring waves as our music,  
Running foam-white and roaring upon the strand.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

My heart is heavy today to be leaving you  
With the Caithness men — it was painful for me,  
As I would not trust you to be with my brother  
Although he is my own mother's son.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

Although I have now been obliged to leave you,  
Upon my word it's not what I wanted —  
I'd rather have you than an earl's daughter  
With nothing protecting you but a shirt!

*Hoireann o, &c.*

But, my love, I can never despise you  
Despite all that people have said to me —  
No matter how much they may try to miscall you,  
I'll say that it's nothing but blustering lies.

*Hoireann o, &c.*

We do not know what became of the relationship. Perhaps, like William Ross's infatuation with Mór Ros of Stornoway, it was one-sided. Perhaps, as is hinted in the last verse, Mary simply had a good relationship with all her father's customers. The third-last verse has a ring of truth about it — it sounds as if John's 22-year-old seafaring brother was in Wick with the herring fleet. Certainly John never married. With regard to the song, Clach remarks (p. 207) that it 'is not without considerable merit as an original composition, but it owes its popularity probably more to the air, which was well known and exceedingly popular in the Highlands long before John Mackenzie was born'.

It appears to have been while John was at Wick that he wrote a spirited essay called 'Defence of the Orthography of the Gaelic Language' (Mackenzie 1876–77). It was found among his papers, presumably by James, and given to Clach, who published it in *The Celtic Magazine*. It is possible to deduce its genesis from internal evidence, and the story that emerges is amusing. An

advertisement appeared in the newspapers for a competition run by the Glasgow Celtic Society in which prizes were offered for ‘the four best essays on the Orthography of the Gaelic Language’. As his topic, John chose to attack a scheme for a proposed new system of Gaelic spelling which had appeared in a circular written by a certain ‘Gathelus’. He set about his task with enthusiasm. Occasionally he reveals his youth: “I have been taught to make a distinction . . .” He shows personal modesty and common sense: “If ‘Gathelus’ should again complain that I do not touch upon the orthography of Gaelic, my explanation is, that I do not consider myself competent to amend it, that I consider him also incompetent, and that therefore, in the absence of a better advocate, I will defend it.”

As he builds up towards his climax he displays no mean satiric skills. He mocks Gathelus, who had unwisely complained that ‘though I have studied the Gaelic with considerable attention for more than twelve years, yet I cannot boast of being able to read the Testament fluently’, with a little piece of verse written according to the proposed new system and duly footnoted ‘*Auctore, Mr J. M——*’:

Nach sserrv sso ri essdachg, na leuhudh, a *Ghateluss*?  
 Ssiv dda vliahna dhiag, er lliahudh ’sa scoil agginn,  
 Snach dduag ssiv luiv a Ghalig, ha passddun a ttogail leo!  
 Bi aggiv calll, is nnaire, erson, ssiv vi co ddana,  
 ’S gun churr ssiv ssivhen, arrdd, a varr er an “Tteachgara.”  
 Cidd ^n nni is danurr’, na b^ghara gun Ghalig,  
 Vi ttegusg dh^an’ is ferr na e fenn ann e *spelligudh*?

I suppose this could be translated:

Isn’t this bitter to be hearing or reading, O Gathelus?  
 That you spent twelve years turning grey in our academy  
 And took away with you no Gaelic, though children do it easily!  
 You will suffer loss and shame for being so importunate  
 As to raise yourself on high above *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach*.  
 What is more presumptuous than for an idiot with no Gaelic  
 To be preaching to his betters on matters of orthography?

Then he lets rip with a passage which makes one wonder what young Iain Alastair Òig had been reading – it occurs to me to point out that Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* had appeared when he was twelve.

We are told that “it would be desirable to have the Gaelic lying in state, with a more pleasing expression of countenance than distinguished it in life.” This, at least, is contrary to the natural course of things. Death does change the countenance, certainly, but seldom for the better. It is certain that the agonies of death would not so much distort the features of the Gaelic as the orthography at present forced upon it. And if it be true that the Gaelic is already in a galloping consumption, should we not account it a useless waste of trouble and expense to put our most eminent mantua-makers and knights of

the needle in requisition to fit out the corpse of our mother-tongue in a more fashionable attire than she ever wore in the days of her pride, when she stood before kings, and was “a mouth” to kings’ councillors!

It was a splendid effort, but it did not win a prize, for as he ruefully remarked in a fresh preamble, he found out after he had written it that the live-wire in the Glasgow Celtic Society who was offering the prizes was none other than Gathelus himself.

By now John was involved in an exchange of letters with Gathelus in the correspondence columns of a Glasgow newspaper called *The Scots Times*. He therefore turned his essay into a response to a letter from Gathelus published on 24 August 1830 which merely consisted, as John put it, of ‘a second and revised edition of the famous circular’. The fact that the manuscript was found by James amongst his papers after his death suggests that he had received it back with a rejection-slip. At six thousand words, it is a little too long for a reader’s letter.

The evidence for the date of the essay lies in John’s references to *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach*, which ran from 1829 to 1831, and to MacLeod and Dewar’s dictionary, which was published in 1831: “We believe that the enthusiasm that could move an individual or two to compile a dictionary, and one of them to commence, and carry on with no ordinary spirit, a periodical work in a despised, disused, and almost dead language, shall neither be damped nor extinguished by the spittings of envy.” As for the place, John writes (Mackenzie 1876–77: 334–35):

As great men have the privilege of coining not only letters, but also syllables and words, “Gathelus” applies to me the elegant epithet *anserous*, from *anser*, a goose. Query, of the Caithness species? I have seen, of the same species with myself, whole flocks of goslings, some of them not exceeding seven, nay six, years of age, who could read the Gaelic Testament more fluently, and fully as correctly, as they could speak the language.

### **Inverness: William Ross’s poems and *An Leobhar Liath***

John appears to have been gathering Ross’s poems during the years from 1826 to 1830, when between 20 and 24 years old. As we have seen, his patron was Sir Francis Alexander Mackenzie of Gairloch (1799–1843), who succeeded to the estate at his father’s death on 26 April 1826 (Mackenzie 1879: 350). Clach claimed (p. 203) that John spent twenty-one nights taking down the poems from the recitation of Ross’s close friend Alastair Buidhe MacIamhair or Campbell; as this statement has been much repeated, it is worth placing on record that John never said so himself. I do not doubt that they spent twenty-one evenings in each other’s company, but in that amount of time John will have got from him the makings of several of his other books as well.

It is difficult to get to the bottom of the story of the publication of *Òrain Ghàèlach, le Uilleam Ròs* (App., no. 1). According to the title-page it was ‘printed by R. Carruthers, for Lewis Grant, and D. Macculloch, booksellers, 1830’, but according to the Rev. Donald Maclean (1915: 334) ‘circumstances seem to indicate that the work was printed in 1833 and not in 1830’. Typically, Maclean does not indicate what these circumstances were. Perhaps all he really means is that Clach wrote of John (p. 203): “In 1833 he left his native parish, and in the same year appeared ‘The Poems of William Ross, the Gairloch Bard,’ with ‘The History of mac-Cruislig, a Highland Tale,’ in one volume; and several other works of minor importance.”

I would like to suggest that all of these facts may be interconnected. The publication of Ross's poems may have been held up from 1830 to 1833 by arguments about the inclusion of certain items. There was already a history of this sort of thing in Gaelic publishing. Duncan Ban Macintyre, as is well known, disagreed with his adviser and friend the Rev. Donald MacNicol of Lismore about the proposed inclusion in his book of 'Òran don Tàillear', and this held up publication for over a year until 1768 (MacLeod 1952: 455–56; Black 2001: 396). Similarly we should note the experience of the Perth publisher John Gillies. In 1780 he included a comical but rather slanderous satire called 'Baran Supair' (for which see Black 2001: 408–09) in a work called *The History of the Feuds and Conflicts among the Clans . . . To which is added a Collection of Curious Songs in the Gallic Language*. Maclean comments (1915: 135–36):

A perfect copy is worth about two guineas. Copies are often met with lacking the Title-leaf, but otherwise clean and complete. Possibly the publisher discovered the nature of the Gaelic poetry appended to the English text before the impression was sold out, and to conceal his connexion with the work had the Titles cut out . . . John Gillies knew no Gaelic.

The first edition of Ross's poems is described by Maclean (1915: 334) as 'very rare'. Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 2484) list extant copies in five locations (EUL, AUL, Inverness Public Library, the British Library and the National Library of Wales), to which we may now add Mat. 172 in NLS, formerly the property of Angus Matheson. Perhaps when Carruthers discovered what he was printing he stopped his presses. If so, the objections would have been to 'Òran do dh'Fhear-Turais', 'Òran do Chailin Àraidh' and 'Òran don Chailin Cheudna', possibly also to 'Òran air Cupid', 'Òran do Dhuine Àraidh', 'Òran mar gun Deanadh Seòladair Deasach E' (for which see Black 1993: 76–80) and 'Cailleach-Milleadh-nan-Dàn' (for which see Thomson 1993: 161–67). Most of these were omitted or shortened in Calder's expurgated edition of 1937. It is also significant, I am sure, that pp. 91–94 of the AUL copy – the pages containing 'Òran do dh'Fhear-Turais' – are missing. What is more, I have before me a copy of the 1834 edition (EUL O.S. .891631 Ros) from which the title-page has been removed, just as Gillies did to his *Feuds and Conflicts*.

The 1830 edition has no preface. There is instead a 'Life of William Ross', subscribed: "John Mackenzie. / Gairloch, May 30, 1830." John begins (p. 3):

In presenting to the public the Songs of William Ross, the Publisher is happy in the conviction, that he can, with confidence, recommend them as being correct, assuring them that they have been faithfully printed, as collected from intelligent persons who had received them from the Author; and that the greatest care has been bestowed on the work to render it worthy of the public attention.

As these Songs may come into the hands of many who may wish to know something of their author, we beg leave to offer to the public a brief sketch of his Life, which has been sent to us by a respectable gentleman with whom our Bard had lived in habits of intimacy and friendship, that terminated but with life.

The ‘respectable gentleman’ is John’s relative James Robertson, Collector of Customs at Stornoway. Having been born in 1756, he was six years older than the poet, and well placed to know a thing or two about his infatuation with Mór Ros. More importantly, however, John’s statement that the songs were ‘collected from intelligent persons who had received them from the Author’ is disingenuous. The book contains thirty-one poems, of which only fourteen are entirely new. Fifteen had previously appeared in the Stewarts’ collection of 1804, and two (‘Òran Cumhaidh’ and ‘Comhairle a’ Bhàird do Mhaighdeannan Òga’) in Donald MacLeod’s collection (Macleoid 1811). Two of the Stewarts’ fifteen (‘Òran anns am bheil am Bàrd a’ Moladh a Leannain agus a Dhùthcha Fhéin’ and ‘Feasgar Luain’) had also appeared in the Inverness Collection (Anon. 1806), one (‘Òran air Cupid’) in MacLeod’s, and another two (‘Moladh an Uisge-Bheatha’ and ‘Moladh na h-Òighe Gaidhealaich’) in Peter MacFarlane’s (Macpharlain 1813). In other words, the majority of the poems had been published in some form before, five of them more than once.

A comparison between Stewart 1804 and John’s editions of 1830 and 1834 shows over and over that the same verses are presented in the same spelling and in the same order. Some notable instances are *chàsairean* (1804: 161) > *chasairean* (1830: 21) > *chàsairean* (1834: 32), *dhaisig* (1804: 328; 1830: 39; 1834: 62), *duthachanan* (1804: 156; 1830: 14; 1834: 21), *luasgans’* (1804: 162; 1830: 68; 1834: 106), *Leat na choirean so shuas* (1804: 166; 1830: 71; 1834: 111), *ag tighinn* (1804: 184) > *ag tighn’* (1830: 48) > *ag tigh’n* (1834: 75), *o na bhàs domh* (1804: 185; 1830: 49; 1834: 77), *Dh’ ionnsaidh m’ eibhneis ann sna gleannaibh. / E ho rò, &c. / Ge do tharladh dhomh bhi ’n taobh-sa* (1804: 186) > *Dh’ ionnsaidh m’ eibhneis ann sna gleannaibh. / E ho rò, &c. / Ge do tharladh dhomh bhi’ ’n taobh-sa* (1834: 49–50) > *Dh’ ionnsaidh m’ eibhneis ann sna gleannaibh. / E ho rò, &c. / Ge do tharladh dhomh bhi ’n taobh-sa* (1834: 78).

John makes many substantial orthographic improvements, e.g. *co-luath* (1804: 328) > *cò’ladh* (1830: 39; 1834: 63), but only occasionally does one come across a case where words (as opposed to spellings and punctuations) vary, e.g. *cartair* (1804: 182) > *cantair* (1830: 61) > *canntair* (1834: 95), *Leis an doirteadh fuil sa bhlàr* (1804: 155) > *A dhoirteadh fuil sa bhlàr* (1830: 13; 1834: 19), *an dlùthas* (1804: 156) > *an taobhs’* (1830: 14) > *an taobh-s’* (1834: 22), *’s le sprèidh* (1804: 165) > *a’s sprèidh* (1830: 71; 1834: 111), *shocair / Nach dochuineadh* (1804: 175) > *shocrach, / Nach doich’neadh* (1830: 23; 1834: 37), *bla-shuil* (1804: 185) > *tlà’-shuil* (1830: 48) > *tlà-shuil* (1834: 76), *cian* (1804: 404) > *sior* (1830: 29) > *sìor* (1834: 47), *Gun bhi* (1804: 479) > *Le bhi* (1830: 9; 1834: 14), *chàil* (1804: 480) > *chail* (1830: 10) > *dhàil* (1834: 14), *magh-shluagh* (1804: 480) > *mal-shluagh* (1830: 10) > *màl-shluagh* (1834: 14), *o bha mi* (1804: 480) > *bha mise* (1830: 10; 1834: 15).

The Stewarts’ *’S dortadh fial gu làr aca* (1804: 158) actually makes better sense than John’s *A dortadh fial gu lar aca* (1830: 19) > *A dortadh fial gu làr aca* (1834: 28); similarly, their *còmhdachadh* (1804: 159) is a much better reading than John’s *cnodachadh* (1830: 20; 1834: 30), and their *lughad* (1804: 333) is a better reading than John’s *laoid* (1830: 87; 1834: 140). In one case there is a couplet in Stewart (1804: 483) which John omits in both editions – probably out of sheer carelessness (1830: 37; 1834: 61):

*Cha’n eil sta dhuinn bhi ga iondran,  
Ge bu Phriunnsa còir e.*

It occurs towards the end of ‘Òran air Aiseag an Fhearainn do na Cinn-Fheadhna’.

In ‘Moladh an Uisge-Bheatha’ (1830: 51–55; 1834: 80–86) John abandons the Stewarts, who offer eighteen quatrains and a chorus (1804: 187–90), to follow MacFarlane, who offers a radically different version consisting of nineteen quatrains and a chorus (Macpharlain 1813: 144–47). Just as he had done with Stewart, we see him picking his way through MacFarlane with an editorial eye, seldom leaving a line untouched, usually making minor orthographic changes, once or twice emending a little more radically to improve the sense, e.g. *Gu eiridh gu frogail, sa cheigeis, / Sgeig air an t-sean aois* (1813: 146) > *Gu èiridh gu frogail, sa cheigeil, / Ri sgeig air an t-shean aois* (1830: 54; 1834: 85). In the case of ‘Moladh na h-Òighe Gaidhealaich’ (1830: 59–61; 1834: 92–96), by contrast, it can be demonstrated that MacFarlane (1813: 148–50) had been following Stewart (1804: 180–83) in the first place, and that a very gentle process of emendation was carried out through the three versions, e.g. *’S na mìn bhàs sneachda-gheal* (1804: 180) > *’S na mìn bhàs sneachda-gheal* (1813: 148) > *’S na mìn bhàs sneachda-gheal* (1830: 59; 1834: 92), *Readh dheud còmhnard* (1804: 181) > *Reidh dheud chòmhnard* (1813: 149) > *Reidh dheud chomhnard* (1830: 60) > *Rèidh dheud chomhnard* (1834: 94). As *deud* is masculine, it may be seen that not all the emendations were happy ones!

The versions of ‘Feasgar Luain’ and ‘Òran anns am bheil am Bàrd a’ Moladh a Leannain agus a Dhùthcha Fhéin’ in the Inverness Collection (Anon. 1806: 90–92, 104–05) were taken from Stewart with minimal alteration. It is quite easy to tell, however, that John had access to the Inverness Collection, for the title of the latter song stands correctly in Stewart as ‘Oran leis a Bhard cheudna, ann am bheil e ag Moladh a leannain, agus a dhuthacha fein’, but in the Inverness Collection (Anon. 1806: 104) as ‘Oran le Uilliam Ros, ann am bheil e ag moladh a leannain, agus a dhuthaich fein’, while in John’s hands this becomes: “Oran anns am bheil am Bard ag Moladh a Leannain agus a Dhuthaich Fein’ (1830: 48). As is often the case, however, John’s information on the tune is new: ‘Air FONN,—“O’er the muir among the heather.’” In the small number of other instances where Inverness differs from Stewart, John sometimes prefers the former, sometimes the latter: *teughbail* (1804: 330) > *eugbail* (1806: 91) > *eugail* (1830: 41) > *èugail* (1834: 65), *an cailin* (1804: 184) > *a chailin* (1806: 104) > *an cailin* (1830: 48; 1834: 75), *’n t soghraidh* (1804: 186) > *’n soghraidh* (1806: 105) > *’n t-soraidh* (1830: 49; 1834: 78).

It is not quite so easy to show that John was influenced by MacLeod’s collection, however. MacLeod (Macleoid 1811: 213–15) had taken ‘Òran air Cupid’ from Stewart (1804: 336–38), as did John (1830: 65–67; 1834: 102–05). MacLeod’s version of the magnificent ‘Òran Cumhaidh’, which he calls ‘Luinnag Ghaoil’ and which is not in Stewart, has only eight stanzas and chorus; John’s (1830: 103–08; 1834: 162–70) is very different, having fifteen stanzas (in a different order) and no chorus. Where the text happens to correspond, it looks as if John has taken the spelling of certain words from MacLeod, e.g. the latter’s ‘àmhailtin Chupid’ becomes John’s ‘àmhailtin *Chupid*’ (1830: 103; 1834: 162), giving the impression that in italicising the second word John has forgotten to normalise the plural of the first one. Finally, John’s version of the macaronic ‘Comhairle Bhàird do Mhaighdeannan Òga’ (1830: 90–91; 1834: 144–46), which again is not in Stewart, corresponds closely to MacLeod’s but displays as many orthographic differences as there are similarities; there are, in addition, two substantive textual changes which convince me that, as in the case of the ‘Òran Cumhaidh’, John had an independent version of his own whose orthography he collated with MacLeod’s. These changes are: “Therefore don’t tarry ach marry gu luath, / ’S biodh Caileanan truagh dol am buar mar is ail” (1811: 103) > “*Therefore, don’t tarry,*



*but marry gu luath, / Ma's biodh sibh gu truagh, dol am buar mar is ail*" (1830: 90) > "*Therefore, don't tarry, but marry gu luath, / Ma's biodh sibh gu truagh, dol am buar mar is àil*" (1834: 144) and "Though she whine and repine, cha bhi loin tuilidh dhi, / Not a kiss a gheibh ise, she'll be meas cummanta" > "*When she'll whine and repine, cha bhi loinn tuille dh'i, / Not a kiss a gheobh ise' she'll be meas cummanta*" (1830: 91; 1834: 145).

Readers of Ross's poems tend to be struck by the unexpected use of archaic or Irish turns of speech. Calder says of him (1937: xxv):

In addition to his duties as schoolmaster he acted as precentor in the Parish Church . . . In his regular attendance for this duty he would hear the scriptures read Sabbath by Sabbath from the Irish version by Bedel (Dr Johnson in his *Journey* discovered that Bedel was read), and thus the poet became so familiar with Irish words and idioms that he introduced some of them into his poems, e.g. do bhi, gu'n tì, nochdair.

Whether *nochdair* should be regarded as 'Irish' is a moot point, but we will let it pass. What Calder meant by 'Bedel' was Kirk's transliteration of it, a work which, *faute de mieux*, served speakers of Scottish Gaelic for a hundred years as their highest written register. This caused Johnson much confusion during his visit to the Highlands and Islands in 1773 (Chapman 1970: 107).

We were a while told, that they had an old translation of the scriptures; and told it till it would appear obstinacy to inquire again. Yet by continued accumulation of questions we found, that the translation meant, if any meaning there were, was nothing else than the *Irish Bible*.

Murchison points out (1947–48: 127) that as Kirk's was the only Gaelic Bible the people had, it was held by many in great esteem. John was remembered as having a copy, he says, adding (*ibid.*: 127–28):

'S e mo bheachd fhéin gur math a dh'fhaodadh leth-bhreac de Bhìobull Chiorc a bhith aig Uilleam Ros, mar a bha aig Iain MacCoinnich, no eadhon gur e peann MhicChoinnich a chuir na gnàthasan is an litreachadh Eireannach ann an òrain an Rosaich.

("My own opinion is that William Ross may well have had a copy of Kirk's Bible, just as John Mackenzie did, or that it may even have been Mackenzie's pen that put the Irish expressions and orthography into Ross's songs.")

This is such an interesting idea that it deserves to be tested. If it can be shown that the principal Hibernicisms in the text are in the poems first printed by John, he may be regarded as the source; if in those first printed by the Stewarts, they must be the source; if evenly spread, they will have come from Ross himself. A search of John's 1834 text reveals the following words or phrases that may reasonably be called Irish: *chùaidh* (p. 14, 'Còmhradh eadar am Bàrd agus Blàbheinn'), *ni'm b' ioghna' leinn* (p. 19, 'Òran do Shir Eachann Gheàrrloch'), *talla ban . . . / An robh do shinnsear'* (p. 22, 'Òran do Shir Eachann Gheàrrloch'), *lò* (p. 28, 'Òran an t-Samhraidh'), *Do bhi* (p. 35,

‘Òran air Gaol na h-Òighe do Chailean’), *Gu’n tì* (p. 71, ‘Moladh a’ Bhàird air a Thìr Fhéin’, cf. Black 2001: 306), *Gur ioc-shlaint choir am b’eil buaidh è and ro-mhòid* (p. 82, ‘Moladh an Uisge-Bheatha’), and *nochdadair* (p. 165, ‘Òran Cumhaidh’). Of these nine readings, five come from Stewart (1804, *ni ’m b’ iongna leinn* 154, *talla bàn / An robh do shinsir* 157, *lò* 158, *do bhi* 173, *chuidh* 480), two from MacFarlane (1813, *am bheil* 145, *ro-mhoid* 145) and two from John himself (1830, *gu’n ti* 44, *nochdadair* 105), *nochdadair* not being in the eight stanzas of the ‘Òran Cumhaidh’ published by MacLeod. This analysis shows that John may quickly be discounted as the source of the Hibernicisms, and the appearance of MacFarlane in the list shows that the Stewarts may be discounted as well. Clearly the perpetrator is Ross himself.

As a check on this result I have looked at a less significant but more widespread category, the Irish-influenced spellings which appear *passim* in the text: *ta* for *tha*, *ni*’s for *nas*, *d’ fhios* for *dh’fhios*, *ge do* for *ged a*. Briefly stated, the result is similar: the source of these is the Stewarts and John in a proportion of three to one. If one finally throws in an intermediate category, archaisms (*feud*, *feutainn*, *eudann*, *cia fàth*, *teachd*, *dearc*, *deachd*, *do ghnà* and the *-s* preterite), the proportion coming from the Stewarts goes up even further; equally, however, *na*’s, *faod* and *a ghnà* may also be found in the Stewarts’ texts, and since most occurrences of *feud*, *feutainn* and *eudann* (twelve out of sixteen, by my calculation) are fixed by rhyme, it remains clear that the perpetrator of the archaisms is Ross himself.

As to Clach’s claim that the poems were bound in 1833 with *Eachdraidh Mhic-Cruislig* (App., no. 7) in one volume, I have no other evidence for it. I know of three extant original copies of *Eachdraidh Mhic-Cruislig* (in New College, the Signet Library and the British Library), and to the best of my knowledge they were all published in 1836: *Glascho: / Clo-bhuailte airson an udair le Bell agus Bain / Aireamh 85, Sraid na Bann-Rìgh. / 1836*. (“Glasgow: / Printed for the author by Bell and Bain / No. 85, Queen Street. / 1836.”) In other words, John, now living in Glasgow, had a stock of them privately printed by the same company which, in the same year, printed the third edition of Ross’s poems (App., no. 6). None of this evidence necessarily contradicts Clach’s statement that Ross’s poems and *Eachdraidh Mhic-Cruislig* had appeared in one volume in 1833, however, for we cannot prove that Clach, writing in Inverness as he was, did not have such a volume lying in front of him as he wrote.

We must also ask what could possibly be the identity of the ‘several other works of minor importance’ which Clach mentions as being published by John in that same year, 1833, when, at the age of 27, he ‘left his native parish’. To the best of my knowledge there is only one candidate, *An Leobhar Liath* (App., no. 2), the four poems in which I have now reprinted with translations (Black 2001: 18–21, 78–81, 264–67, 352–53), along with some remarks on the source (372–73). Each of these poems contains obscene elements of one kind or another. *An Leobhar Liath* does not have John Mackenzie’s name on it, but Maclean says (1915: 247): “The editorship of this very free poetical work is attributed to John Mackenzie, notwithstanding the difference in orthography.” What he means by ‘the difference in orthography’ I am not sure; I have hazarded the guess (Black 2001: 373) that it had to do with *leabhar* being spelt *leobhar*. The title-page informs us that it was printed in *Baile nam Breabadairean*, ‘The Weavers’ Town’, to be sold privately by itinerant booksellers; Maclean says that this is Paisley, but I think it is more likely to be Tradeston, a new suburb begun in the 1790s which, being on the south side of the Clyde, was not then considered part of Glasgow. The date is given as 1801; to this Maclean responds (1915:

247): “The year of publication is of course ante-dated. It was printed in Glasgow about 1845. *Excessively rare*. Only one copy known.”

What are we to make of this? Firstly, it would be foolish to discard Maclean’s statements as guesswork. Although he seldom states his sources, it is clear from a perusal of his work in general that he had access to a great deal of information (often of a very detailed nature, such as print runs) which is unavailable to us now. Having been born in 1869, he would have been personally acquainted with individuals of John’s generation. With regard to place of publication, the idea of falsifying this is not unique. If Maclean’s own evidence (1915: 189) is to be believed – and it seems very credible, for various reasons – one of the most celebrated Gaelic books ever published, Alexander MacDonald’s *Ais-Eiridh na Sean Chánoin Albannaich* of 1751, which contains material both seditious and obscene, is likely to have been published not in Edinburgh where the title-page says, but in Glasgow. Moreover, it could be claimed that *Baile nam Breabadairean* is not a falsification, merely an obfuscation, given that any town with weavers in it could lay claim to the name. On the other hand, it seems perfectly possible that the book really was printed in Paisley – according to Maclean (1915: 28), the firm of Alexander Gardner, which became celebrated for Gaelic publishing later in the nineteenth century, published a Gaelic translation of Boston’s *Gospel Compulsion* at 14 Moss Street, Paisley, in 1830.

The print quality of *An Leobhar Liath* suggests to me a date of publication in the second rather than the first quarter of the nineteenth century; nor would I like it to be thought that I am convinced that all four poems in it were necessarily made in the eighteenth. I believe that the two middle items (‘An Oba Nodha’ and ‘Dòmhnallan Dubh’) certainly belong to the eighteenth century, but that the first and last (‘An Seudagan’ and ‘Eachann an Slaoightear’) may belong equally to the eighteenth or nineteenth. I therefore included them in *An Lasair* on two grounds: (1) John Mackenzie, if he indeed it was who collected and published them, clearly did not expect his little deception to be uncovered through any of the poems being revealed to be nineteenth-century compositions; (2) these poems belong to an important genre already too long subject to suppression, and I felt that editors of anthologies of nineteenth-century Gaelic verse were unlikely to take up the option of reprinting them.

I believe, therefore, that John Mackenzie was indeed the editor of *An Leobhar Liath*, in which case it could not of course have appeared in 1801. I believe that Maclean’s date for it of ‘about 1845’ fails (quite forgivably) to take into account the changing nature of John’s career. I believe that it is one of ‘several other works of minor importance’ published by John in 1833 in Inverness, Glasgow, Paisley or even all three, the purpose of which, I imagine, is summarised by the title-page of *An Leobhar Liath*. John may have hired or bought the plates, and they would have been printed as required ‘to be sold privately by itinerant booksellers’, of whom, until 1836, John was one.

### **Glasgow: Mac Mhaighstir Alastair and Mac-Crùislig**

It will have become obvious by now why John ‘left his native parish’ in 1833 and made his home in Glasgow. He had found an occupation more congenial to him than that of carpenter. It involved peddling publications, however, which might have caught a censor’s eye in any age. More importantly, the nature of these publications ran counter to a swelling tide of religious fundamentalism which was filling pulpits and preaching-stations all over the Highlands, nowhere

more so than in the parishes between Inverness and Gairloch, where inspired divines like MacDonald of Ferintosh, Kennedy of Killearnan, Mackintosh of Tain and Forbes of Tarbat were at the height of their powers, staunchly supported by powerful sessions full of men close to sainthood (Kennedy 1979: 68–72, 128–98). It was the unstoppable movement that led in ten years' time to the Disruption, and the reason why it was prospering was that a minority activity of the old had become a passion amongst the young.

There was little place any more for John's old-fashioned, eighteenth-century liberalism. The heroic clan model, by which gentlemen and tacksmen caroused at the same table while loyal sub-tenants looked on, and women fantasised at waulkings about sleeping with a king's son on a bed of linen, was becoming a thing of the past. The climate John had to struggle with in the north was the one which he describes in an anecdote (*Sàr Obair*: 316) about the Rev. Dr James MacGregor of Pictou, Nova Scotia (1759–1828).

Towards the close of this excellent man's life, he conceived the idea of clothing the doctrines of the gospel in versification, that he might unite the best and most wholesome instructions with the sweetest and most fascinating melodies. When entering upon the task, he wrote to a friend of his at Lochearn-side for a copy of Duncan McIntyre's and McDonald's Poems. His mind had been so occupied with the various studies necessary to the full and efficient discharge of his ministerial duties, that the airs, to which he wished to sing his contemplated hymns or songs, had escaped his memory. The desiderated volumes were sent; but, through the officiousness of some of his domestics, the fact of their being in the minister's possession became known, and a most unwarrantable, unjust and ungenerous construction was put upon the circumstance. How short-sighted, illiberal, and fanatical it was, to edge out insinuations against the genuineness of Mr McGregor's religious principles, simply because the productions of the two most brilliant stars of his native country were on the table of his study in a foreign land! How pitiful, that fanaticism which shrouds itself under the garb of piety – broad, expansive, benevolent piety!

We have enough evidence, in the form of the alleged delays in the printing of Ross's poems, to be able to guess that John's departure for Glasgow resulted from ecclesiastical pressure upon his printers and publishers in Inverness; whether such pressure was applied in a more personal way upon himself and his family in Gairloch we have no way of knowing.

John Mackenzie was no atheist but, in the mould of eighteenth-century poets like Alastair Mac Mhaighstir Alastair, believed passionately in the prime Christian virtues of toleration and forgiveness. Indeed, he quietly provided a service which ministers (like Russell of Gairloch and Souter of Duirinish) who were, in Clach's words (p. 206), 'ignorant of the language in which they were paid for preaching to their congregations', must have found invaluable – he wrote original Gaelic sermons for sale. Had he been alive today, he would have been in line for an HIE 'Young Entrepreneur of the Year' award. Says Clach (p. 210):

That John Mackenzie was a man who thought for himself, not only on Celtic questions and Gaelic orthography, but on the all-important question of the religious belief and teaching of the age in which he lived, and that his views did not run exactly in the strict

Calvinistic groove, and were not in perfect agreement with the standard of orthodoxy prevalent in his day, and indeed in our own, may be gathered from his MS. sermons in our possession; but at present we will not dwell further on this mental characteristic trait of our subject, than to relate an incident which will fully demonstrate his hatred of those who preached the thunderings of the Law at the expense of the Gospel. On a certain occasion, when attending one of the large sacramental gatherings so common throughout the Highlands, he expressed his perfect horror at what he called “the outpourings of damnation,” which were invariably heard proceeding from reverend lips. Such fiery utterances found no response in his young, gentle, and loving bosom. “I look,” he said, “upon these declamations as nothing short of blasphemy against my Heavenly Father. What a tyrant they make *their* God. *My* God is a God of love and summer. Such a God as *they* paint would be *my* devil.”

It seems likely that John’s move to Glasgow was nothing more at first than a change of base, provoked by the need to find new publishers and printers for his work – the second edition of Ross’s poems (App., no. 3) duly appeared in 1834, published by John Reid & Co. of Glasgow in association with Oliver & Boyd of Edinburgh and Whittaker, Arnott & Co. of London. John had made a number of changes. There was now a ‘Preface’, dated Glasgow, 20 August 1834, in which John, far from apologising to his readers for misleading them with regard to his sources, audaciously compounded the lie (pp. iii–iv).

Previous to the publication of the first edition of Ross’s Songs, the only record of their existence was their floating through the district on the memories of the people, and the only method of their publication was by the lips of fair maidens and fond admirers. To rescue the songs of “the secluded unhappy bard” from “the tooth of time and rasure of oblivion,” was the sole object of the Editor in publishing the previous edition; and in proof that he was successful, he has only to say that the book was out of print within the short period of twelve months. This was sufficient encouragement to him to renewed diligence. Accordingly, several new pieces have been added to this edition, together with three poems by the bard’s grandfather, the celebrated *Piobaire Dall* of Gairloch.

In pondering why it is that John appears to have made so many enemies and encountered so many difficulties in life, we need look no further than this passage. He was a liar. And when cornered, he lied again.

To the ‘Life’ John added fragments of two of the poems, a ‘Song to the Seasons’ and ‘Troed Dhaormuinn ma Bhrat Armuinn’, which Ross had burned a few days before his death, along with fresh material on Ross’s musical accomplishments, personal appearance, death and burial; he also embroidered the story of Mór Ros and embellished his summary of Ross’s poetic achievement. In the poems, he improved his text in two places (*ùr-chosgar* > *ùr thosgair* p. 23, *Eilig* > *eilid* pp. 135–36), disimproved it in one place (*Mhac-Cruisleig* > *Mhac-Gruisleig* p. 150), added an extra prose introduction (p. 34), tinkered with a footnote (‘crazy’ > ‘mad’ pp. 163–64), added a stanza to ‘Òran air Gaol na h-Òighe do Chailean’ (p. 41), added two lines to ‘Achmhasan an Déididh’

(p. 178), and, above all, put in two new poems – ‘Cuachag nan Craobh’ (pp. 112–16) and the ‘Òran Eile’ (pp. 171–74).

John printed ‘Cuachag nan Craobh’ without comment, but it was a controversial addition. It was generally understood to have been composed much earlier in the eighteenth century by Alexander MacDonald, 4th of Dalness in Glen Etive (Macdonald 1900–01; Booth 1990); versions of it had been published by Turner (Mac-an-Tuairneir 1813: 298–301) and MacCallum (1821: 131–42), while yet another, the earliest of all, survived in the papers of the Rev. James MacLagan – now GUL MacLagan MS 164 – dated 7 February 1764 (Calder 1937: 184–91). Many years ago I subjected them all to detailed textual analysis (Black 1968: 19–28) after noticing that the version in John’s book (which I called M) was subtly different from the rest; I reached the following conclusion.

It seems extremely likely that, even if “Cuachag nan Craobh” was not already known in Gairloch in William Ross’s day, he would have heard the song during his travels in Argyll. He would also have heard the story of Mac Fir Dhail an Easa and he would have noticed the parallels between it and his own affair with Marion Ross. Certainly he seems to have taken the poem over, improved its imperfections, repaired its corruptions, and virtually made it his own, so that in the version found in M we now have a brightly polished restoration of a tarnished antique. This process can be shown, even to the extent of pinpointing Ross’s actual alterations, by correlating the four versions . . . One can calculate that Ross’s contribution to “Cuachag nan Craobh” is 36% of the whole.

Better still, in the ‘Òran Eile’ John had unearthed one of the most perfect gems in all Gaelic literature. Had he done nothing else, his life would have been worth while.

He did far from nothing else. From now on there was scarcely a year in his life in which he did not publish some new book or other. Before 1834 was out he had produced a new edition of his next favourite poet, Alastair mac Mhaighstir Alastair. It included three previously unpublished songs which he appears to have got from a manuscript in the poet’s own handwriting in the possession of his grandson, Allan MacDonald of Laig in Eigg: ‘Òran do’n Phrionnsa’, beg. *’S eibhinn leam fhein tha e tighinn* (pp. 83–84), ‘Òran Eile do’n Phrionnsa’, beg. *Moch ’sa mhadainn ’s mi dùsgadh* (pp. 85–88), and ‘Di-Moladh Chabair Feidh’, beg. *Gu bheil mi air mo bhoradh* (pp. 139–48). ‘Màrai Shugaideach’, beg. *A Mharai shugaideach ’s ròsach riùteach thu* (pp. 96–97), is in a different category: a popular song which John had from some other source, and which he now published under the poet’s name for the first time.

Unlike Ross’s poems (which had been subsidised by Sir Francis Alexander Mackenzie) but like *An Leobhar Liath*, the book was published by John himself ‘to be sold by all booksellers’. The first impression (App., no. 4a) appears to have been printed in a hurry in 1834, but the second included John’s dedication to the Ossianic Society of Glasgow, dated 10 December 1834, and was – not surprisingly – published in 1835 (App., no. 4b).

John’s edition of Mac Mhaighstir Alastair may be seen in the context of his change of residence, which had opened up new territory for his activities – Perthshire and Argyll. It was a long time now since James Robertson had suggested to him the idea of publishing an anthology containing examples of all the best poetry extant in Gaelic, from Ossian down to his own time,

with biographical introductions in English; according to Clach (p. 203), John spent twelve years travelling the Highlands, north, south and west, gathering materials and putting together a large list of subscribers not only for his *magnum opus* but for other intended publications as well. The years in question were those from 1824 to 1836, when he was between eighteen and thirty.

The first direct result was a ‘trial’ anthology, *Co’-Chruinneachadh de dh’Oranan Taoghta*, published by Duncan Macvean in Glasgow in 1836 (App., no. 5). John’s name does not appear in the book, perhaps because of his known character, but some years ago he was stated unequivocally to have been the compiler (Blankenhorn 1978: 50; cf. Blankenhorn 2019: 372), and it is an opinion with which I am in complete agreement. The ‘Preface’ (pp. 3–4), subscribed ‘Glasgow, / Sept. 21, 1835’, bears some of John’s hallmarks – scathing criticism of ‘ignorant’ collectors; specific mention of ‘the eminent poetess, Mary McLeod’, of Mac Mhaighstir Alastair’s poem ‘A’ Bhanarach Dhonn’, and of his grandson ‘the late Allan Macdonald of Laig, in the isle of Eigg’; the writer’s statement that he has collected ‘some notices of the Highland bards’ which ‘cannot be inserted in a short preface’; a whiff of scandal concerning Kenneth Mackenzie, Strath-na-sealg, who wrote ‘two songs . . . on the same girl, who was his own servant’; and an obvious delight in a type of community activity which was anathema to the evangelicals of his day, the enactment of ‘Raghal agus Caristine’ by two travelling packmen, ‘one of them performing the part of Carastine, in women’s clothes, to the great delight of the audience’. The text consists of forty-five poems, of which about thirteen appear to be of Ross-shire origin.

The *Co’-Chruinneachadh* must have sold well, because Duncan Macvean now purchased from John the remaining stock of Ross’s poems and reissued the book in 1836 with a fresh title-page (App., no. 6). Also published in 1836 was the edition of *Eachdraidh Mhic-Cruislig* which survives today (App., no. 7), printed for John by Bell & Bain (who had also printed Ross’s poems and the *Co’-Chruinneachadh*). I am sure that Clach was right in thinking that he had seen a book dated 1833 consisting of Ross’s poems and *Eachdraidh Mhic-Cruislig* in one volume. That does not mean, however, that the latter was published in 1833; it could have been brought together in 1836 with unbound copies of the 1833 edition of Ross’s poems. As the ‘Preface’ to *Eachdraidh Mhic-Cruislig* is of great interest, here it is in full.

The following tale has been long known, and often related in the Isle of Skye. It is mentioned by Boswell, who visited that island with Dr. Johnson in 1773. It is one of those tales which amused our forefathers during the long winter evenings, as they sat in a circle round the fire placed in the middle of the floor;—a fashion which is now declining fast, and will in all probability, soon disappear entirely.

The tales of the Highlanders are generally of a wild and romantic character; full of wonderful and surprising adventures, and supernatural exploits. We are sorry that many of them have not been collected and published before they are totally lost. We cannot forget the pleasure we derived from them in childhood, and, after a lapse of many years, we still retain some faint traces of the wonderful exploits of the hero who passed over the bridge of one hair, with the sword of light in his hand.

The tale of “*Corra-chriostag agus Plocan an Ruadhair*,” or the History of the Thriftless Wife, is very interesting.

Mac Cruislig may be called *The Highland Rogue*; his pranks are amusing, but they

cannot be called harmless. His tricks upon his master are both mischievous and wicked; but there is a sort of poetical justice in the punishment of the priest. His adventures in the island remind us of the exploits of Jack the Giant Killer.

J. McK.

GLASGOW, *August 8th*, 1836.

A few comments on this are necessary. Firstly, Boswell's reference to the tale is indirect. One of his (and Johnson's) fellow-guests in Raasay House in 1773 was Alexander MacLeod of Muiravenside, who had long been in exile on account of the part he had played in the '45 (Chapman 1970: 267): "Sandie Macleod, who has at times an excessive flow of spirits, and had it now, was, in his days of absconding, known by the name of *McCruslick*, which it seems was the designation of a kind of wild man in the Highlands, something between Proteus and Don Quixotte; and so he was called here. He made much jovial noise."

Secondly, John's reference to the need to collect and publish Gaelic tales was timely. The Grimms had published their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in 1812–15. Thomas Keightley's *The Fairy Mythology* had appeared in 1828, with a chapter on the Scottish Highlands. John rightly chose to publish the story in all its earthy richness, very much (I imagine) as he had heard it; it was, I think, the first Gaelic tale ever to be published in the original and in full.

Thirdly, what John calls 'Corra-chriostag agus Plocan an Ruadhair' is indeed an interesting tale, but it has been collected, published and discussed elsewhere – GUL MS Gen. 1090 (28): 1–5 (Fr Allan McDonald); Campbell 1940: 104–07; Carmichael 1971: 50–51; MacilleDhuibh 2002; Black 2002: 414. The tale to be told here, in order to assess John's tastes and those of his customers, and to consider if his comments upon it are justified, is John's 'Eachdraidh Mhic-Crùislig' itself.

For the name Mac-Crùislig and its antiquity see Black 2005: 446. Mac-Crùislig and his brother Präbrösg, says John, are sons of a well-to-do farmer and his wife who are so hospitable and generous that they die of cold in *Bliadhna an t-Sneachda Bhuidhe*. (This touch may be an echo of the famine year 1783, cf. MacilleDhuibh 1997.) Präbrösg ('Rheumy Eye', 'Bleary Eye') is simply a foil for his brother, who by implication is singularly smart, clear-sighted and well-focused. Mac-Crùislig cheats Präbrösg of his inheritance, and gets him a job as a *sgalag* (farm-servant) with *tuathanach machrach a bha dlù dhoibh* – a neighbouring Lowland farmer. The work is so hard and the food so poor that Präbrösg only lasts a week, so Mac-Crùislig (sportingly enough, one would have thought) takes his place (p. 5).

Thog Mac-cruislig air gu taigh an tuathanaich; ri taobh sruthain ro'n dorus thachair nighean an tuathanaich ris agus i ri glanadh mhàrag, dh'fheòraich i "cia as da, is càite a bha e dol?" Thuird gu'm b'esan brathair Phrärbrüisg a bha gu bhi na sgalaig aig a h-athair gu latha-buidhe Bealltainn. Dh' fharaid i brath ainme; thubhaird e gur e màrag a b'ainm da riabh. "Gum meal thu d'ainm a sheoid," ars ise; thug e sin an taigh air, ach mas gann a shuidh e, dh' fharraid bean an tuathanaich:—"Brath t-ainm a Dhiulaich?" "S b' ainm dhomh riabh P\*\*, a bhean an taighe, thugaibh sibhse an t-ainm as miann leibh fein orm," arsa Mac-cruislig.



Ma thuiteam na h-òidhche chruinnich an teaghlach cruinn agus ghabh iad an suipeir, gu math de lùban-dubha, de mhàragan, agus de dh' isbeanan, agus chaidh gach neach a laidhe gu seasgair na leabaidh fein, ach lochd chadail cha d' rinn Mac-cruislig. Gus na leig se e-fein na shineadh ri taobh nighean fir an taighe. Leig an nighean chòir glaodh bais aisde ri h-athair airson teasraiginn, òr bha Mac-cruislig ri cruaidh fharach gaoil oirre. “A Dhuinne! Dhuine! thigibh grad tha, mǎrag air mo mhàrbhadh!” chan eisdeadh a h-athair ri gearan ach fhreagair e mar so:—“Ma tha a mhòsag ith thusa ni's lugha rithisd.” Lean an nighean air glaoghaich, “Mǎrag air mo mharbhadh,” gus fadheireadh gun dh' éirich a mǎthair suas le solus cainnle ga h-amharc, agus faigheadar Mac-cruislig ann an àite mi-theisteil, air chòr agus gun ghlaogh i mar chruathas guth curaidh:—“P\*\* ann an gobhal mo nighinn, 'fhir an taighe, éirich.” “Mo chead aice,” ars an tuathanach, is e fās bodhar ri glaodh, “mas e sin fath a gearain is beag mo thruas rithe.” 'Nuair thainig a mhadainn mhinich bean-an-taigh d'a fear earachdas na h-òidhche, air chòr is gur beag nach do dh' aontaich e na h-iallan a thoirt as, agus Mac-crùislig a leigeadh fa sgaoil, “ach,” ars esan, “mas dian mi sin bheir mi dùlan fathas da.”

(“Mac-Crùislig carried on to the farmer's house, and encountered the farmer's daughter, who was busy cleaning puddings at a stream in front of the door. She asked him where he'd come from and where he was going. He said he was Bleary-Eye's brother, who was to be working for her father as a farm labourer until Yellow Beltane Day. She enquired as to his name, and he said he'd always been called Pudding. ‘What a nice name, dearie,’ she said. Then he went into the house. But he'd hardly sat down when the farmer's wife asked, ‘What's your name, my lad?’ ‘I've always been called C—t, goodwife, but you can call me whatever you like,’ said Mac-Crùislig.

“In the evening the family gathered round and had a fine supper of black puddings, blood puddings and sausages, then everyone went to his own cosy bed. But Mac-Crùislig didn't sleep a wink, then in due course he got into bed beside the goodman's daughter. The darling girl cried out like the dickens to her father for help, for Mac-Crùislig was making love to her very energetically. ‘Dad! Dad! Come quick! A bit of Pudding has murdered me!’ Her father wouldn't listen to her complaints, and simply replied, ‘In that case, you daft lassie, don't eat so much next time.’ The girl carried on wailing, ‘A bit of Pudding has murdered me,’ until at last her mother got up by candlelight to come and see her, and found Mac-Crùislig in an improper place, so that she cried out in a great warrior-like voice, ‘There's a bit of C—t in my daughter's crotch! Goodman, get up!’ ‘I can't say I object,’ said the farmer, growing deaf to her shouting. ‘If that's all she's complaining about, she'll have no sympathy from me.’ When morning came, the goodwife explained the night-time drama to her husband, so that he nearly agreed to have the thongs taken out of him, and to let Mac-Crùislig go. ‘But,’ said he, ‘before I do that, I'll set him a challenge.’”)

The trick played by Mac-Crùislig is a variant of one commonly played by women in traditional stories who suffer the unwelcome advances of some otherworld creature such as an *ùraisg*. The creature asks the woman's name, and she replies – as a girl might well do in such a situation – *Mi fhìn*. “Myself.” At the first opportunity she spills scalding water over him, and he runs off to the

protection of his fellow-creatures, who demand to know who has done this to him. *Mi fhìn*, he says. “Oh, in that case,” they say, “there’s nothing to be done. If it had been someone else, we would have killed them and burned their house around their ears” – or words to that effect. (See for example Campbell 1890, vol. 2: 206, and MacDougall and Calder 1910: 298–301.) As to the nature of the *iallan* ‘thongs’ mentioned at the end, this is made clear in a version published by Campbell (1890, vol. 2: 319, 333), according to which one of the terms of Mac-Crùislig’s engagement was that if either party came to rue the bargain, according to law ‘a thong shall be taken out of his skin, from the back of his head to his heel’. The motif is equally prominent in a short and censored-looking version of the tale (NLS MS Adv. 50.1.10, ff. 340–41) sent to Campbell by A. McRae, Diabaig, who had taken it down from Norman Mackenzie, Diabaig, who had learned it from Murdoch Mackenzie, Diabaig. It begins: *Bha ann o shean an Alba duine da b’ ainm Macruslaig, agus air dha bhi na dhuine og gun obair aige, ghabh e muinntearas aig tuathanach fearuinn, agus daighean anns a chordadh, be a peanas bha gu bhi air a leagail air an neach a bhristeadh a mhuinntearas, gu robh gu a thighean às iall dhromadh, iall tharadh, agus iall theanachadh nan iall.* (“Long ago in Scotland there was a man named Macruslaig, and having been an unemployed young man, he engaged with a farmer, and set firmly in the agreement, the punishment to be brought down upon whichever party broke his engagement was that there were to come out of him a back thong, a belly thong, and a thong to tighten the thongs.”) See also ‘The Farmer Who Went Back on His Agreement’, Bruford and MacDonald 1994: 202–04, 456–57.

The farmer in John’s version now sets Mac-Crùislig a series of four challenges, one at a time, each ending with the farmer declaring: *Cha mhor nach do gheill mi gu na h-iallan a thoirt asam, ach ’mas dian mi sin bheir mi dubhlan eile dhut.* “I’ve nearly consented to the thongs being taken out of me, but before I do that I’ll set you another challenge.” Each rebounds upon him, resulting in Mac-Crùislig (1) enjoying his wife and daughter, (2) pulling apart his new barn, (3) sadistically destroying his flock of sheep, (4) gouging the eyes out of his oxen and setting fire to his stacks of oats, barley, rye, pease and hay. This has a contemporary feel. A Jacobinical sense of social and economic resentment was being expressed at the way Lowland farmers had enriched themselves since 1783 at the expense of the Highland people.

With the farmer put in his place, the target shifts. Each of the next three paragraphs begins with Mac-Crùislig and the farmer ploughing together in spring on *Iomaire-Mhic-Bharais*, a name which can only have been chosen because it belongs to Moidart and therefore to Catholicism (cf. *Mac Mharais*, Bruford and MacDonald 1994: 109, 450, and *Àirigh mhic Mharoich*, Black 2005: 187, 438–39). In each case the plough breaks, and when Mac-Crùislig is sent to fetch something to repair it he finds the farmer’s wife or daughter enjoying themselves with *Sagard an Teampuill*. This may be translated ‘the priest of the local Pre-Reformation church’. On the first occasion Mac-Crùislig notices ‘bord soghail air cuir tharais leis gach mirean as diaran a b’ fhearr no chéile, sgaoilte fan comhair “*ri cùir ann doibh fein agus às do chach*”’ – ‘a sumptuous table overflowing with the best of all food and drink, spread in front of them “*to give to them and take from others*”’. The italics are John’s, and we must note that since it is ploughing time, this is taking place during the season of greatest annual hardship to the Highland people, not to mention Lent.

The first of the three episodes ends with Mac-Crùislig selling the priest the farmer’s *cistè-mhine* (meal-chest) for two hundred merks (*da-chiad marg*), of which he gives the farmer fifty. The farmer is pleased. The second ends with Mac-Crùislig selling him the farmer’s *cliabh-clis* or

rather *cliabh-cleith* (which John explains in a Gaelic footnote is a cheese basket woven from hazel wands) for another two hundred merks, of which he gives the farmer a hundred. The farmer is delighted. On the third occasion he finds the priest with the farmer's daughter, her mother being away. He chases him and catches up with him in the confessional (p. 10).

“Chuir mo bhanna-mhaighstir mise gu do spòth,” arsa Mac-cruislig, “agus tha mi gu do bhuill uaisle thoirt da h-ionnsaidh, airson an cuir d’ on Roimh thun a Phāpa, gu fianais a thogail na d’ aghaidh.” Rinn Mac-cruislig mar gheall e, ghearr e bacan an t-sagairt bho sgathan, agus thug e’n taigh air.

(“‘My mistress has sent me to castrate you,’ said Mac-Crùislig, ‘and I have to bring her your *buill uaisle* (“noble members”) to send to the Pope in Rome in order to serve as evidence against you.’ Mac-Crùislig did as he had promised – he cut the priest’s front door off its hinges, and went home.”)

John here treats us to a Gaelic footnote on the rare word *bacan*, which appears from the context to mean ‘penis’, though I have preferred the euphemism ‘front door’. Next day, after Mac-Crùislig and the farmer have been out hunting, word comes that the priest, not surprisingly, is on his death-bed, and the farmer sends Mac-Crùislig to the priest with a *crögan* (bowl) of his wife’s best venison broth, *on tha sibh cho mor aig a cheile* – ‘since you are on such good terms with each other’. Mac-Crùislig goes only as far as the back of the dyke, where he substitutes the priest’s privates for the venison, then comes back saying: *Cha chreideadh an sägard gur sibh a chuir da iunnsaidh an t-eanaraich, is uime sin cha ghabhadh e bh’uams’ e*. “The priest wouldn’t believe that it was yourself who sent him the broth, so he wouldn’t take it from me.”

Off goes the farmer’s wife with the broth, and what ensues is told with great relish (p. 11).

“Tha so gu math, math, a bhean-an-taighe.” “Ged a biodh e ni’ b’ fharr’ fhir mo ghráidh,” ars is, “B’e nur beatha-sa d’a ionnsaidh, tha e math, gun teagamh, ach se’n t-ìochdar as fearr non t-uachdar.” Cha b’ fhada bha ’n sagard a ’g-òl as a chrögan, nuair a thog e anns an spain a chuid bacanan fein . . .

(“‘This is really excellent, goodwife.’ ‘Even if it were better still, my love,’ said she, ‘you’re welcome to it. It’s good all right, but what’s down below is better than what’s on top.’ The priest hadn’t been supping out of the bowl for long before he’d picked up his own privates in the spoon . . .”)

In revenge, the priest demands what we would call a ‘French kiss’ and when the farmer’s wife puts her tongue in his mouth he bites it off. She comes home gibbering *blă-là-là-là-lâe*. The farmer asks Mac-Crùislig what she is saying. He explains that it is Latin which the priest has taught her. She is telling them, he says, that she will be dead by midnight, and that they are to break open her secret chest in which she has been putting by all manner of fine food and drink for a wake.

Both the farmer’s wife and the priest die that night, but unfortunately for Mac-Crùislig the priest’s *cléireach* (clerk) hears his last confession and goes straight to the farmer to tell him everything that has happened. Mac-Crùislig having been the sole cause of his ruin, the farmer’s friends advise him to send him with a herd of pigs to *eilean Fomhair mor nan seachd ceann, nan*

*seachd meall, agus nan seachd muineal* (the isle of the great giant of the seven heads, the seven humps and the seven necks), on the assumption that he will never return.

The arrival of Mac-Crùislig's pigs in the island causes a fight for possession of them in which *fomhair nan ceann, nam meall, 's nam muineal* is slain by *fomhair buidhe uamh an oir*, "the yellow-haired giant of the cave of gold". Mac-Crùislig is terrified, but the yellow-haired giant's wife is kind to him and hides him *fo bhial dacha bha staigh* – in a big vat she had in the house. That evening when the giant comes home he declares (p. 13): "*Fiū fàu fomhagraich tha mi faotainn fàileadh an fhàrbhalaich an so.*" ("Fee fi fo fum, I smell a stranger here.")

So Mac-Crùislig is caught, but his luck being what it is, instead of slaughtering him there and then the giant decides to fatten him up first. This leads to four contests, each of which Mac-Crùislig wins by trickery. Following the fourth contest – to see which of them could eat the most – he slays the giant with his own *claidhe-soluis* ('sword of light'). After taking a fond farewell (*soraidh ghraidh*) of the giant's wife he sets sail for home in the giant's *biorlainn-luingeanachd* ("sailing galley"). There is a traditional 'run' to emphasise his triumph over adversity (p. 15): *thog e na siùil bhreaca bhaidealach an aghaidh nan crann fada feudanacha, fulangacha . . .* "He hoisted the speckled billowing sails upon the tall straight long-enduring masts . . ."

It is hardly a story that could end on a heroic note, however. The jaws of the farmer and his household drop when they see him coming back. He promptly plays a practical joke on them with pig's tails in the sand, and the story ends (p. 16) with the words, *na'n biodh na h-earbuill ni bu righne, bhiodh an sgialachd ni' b'fhaide* - "If the tails had been tougher, the tale would have been longer."

John has chosen to make available to his customers a story which, though it ends with a version of 'Jack the Giant-Killer', is Jacobinical in content. Its targets are the landowning class and the Catholic Church, which, in the popular mindset of the time, were one and the same. The middle section is exactly in line with the poem 'Dòmhnallan Dubh' which he had published in *An Leobhar Liath* (Black 2001: 78–81), even down to the use of merks as currency, an eighteenth-century feature. John's verdict on Mac-Crùislig in his preface that 'his tricks upon his master are both mischievous and wicked; but there is a sort of poetical justice in the punishment of the priest' shows that in the 1830s the Catholic Church was still a soft target, and the landowning class a dangerous one.

A quarter of a century later J. F. Campbell published his *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, duly taken down by his team of collectors according to his golden rule: "Write down exactly what you hear." Nevertheless, 'Sgeulachd Mhac a Rusgaich' (the version of 'Eachdraidh Mhic-Crùislig' collected for him by John Dewar) was put through the mill of Victorian prudery. As printed, it consists of the 'farmer' and 'giant' sections, the 'priest' section having disappeared, and while it remains choc-full of violence and cruelty to animals, there is no sex. Campbell explains this as follows (1890, vol. 2: 342):

Mr. Dewar writes:—"Tradition says that Gille Neumh Mac Rusgaich disguised himself in woman's apparel, went to Iona, passed for a nun, and caused some of the sisters to become frail sisters. There is a long tale about him and his sister. She would get into service to attend ladies, and Mac-a-Rusgaich would disguise himself in his sister's clothes—but that part of the sgeulachd was so unbecoming that I did not write it. I heard

the part which I did write as early as 1810, from an old man of the name of Alexander Dewar in Arrochar.”

The story of MacRuslaig, as it is sometimes called, is very widely spread, and, as Dewar says, part of it is “unbecoming.” I believe it is printed in Gaelic, but I have been unable hitherto to see the book.—J. F. C.

A very similar story is known in Sutherland.

This Iona story, sometimes associated with *Eilean nam Bannaomh* (Priory Island) in Loch Tay, gave rise to the proverb cited by Nicolson (1951: 80) as *Cha b’ann mar a fhuair Mac-Rùslain na mnathan* – ‘Not as MacRuslan got the women’ (see also Watson 1926: 210–11).

The Diabaig version whose beginning I quoted above consists merely of the farmer’s four tasks. As in John’s version, each rebounds upon him, resulting this time in Mac-Crùislig (1) gouging the eyes out of his oxen, (2) sadistically destroying his flock of sheep, and (3) murdering his mother. The fourth task concludes the story. On the evidence of John’s version it should result, I think, in Mac-Crùislig enjoying the farmer’s daughters. I can make little sense of it, however, which is why I believe it has been censored, perhaps by A. McRae who took it down for J. F. Campbell. Here it is without further comment (NLS MS Adv. 50.1.10, f. 341v).

*An ath latha chuir e e a dh’iarruidh braidean nan each, is iad a dol a threabhadh, dh’fhalbh e agus thubhairt e ri dithis nighean an tuathanach [sic] gun robh ordugh aigesan bhon n’athair orra, cha robh iad ga chreidsin, ach chaidh aon dhiubh mach maille ris dh’fhaicinn, dh’eigh e, Co an té dhiu? Thubhairt an tuathanach le cheille iad; agus air dha teachd dhachaidh bha e cho diombach is gun do leig e a cheud [sic] le Macruslaig, aig an ām an deidh a pheanas fhaotuinn.*

(“Next day he sent for the horse collars, as they were going to be ploughing. He went off and told the farmer’s two daughters that he had orders for them from their father. They didn’t believe him, but one of them went out with him to see. He shouted, ‘Which one of the pair?’ The farmer replied, ‘Both of them.’ And when he came home he was so annoyed that he let Mac-Crùislig go as soon as he’d been punished.”)

*Eachdraidh Mhic-Cruislig* marked John’s swan-song as an itinerant bookseller. Perhaps the survival of three copies (in New College, the Signet Library and the British Library) is an indication of unsold stock, for in the year of its publication, 1836, he obtained a situation as book-keeper at the Glasgow University printing office in Dunlop Street. He was now under the eagle eye of an employer – Edward Khull, founding partner of Khull, Blackie & Co., now Printer to the University – for the first time since he had been an apprentice carpenter at Conon Bridge twelve long years before (Moore 1996: 60).

With his next book, therefore, he trod carefully. There was nothing intrinsically controversial about *An Cruiteara Gàèlach: The Gaelic Melodist, being a Selection of the Most Popular Highland Love Songs* (App., no. 8), and he was able proudly to designate himself on the title-page as ‘Honorary Member of the Glasgow Ossianic Society; Editor of the Songs of Ross’. It was a tiny book which could be kept in waistcoat pocket or in sporran, ready for the call to sing a song – a sign of urban decadence, no doubt, in the eyes of those for whom Gaelic tradition was an oral

one maintained by memory alone. It was the first of John's books to be published in Edinburgh, where D. R. Collie & Son, the publishers, appear to have spotted a gap in the market for a book still smaller than the *Co'-Chruinneachadh*.

Duncan Macvean's response was to commission from John a 'Memoir' of the life of Alastair Mac Mhaighstir Alastair and to preface it to a new (fifth) edition of the *Aiseiridh*. In one respect this edition was 'cauld kale het up', since the basic text of the poems was unchanged, and indeed Maclean remarked (1915: 191) that it 'seems to be what was left unsold of the impression of 1834'. In another respect Macvean allowed John to be true to himself and to the man whom he unequivocally described in his 'Memoir' as the greatest Gaelic poet who had ever lived – a number of copies of a supplement were printed, containing eight poems more or less indecent in nature which had not been published since 1764. Curiously these included the 'Òran d'a Chéile Nuadh-Phòsta', which contains subtle phallic imagery and evokes the 'Song of Solomon', as has been shown by Sarah Fraser (2002), but it is not conventionally regarded as an indecent poem: the reason may very well be that John's nineteenth-century Gaelic readership was much more alive to subtleties of all kinds than the twentieth-century one.

### *Sàr Obair*

John was now anxious to publish *Sàr Obair* as soon as possible. He had collected many subscriptions for it, but his list of subscribers was falling out of date. Not that his travels were entirely at an end: at some point during the years 1835–41 – probably in 1835–36, I would guess, before he was tied down by his job in Khull's office – he had made a prolonged stay in Liverpool, 'taking the names of subscribers for his famous collection of the works and lives of the Gaelic bards' (Mackenzie 1891: 146). On the title-page of *Sàr Obair* he describes himself as an honorary member of the Gaelic Society of London, so he must have spent some time in that city also, and made the acquaintance of prominent members of the society such as James Logan, who in due course provided him with an introduction for *Sàr Obair*.

It was to be many times the size of any of John's previous books, and, financially and otherwise, he was unable to publish it on his own account. According to Clach (p. 203) he sold the copyright 'for a mere trifle' to Macgregor, Polson, & Co. of 75 Argyle Street, Glasgow, at the same time engaging to see it through the press. This was such tiring work that his constitution, never very robust, was undermined to an extent from which it never recovered.

There is, however, another reason for John's being under a great deal of stress at this time. "It is not generally known," says Clach (p. 206), "but his brother informs us, that Mackenzie was also sub-editor of the *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, with 'Tormod Og,' who could write Gaelic phonetically, and who carried on the correspondence with his contributors and the outside world, while John did the actual work of editor."

This is a statement of no small importance to Gaelic literature. 'Tormod Og' was a *nom-de-plume* of the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod (1783–1862). He was already 57 years old in 1840, but by the time the potato blight of 1846 had taken its toll he had earned himself a new and lasting nickname, *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, bestowed on him for efforts far beyond the call of duty on behalf of the suffering crofters and cottars of the Highlands. Minister of St Columba's in Glasgow since 1835, he had been trying desperately since the 1820s to provide Gaelic speakers with reading-matter in their own language. His ground-breaking periodical *An Teachdaire Gaelach* had run for

three years, from 1829 to 1831, and in 1831 he and the Rev. Dr Daniel Dewar had published a dictionary.

Now, apparently with John's help, he was trying again. And since he towers over all other Gaelic literary figures in the nineteenth century and is seen as the founding father of Gaelic prose, it is fascinating to be told – conspiratorially as it were – by John's seafaring brother that he 'could write Gaelic phonetically', and that John did 'the actual work of editor'. The implication is that, in John's view at least, this celebrated writer and lexicographer had never learned to write the language properly and depended on others to correct his work. It is an allegation which may have more to do with bad handwriting than with actual ignorance, and must be tested against documentary evidence; for present purposes I would simply say that John was clearly in an awkward situation. *Cuairtear nan Gleann* (App., no. 11) came out every month for three years, from March 1840 to June 1843; if John sub-edited every one of its forty issues, we can understand the strain he was under while *Sàr Obair* was going through the press. It was worthwhile, however. The *Cuairtear* served a public desperate for reading-matter and was eagerly read in ceilidh-house and pulpit alike. Maclean Sinclair (1898) had fond recollections of reading it in his schooldays in Nova Scotia: "My real text-book in history was not Chambers' British Empire, but Norman Macleod's *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, a most valuable and attractive work."

*Sàr Obair* (App., no. 12) duly appeared in 1841 in two parts, and it is of biographical interest, I suspect, that MacLeod noticed the first one (in the April 1841 issue of the *Cuairtear*: vol. 2, p. 60), but not the second.

*So leabhar ùr do dh-òrain thaghte bha air an cruinneachadh le Mr Iain Mac Coinnich air feadh na Gàidhealtachd. Tha a' cheud earrann a mach, agus ann an ùine ghoirid bidh an earrann eile deas airson a cur a mach mar an ceudna . . . Cha d' thainig riabh as a' chlà leabhar Gàilig a's sgiolta 's a's eireachdala tha air a chur a mach na an leabhar so . . . Tha seòrsa do eachdraidh aithghearr air a toirt seachad le Mr. Mac-Coinnich air gach aon do na bàird ainmeil so; agus da-rìribh rinn esan a chuid féin gu gléusda: 's airidh e air mór-chliù. 'N uair thig an earrann eile 'mach bheir sinn cùnnas ni's faide air a' chùis.*

("This is a new book of choice songs which have been collected by Mr John Mackenzie throughout the Highlands. The first part is out, and in a short time the other part will also be ready for publication . . . No Gaelic book has ever been printed which has been more skilfully and beautifully produced than this book . . . Mr Mackenzie has provided a sort of brief history for each of these famous poets; and indeed he has carried out his particular task with efficiency: he deserves great acclaim. When the other part comes out we will provide a longer account of the matter.")

We can only speculate as to why MacLeod chose the words he chose, and why he neglected to fulfil his promise. Did the contents of the second half of *Sàr Obair* confirm his evident apprehensions about the 'sort of brief history' that John so enjoyed telling? Did he dislike the choice of poems? Or was it more personal than that? Did John leave his service under a cloud between the appearance of the two parts in the summer of 1841? If so, was *Sàr Obair* the reason? Did John's persistent mining of a rich underground seam in Gaelic literary tradition threaten to

destabilise his grand vision of a new social contract for the Highland people by which, in return for unquestioning loyalty to their landlords, to the Crown and to the Established Church of Scotland, they were to be allowed to practise a suitably codified form of their language, their songs, their sports, their customs?

I am reminded of a chilling passage in MacLeod's celebrated essay on *Oidhche Challainn*, first published in December 1829, in which Eòghan Bàn the ground-officer comes around to tell the people to have their shinty-sticks ready, because 'the family' wish them to celebrate New Year in the traditional manner. The people take great pleasure in the invitation, says MacLeod (1829–30: 165; cf. Clerk 1910: 396), the only people left out that year being *Calum dubh nan gabhar* ('black Calum of the goats') and *clann Eoghainn mhòir nan cluas* ('the children of Big Hugh of the ears'). *Cha b'ann gun aobhar a rinneadh so, ach o'n oidhche sin bha'm binn a mach san dùthaich, agus b'èiginn doibh iad fein a thoirt as.* "This was not done without reason; but from that night on their sentence was known all over the district, and they had to make themselves scarce."

Did our John share the fate of Calum Dubh nan Gabhar and Clann Eoghainn Mhòir nan Cluas?

My own opinion is that what happened was this. As a busy man is likely to do, MacLeod admired the cover, glanced at the poems here and there, read John's foreword, then put the book aside to read it later. In the foreword he saw the quaint but reassuring words (p. vii\*):

Where spurious verses and monastic interpolations had intruded themselves, they have, of course, been thrown out. The same system of ejection has been carried to indecent phrases and objectionable passages; and, while nothing of the fire, or grandeur, or general beauty has been lost, the utmost vigilance has been exercised that nothing should be allowed to creep in, which could offend the most delicate, or afford ground of complaint to the most fastidious.

There are places where this has been observed to the letter in a very obtrusive way. A glance at p. 210 of *Sàr Obair* and p. 284 of *An Lasair* will show that John withheld the last four stanzas of Rob Donn's 'Turas Dhàibhidh do dh'Arcaibh', which contain ribald remarks relating to a series of named women including a minister's wife. Curiously, these had been published in 1829 by the Rev. Dr Mackintosh MacKay, a future Free Church moderator, but John printed four rows of asterisks instead. (I suppose there is a hierarchy about these things.) When Caraid nan Gaidheal settled down in his armchair to read the book properly, however, he would have begun to suspect that the ringing statement in John's foreword and the equally clamorous rows of asterisks had been put in to get the book past its non-Gaelic-speaking publishers and censors. Suffice to say that at pp. 67, 74, 86, 95, 202, 203, 205, 209, 212, 215, 253, 291 and 364 we find very distinct reflections of the taste of the man who had published *An Leobhar Liath*, *Eachdraidh Mhic-Cruislig*, Ross's 'Òran do dh'Fhear-Turais' and Mac Mhaighstir Alastair's 'Mìomholadh Móraig'. (Needless to say, the concentration at pp. 202–15 is in the work of Rob Donn himself.) What is more, John has a way of practising self-censorship through innuendo which can sail close to libel. With regard to John Roy Stewart he says (p. 265): "We do not mean to ascribe to poetic or military genius all the recklessness which a sober-plodding world compliments it with; and we, therefore, suppress a gossiping story in which our warrior-poet figures with the Lady of the Lord Provost of Glasgow."



On the other hand, one wonders what MacLeod would have thought of the fact that John omitted eight stanzas of ‘Òran Mòr MhicLeòid’ on the stated grounds (p. 93) that ‘we think their insertion would be an outrage on our readers’ sense of propriety’. The missing stanzas survive today – not eight, in fact, but fifteen. They are not obscene, nor are they seditious, nor are they satirical in the Gaelic sense, but they are objectively and scathingly critical of the spendthrift behaviour of Ruairi Òg, chief of the MacLeods from 1693 to 1699. The issue was discussed by the Rev. William Matheson (1970: 132–35), who remarked that ‘in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century there was a certain fear of giving offence, not only to the MacLeods, but also to others who betrayed their trust as chiefs and ruined themselves by behaving in the manner so scathingly described in the verses omitted’. Matheson weighs in the balance an anecdote of John’s concerning the same poem (*Sàr Obair*, p. 93):

This song was a favourite with Sir Alexander McKenzie, of Gairloch, who paid a person to sing it to him every Christmas night. One of Sir Alexander’s tenants went to him one day to seek a lease of a certain farm. The laird desired him to sit down and sing *Oran Mòr Mhic-Leòid* till he should write the document. The tenant remarked that he certainly set great value on that song. “Yes,” was his reply, “and I am sorry that every Highland laird has not the same regard for it.”

Matheson suggests (1970: 133) that ‘perhaps Sir Alexander MacKenzie of Gairloch was allowed to hear only an expurgated version after all’, but I do not think that is what John is telling us. Matheson might equally have pointed to John’s extreme sensitivity in the matter of Ruairi Òg’s cultural identity. After telling us that Ruairi neglected Dunvegan Castle and dispensed with the services of his father’s bard, harper, piper and fool ‘to make room for grooms, gamekeepers, factors, dogs, and the various *et ceteras* of a fashionable English establishment’, John hastens to add (*Sàr Obair*, p. 93): “We here beg the reader to note, that we have not said Rory was an English gentleman, but only hinted that he aped the manners of one.” The Highland people had set up a select few of their own relatives to lead them in war and peace, judge them in court, patronise their arts and serve as role models to their young; the idea that, thanks to exogamy, some chiefs had totally ceased to do any of these things was too painful to bear. I think, or rather feel, that John’s omission of the stanzas was not done out of fear, as Matheson supposed, but out of self-censorship – the same act of denial that Màiri Mhór nan Òran was still practising fifty years later when she blamed *na Sasannaich* for all the woes of Skye.

I believe that John’s respect for the distinguished editor of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* was another factor in his decision. Anglicised landlords were unlikely to take exception to stanzas in old poems which they were unable to read. John knew that ‘Tormod Òg’ was trying to tread a fine line of compromise between landlords and people, and would have agreed with the strictures expressed in the song. But Tormod Òg was a MacLeod. Sir Alexander Mackenzie prided himself on not letting his people down, but Sir Alexander’s pride was the MacLeods’ shame, and the current chief of the MacLeods was Norman, a decent man who was to beggar himself in the famine years of 1846–48 by working with his namesake to alleviate distress on his estate.

In John’s treatment of Lachlan MacPherson of Strathmashie – a man entirely in John’s mould, one would have thought – there is a curious equivocation of judgement (pp. 260–63). John prints ‘A’ Bhriogais Lachdann’, with its memorable jibe at *a’ bhriogais leibideach / Nach deanadh anns*

*na preasan clann* ('the clumsy breeches / Which could make no children in the bushes'), but suppresses one of my own personal favourites, 'Aoir nan Luch' (Black 2001: 218–23), which, he says, 'although not destitute of merit, is not much to our liking'. I like 'Aoir nan Luch' because it is full of innocent good humour. Is it possible that John disliked it, or rather feared it, because some of that humour was at the expense of the Duke of Atholl, a very powerful man?

*Sàr Obair* was a showcase product of John's office in Glasgow. It is the only one of his many books in which he subscribes his preface 'University Printing Office, / Glasgow'. His boss's name appears twice: "Glasgow: / Edward Khull, printer to the University, Dunlop Street." And: "Glasgow:—Printed at the University Press, by Edward Khull."

It begins, naturally, with a title-page. The wording of this in the first edition varies, depending upon whether Logan's introduction is bound in. Next – as frontispiece to the preface – comes an illustration on art paper: 'The Aged Bard' by B. Clayton, showing a white-robed, white-bearded old man reclining beside a stream with a young goat nestling in the crook of his arm. Clearly it was drawn to illustrate verse 7 of 'Miann a' Bhàird Aosda'; perhaps it was chosen by the publisher for the simple reason that he could understand it, being one of the few poems in the book for which John provided an English translation (in the form of an extended footnote). The verse is given underneath in Gaelic and English, taken from pp. 14 and 15, followed by: "Published by Macgregor, Polson. Sutherland & Co. Dublin." Clach tells us (p. 207), no doubt echoing a little piece of Gairloch folklore, that the old man is 'said to be a likeness' of the Gairloch poet Alexander Grant, *Bàrd Mór an t-Slagain* (1742–c.1820), and Dixon, who was perhaps not very familiar with the picture, turned the joke into a statement of fact (1886: 188): "A portrait of him, which they say was an excellent likeness, appeared in the first edition of John Mackenzie's 'Beauties of Gaelic Poetry'." One of Grant's poems, 'Fàilte na Cuthaig', appears in John's *Co'-Chruinneachadh* (App., no. 5), pp. 8–10.

There follows John's foreword in six pages, subscribed 'University Printing Office, / Glasgow, April 1, 1841'. Due to some kind of mix-up – probably Logan's introduction, pp. iii–lxi, was printed off before anyone thought to tell the printers that there was to be a foreword as well – it is paginated iii\*–viii\*. This curious blemish was maintained through several editions.

In these six pages John says more of interest, and says it better, than Logan in fifty-nine. Beginning with an explanation of the book's name, he moves on to speak of the childhood influences which inspired him to compile it, then of the inadequacies of existing collections, remarking that 'it was not until I had completely traversed the Highlands, and secured a variety of old manuscripts, that I ascertained the nature of the labour I had imposed upon myself'. The emphasis on acquiring old manuscripts rather than taking accurate field-notes is interesting – despite having opportunities that twentieth-century folklorists would have killed for, and having broken new ground with *Eachdraidh Mhic-Cruislig*, in methodological theory John appears to have felt a need to remain loyal to the memory of James Macpherson. It is startling to think that J. F. Campbell's scientifically noted *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* was only twenty years down the line.

Seldom in defensive mode for long, John goes on to speak darkly (p. iv\*) of 'the aspersions and insinuations which have been levelled at me' and of 'a class of men, whose assistance I had a right to expect in so national an undertaking,—I mean our clergymen and schoolmasters'. His complaint was echoed in due course by both J. F. Campbell (1890, vol. 1: vii, xxiii) and Alexander

Carmichael (1928: xxv–xxvii, xxx–xxxii). Clearly there were many who regarded the secular riches of the Gaelic language as an obstacle to be overcome rather than a treasure to be safeguarded. But John goes on to praise the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod ‘for his unwearied efforts to enlighten his countrymen, and to exalt them to a higher status of moral and intellectual excellence’, and to thank those clergymen and schoolmasters who had proved to be an exception to the rule.

After some remarks on grammar and orthography, he turns to the content of the book, saying that ‘the lives of the Bards form, perhaps, the most interesting part of the work’. This sort of thing is normally said as a compliment to the editor, and it is characteristic of Iain Alastair Òig that he gets in first and says it himself. He was, however, capable of being as generous as he was insecure, and he goes on (after referring to the chronological arrangement of the book, and some other matters) to devote more than half a page to thanking four specific individuals for their help, kindness and encouragement; as these people must therefore be seen as the principal influences on his life and work to date, I will try to say what I can about each of them in turn.

John’s great-uncle, James Robertson, Collector of Customs, Stornoway (1756–1840), initially suggested to him the idea of *Sàr Obair*. A ‘gentleman of high poetic talent’, he had much information about the poets, and possessed several written documents which John was able to use as a source for his anecdotes. He was a son of the Rev. James Robertson of Lochbroom (Mackenzie 1877–78a: 268; cf. Henderson 1905: 165–66, 231–51).

Sgt Donald MacPherson was born in Laggan c. 1788, and served for fourteen years in the 75th Regiment, but spent the rest of his life working as a bookseller at 54 Upper Ebury Street, Pimlico. He was Gaelic secretary to the Highland Society of London while Logan was English secretary (Mac a’ pharsuinn 1977: 207–08). A poet and amateur historian, in 1824 he had published *Melodies from the Gaelic*. At p. 370 of *Sàr Obair* John prints a translation MacPherson had made of ‘Màiri Laghach’, one of the poems in the ‘Aireamh Taghta’. His surviving papers are NLS MSS 14890–95. What he lacked in talent he made up for in enthusiasm. He it was, says John, who encouraged him to persevere with the work at a point when he had collected all his materials but had lost hope of ever being able to publish them. He explains that MacPherson ‘entered into my projects, and, by his warmly exercised influence, put me into a position in which I soon enjoyed the pleasing assurance of being able to carry my intentions into execution’. I think this means that MacPherson had used his clout as a bookseller to find him a publisher.

Archibald McNeil, WS, Edinburgh (1803–70), was fifth son of John McNeil of Colonsay, and therefore a member of the same talented family which produced Lord Colonsay, judge of the Court of Session, Sir John MacNeill, first chairman of the Board of Supervision for Poor Relief, and Sir Malcolm MacNeill, secretary of the Napier Commission and head of the Local Government Board (MacPhail 1989: 71). As Director in Chancery 1843–58 and Principal Clerk of Session 1858–70 (Will 1983: 209), he was Mackenzie’s most distinguished patron, and his special contribution to *Sàr Obair* lay in ‘urging others to give the work their support’ – in other words, obtaining wealthy subscribers in Edinburgh and amongst the landed classes. He was the author of *Notes on the Authenticity of Ossian’s Poems* (Edinburgh, 1868).

Lachlan Maclean (1798–1848), a native of the island of Coll, ran a hosiery business in Glasgow. A maker of hymns and an outstanding writer of Gaelic prose (Thomson 1994: 181), in 1835–36 he edited the short-lived *An Teachdaire Ùr Gaidhealach*. He published *A Historical*

*Account of Iona* (1833), *Adhamh agus Eubh, no Craobh-Sheanachais nan Gaël*, which put the academic case for Gaelic as the language of the Garden of Eden (1837), *The History of the Celtic Language* (1840), *Maighistir na' Modhannan: no Leabhar-Pòc a Ghaeil Òig*, a book of etiquette (1845), *Da Laoidh Nuadh* (1851), and other works. He had two nicknames, *Lachann nam Mogan* and *Lachainn na Gàidhlig*, presumably deriving from his business and his hobby. Kenneth MacDonald has pointed out (1990–92: 400–02) that in the late 1830s his shop at 23 Argyle Street was a favourite meeting place for Glasgow's 'Gaelic literati', the most prominent of whom, other than Maclean himself, were the Rev. Norman MacLeod, Evan MacColl and John himself. Maclean gave him the use of his library and helped him 'enlist public sympathy and support' – presumably by obtaining subscribers in Glasgow.

John goes out, as was his wont, with a bang. As a writer of English prose he was second to none; as a writer of Gaelic prose he was every bit as good, as we will see. The following are not quite the last words of his introduction, but they are the best.

Time was, when the hours which are now so assiduously devoted to the propagation of gossip, to circumvention, scandal and chicanery, were spent in singing songs, and reciting legends in the innocent comfort and simplicity of unsophisticated manners. But the Bards have ceased to lash the backbiter, the drunkard, and the moral delinquent; and as snails shoot out their horns in a calm, so the human owlets of our country have multiplied in a fearful degree!

There now follows the 'Introduction' in fifty-nine pages (pp. iii–lxi, p. lxii being blank) by James Logan, FSAS (c.1794–1872), author of *The Scottish Gael* and a fellow-eccentric of John's. It is possible to come across copies of the first edition in which this is missing for some reason. I have one before me: the pagination runs i–ii, iii\*–viii\*, lxiii–lxvi, 1–376. Logan did his best, but beside John's his work is boring. Its content is summarised on the title-page: 'an historical introduction containing an account of the manners, habits, etc., of the ancient Caledonians'. It is self-consciously academic, steeped in Ossianism, and written – mainly in the past tense – by one who has clearly made a profession of peering in at the Celtic world from outside. To modern users of *Sàr Obair* its main function is to help us understand the difficult intellectual climate in which John was operating. It was widely assumed that any book which tried to bridge the gap between Gaelic and English must be antiquarian in nature. The heroes of the past were considered a suitable subject for study, but the lives and thoughts of the ordinary people of recent times (and of the present day) were not: whatever their songs were, they were not literature. That is why their poets were not called poets in English but bards; that is why John insisted on calling them poets, and shouted this from the rooftops by putting the word *Poetry* in his title.

This, then, was the climate in which John felt obliged to lay more stress on manuscripts than on field-notes. It was a climate in which all previous Gaelic-speaking writers except Martin Martin had retreated into antiquarianism, archaeology and philological speculation, no matter how well placed they were to collect the lives and works of the Gaelic poets. I am thinking for example of the Rev. Dr John Macpherson of Sleat, author of the tedious *Critical Dissertations on the Origin, Antiquities, Language, Government, Manners, and Religion, of the Ancient Caledonians, their Posterity the Picts, and the British and Irish Scots* (London, 1768), of which Dr Johnson, himself

the future author of a *Lives of the Poets*, rightly said in 1773 (Chapman 1970: 296): “You might read half an hour, and ask yourself what you had been reading: there were so many words to so little matter, that there was no getting through the book.” Had Dr Macpherson published ‘The Lives of the Gaelic Poets’ instead, Johnson would have been infinitely better informed about the Highlands than he was; but then, since it is the way of intellectual climates to perpetuate prejudices rather than to undermine them, such a book, even if written, would not have been published. That the prejudice still existed in 1841 is proved, I think, by the unfortunate result of issuing *Sàr Obair* in two parts – the first part, says Maclean (1915: 247), ‘was more in demand than the second, so that it was sold out, leaving a stock of the second volume in the hands of the publishers’. The result, when the parts were bound, was the confusion of missing bits and pieces which is still with us today.

We cannot know precisely the relationship between John and Logan, but I think it likely to have been close, for they had much in common. Born a merchant’s son in Aberdeen, Logan was destined for a career in the law, but while a student at Marischal College he received an accidental blow on the head which appears to have fractured his skull. One account (Stewart 1876: x) has it that it happened during a game of quoits in the college quadrangle; according to a more circumstantial one (*ibid.*: x–xi, cf. MacInnes 1988: 253), he had gone to the links to watch an athletic competition amongst the officers and men of a Highland regiment.

One of the officers, when throwing the hammer, most unfortunately sent it in a direction where Logan was standing; and the hammer, striking the young lad with great force on the head, nearly killed him. Through the eminent skill, however, of Dr. Charles Skene, the broken bones were removed from Logan’s head, and we understand are still to be seen in the museum of Marischal College.

Logan’s subsequent career foreshadowed John’s by ten years to quite a startling degree, with one difference: money. He left college, became an avid reader of books on history and antiquities, showed promise in art, was sent to study at the Royal Academy in London, gave it up, became an architect’s clerk, gave it up, took to wandering about Scotland, published his magnum opus (*The Scottish Gaël*, 1831), and spent the rest of his life in London as a jobbing littérateur and periodical writer. An unnamed correspondent in that city told Stewart (1876: xix):

My own opinion is, that the accident to his head in early life sometimes affected his mind. At all events, I can recollect many odd sayings and doings of his not to be accounted for except on some such supposition of partial mental derangement, if not of actual insanity. He was very liberal and kind-hearted. I have known him give his last sixpence to a beggar man or woman that did not too loudly or pertinaciously importune him. Latterly, his eyesight was bad. This seemed to annoy him much. “Give me my eyesight as it once was,” I have heard him say, “and take away this terrible pain in my temples.”

Feeling that the detail of Logan’s trauma might shed some light on John’s, I showed these passages to my medical friend Dr Cameron. He agreed (e-mail, 28 February 2003) that the

removal of bone fragments may have prevented subsequent penetration of vital brain tissue and thus saved Logan from death or disability, but was less comfortable with the opinion that he was deranged or insane, pointing out that the Royal Edinburgh Hospital has a unit devoted to the examination and care of patients who have developed personality change after head-injury – such patients demonstrate moderate to severe personality disorder and/or associated neurotic illnesses, but not psychosis ('madness'). In his opinion, Stewart's last few sentences do not describe post-traumatic disorder at all but temporal arteritis, commoner in the elderly but also liable to come on in middle age: "This combination of severe bilateral temporal pain and dramatically deteriorating eyesight is a condition readily recognisable by doctors today."

Logan's introduction may have been necessary, as I have tried to show, to give the book enough academic respectability to allow it to be published, but the result is that the magnificent introduction which John should have been asked to write has perforce to be imagined – pieced together in the mind from countless gems scattered around the book such as his reference at p. 260 to 'hunting and fishing, which in themselves are a species of poetry'. The nearest he comes to a synthesis is, not surprisingly, in his life of William Ross (p. 278):

In purity of diction, felicity of conception, and mellowness of expression, he stands unrivalled – especially in his lyrical pieces. McDonald's fire occasionally overheats, and emits sparks which burn and blister, while Ross's flame, more tempered and regular in its heat, spreads a fascinating glow over the feelings, until we melt before him, and are carried along in a dreamy pleasure through the Arcadian scenes, which his magic pencil conjures up to our astonished gaze. If McIntyre's torrent fills the brooklet to overflowing, the gentler stream of Ross, without tearing away the embankment, swells into a smooth-flowing, majestic wave – it descends like the summer shower irrigating the meadows, and spreading a balmy sweetness over the entire landscape.

To measure the extent of our loss, this may be compared with Logan (p. lv): "The Gaëlic poetry and music are usually of a melancholy cast, and this has been attributed to the atrabilious temperament of a depressed people." Sadly, even after *Sàr Obair* was published, the innocent enquirer who had no knowledge of Gaelic was still unable to tell who had correctly summed up Gaelic poetry, John Mackenzie or James Logan, because while John's biography and criticism was all in English, the poetry was nearly all in Gaelic only; worse still, almost the only poem for which a translation appeared, 'Miann a' Bhàird Aosda', was bogus, pseudo-Ossianic, and therefore (of course) melancholy.

Following Logan's introduction came a 'Clar-Innsidh' (list of contents, pp. lxiii–lxv), then a second frontispiece on art paper. Maclean says (1915: 248): "In the First Edition there was an engraving of a rural scene taken from Alexander Macdonald's 'Dairymaid'. This plate got destroyed, and in substitution thereof, a view of Rothesay Bay is given as a frontispiece in the later Editions." I have seen two copies of the first edition which have no print here at all, and one of the second (1865) which includes the dairymaids in all their beauty; Rothesay Bay (by A. Donaldson, published by J. & J. Johnstone) makes its first appearance in 1872. Of the three illustrations, what Maclean called the 'Dairymaid' was the only one which accurately reflects the character of the book; if there is ever another edition, it should certainly be restored. Against a dramatic background of Loch Hourne or the like, we see five young women in animated poses at the well with their vessels, mainly of wood; in the background is an admiring young man and

some cows, one of which is being milked by a sixth girl. We can just see the houses. Underneath is: “CUACHAG AN FHASAICH. / 'S ge b' fhonnar an fhiodhall, / 'S a teudan an rithidh; / 'S a [*sic*] bheireadh damhs air gach cridhe / Ceol nighin na h-áiridh. *to face page 128. / Published by Macgregor, Polson. Sutherland & Co. Dublin.*” The instruction to bind the engraving at p. 128 to face Mac Mhaighstir Alastair’s ‘A Bhanarach Dhonn’ appears to have been comprehensively ignored.

The first edition of *Sàr Obair*, the only one published in John’s lifetime, contained selections from the work of thirty-six leading Gaelic poets (including the bogus ‘D(o)uthal’, ‘Fonnor’ and ‘Am Bàrd Aosda’), with biographies and criticisms in English and an appendix containing twelve poems by less well-known individuals, similarly accompanied by notes about the authors and the incidents behind the songs. Statistically there were 254 featured poems, i.e. 242 by thirty-six featured poets and twelve in the ‘Aireamh Taghta’. Extra verses, songs and occasional translations lie buried in the footnotes, the most substantial examples being at pp. 21, 55, 98, 268, 364. It appears that some of John’s friends and acquaintances were expecting rather more than thirty-six poets to be featured – referring to a new edition which was proposed in 1847 but which never materialised, Alexander Mackenzie says (1881–82: 271, cf. 1911: 163):

A copy of the prospectus in our possession explains what was for long a puzzle to many. It was known that Mackenzie had collected the poems of several Gaelic bards whose works were considered, by good judges who knew them, well worthy of a place in “The Beauties;” but it now turns out that his publishers found the work extending so much that the compiler was obliged at the last moment to omit many of the modern bards. These included John Macrae, of Kintail.

The first three poems in the book are ‘Mòrdubh’ by D(o)uthal, ‘Collath’ by Fonnor, and ‘Miann a’ Bhàird Aosda’ by Am Bàrd Aosda. They belong to the curious category well named by Derick Thomson as ‘bogus Gaelic literature’. In John’s day they were believed to be genuinely ancient; as Thomson has shown, however (1958: 178–83, 187), ‘Mordubh’ and ‘Miann a’ Bhàird Aosda’ appear to be anonymous products of the 1770s, while ‘Collath’, as I will show later, turned out to be the work of the Rev. Duncan MacCallum (1784–1863). All three poems were influenced to varying degrees by James Macpherson’s Ossianic ‘translations’, genuine Ossianic ballads, and the late sixteenth-century ‘A’ Chomhachag’ of Dòmhnall mac Fhionnlaigh nan Dàn (the fourth poem in *Sàr Obair*). Neil Macleod (1843–1924), who was hailed as the leading Gaelic poet of his day but is no longer fashionable, was so taken by ‘Miann a’ Bhàird Aosda’ that he devoted a paper to it, not much to his credit (Macleod 1893–94).

The Rev. A. Maclean Sinclair, a harsh critic, said (1899–1901: 273) that all the poems in *Sàr Obair* except twelve were copied from previous publications. He named the twelve as: in the main section, Lachlan MacKinnon’s ‘Cùram nam Bantraichean’ (p. 84), Gilleasbaig na Ciotraig’s ‘Banais Chiostal-Odhair’ (p. 166), Alexander MacKinnon’s ‘An Dubh-Ghleannach’ (pp. 346–47), and am Bàrd Conanach’s ‘Òran do Bhonipart’ (pp. 348–50); in the ‘Aireamh Taghta’, first edition, ‘Òran Ailein’, elsewhere ascribed to Mac Mhaighstir Alastair (p. 372), and ‘Òran do Phriunnsa Teàrlach’, which I prefer to call ‘Achadh nan Comhaichean’ (p. 373); and in the additional ‘Aireamh Taghta’, 1865 edition onwards, ‘Duanag Ghaoil le Baintighearn Ille-Chalum Rasa’ (pp. 379–80), ‘Fear an Leadain Thlàith’ (p. 385), ‘Fàilte Dhut a’s Slàinte Leat’ (pp. 385–86), ‘Iorram do Sheumas Beaton’ (pp. 389–90), and two songs by John Munro (pp. 400–02).

Things are seldom quite as simple as the self-confident Sinclair made them out to be, however. There is no reason to disbelieve Clach's evidence that over twelve years John had travelled the Highlands, north, south and west, gathering poems, stories, manuscripts – and subscribers. My study of John's edition of Ross's poems has shown that even where he took his material straight from published sources, he sometimes had fresh stanzas to add. John would certainly have taken exception to Sinclair's claim (*ibid.*) that 'John Mackenzie's aim was not to collect poems, but to publish in one large work the best poems to which he had access'. Ailean Dall's 'Duanag don Uisge-Bheatha' is a case in point. John says (p. 304): "Note.—We have printed this song as we took it down from the poet's own recitation in 1828."

This is impressive. It was the year of the poet's death, aged about 78, but it is more than likely that John would have met him, because in 1828 MacDougall, as he points out (p. 300), 'travelled the counties of Argyle, Ross, and Inverness, taking subscriptions for a new and enlarged edition of his works'. Sure enough, a comparison of John's version with those printed in Ailean Dall's two collections (Dughallach 1798 and Dughalach 1829) reveals a number of significant differences, suggesting that by 1828 the poet was no longer singing exactly what he had had printed thirty years earlier, but that in most cases the 1829 version is merely an edited reprint of the earlier one. Here are some of the more significant passages: *O! 'sid i 'n deoch mhilis nach tilleadhmid uainn* (1798: 59) > *O! sid i 'n deoch mhilis nach tilleadh-mid uainn* (1829: 49) > *O! sid i 'n deoch mhilis / Nach pilleamaid uainn* (1841: 304); *Bu mhaith leis na slugain a fliuchadh gu luath* (1798: 59) > *Bu mhaith leis na slugain a fliuchadh gu luath* (1829: 50) > *Bu mhath le ar slugain / Am fliuchadh gu luath* (1841: 304); *Mu bhios sinn as t iunnais, dh'fhalbh ar sugradh sa'n uair* (1798: 60) > *Ma bhios sinne as t-iunnais, dh'fhalbh ar sùgradh 's an uair* (1829: 50) > *Ma bhios sinn as t-iunnais, / Bi'dh sùgradh fad bhuain* (1841: 304); *Tha u d dhotair neo-thuisleach, maith a dh' iarruidh gach cuisle, / Cha'n eil iarmailt na duslach air nach cuireadh tu ruaig* (1798: 60) > *Tha thu a d' lighich' neo-thuisleach, maith a dh' iarruidh gach cuisle, / Cha 'n 'eil iarmailt no duslach air nach cuireadh tu* [last word lost by fault in printing] (1829: 50) > *Tha thu d' lighich' neo-thuisleach, / A dh' fhiachas gach cuisle, / Gun iarmailt no duslach, / Air nach cuir thu ruaig* (1841: 304); *theid do phaigheadh ad dhuais* (1798: 61) > *theid do phaigheadh a d' dhuais* (1829: 51) > *phaighear dhut dhuais* (1841: 304).

Sinclair appears to have had difficulty in understanding that when John made changes to a poem in copying it from a published text, he would normally have done this because he had heard a different version. Discussing Sìleas na Ceapaich's 'Marbhrann', he says (Sinclair 1894–96: 19) that 'it is copied into Sar-Obair nam Bard by John Mackenzie, who made a few changes in it', and that when *bhrionnaich* appears in *Sàr Obair* in place of *bhruidhnich* it is 'evidently owing to a typographical error'!

As with other anthologies, there are two ways to assess the editor's aims: by what he says, and by what he does. It is clear from what he says, for example, that John liked satire, and he claimed to like it clean. On Alastair Mac Mhaighstir Alastair he says (p. 105): "He is not to be excused for his immoral pieces, which of course are excluded from the 'Beauties of Gaelic Poetry'." And on that he is as good as his word. Coming to MacCodrum, he returns to the theme (p. 144): "His satire on 'Donald Bain's Bagpipe' is a masterpiece of its kind; full of wit and humour, without the filth and servility that disgrace the satires of Macdonald and other Keltic poets."

I know what filth is, but I am not sure what John means by 'servility'. He is hardly referring



to the satires which Alastair made out of loyalty to the Jacobite cause. He may be using the word in its Gaelic sense – *tràilleachd*, ‘baseness’ – to denote Alastair’s apparent misogyny; however, Dr Sarah Fraser, a specialist in Alastair’s *drabastachd*, has told me that she does not see these works as misogynistic. I suppose John was thinking mainly of ‘Miomholadh Móraig’, in which Alastair seems to have reversed a poem of praise to his mistress in order to please his wife.

Proceeding to Rob Donn, who made his name from satire, we encounter one of John’s most challenging statements (p. 187): “As a poet he cannot be placed in the highest rank. He is deficient in pathos and invention. There is little depth of feeling, and very slender powers of description to be found in his works; and, when the temporary and local interest wears away, he can never be a popular poet.” Even Donnchadh Bàn does not quite escape the lash (p. 217): “Neither he nor McDonald knew when to set bounds to their descriptions, and in their satires went on beyond measure.”

Those are examples of what John says. They are not entirely matched by what he does. Here again however there is more than one yardstick, as I am very aware from personal experience, for statistically my *An Tuil* is a similar book to *Sàr Obair* – it contains about 300 poems, and the number of poems per poet varies from one to thirty-seven (Sorley MacLean). By an astonishing coincidence, in *Sàr Obair*, which also contains about 300 poems (at least in later editions), I find that the number of poems per poet also varies from one to thirty-seven (Duncan Ban Macintyre). The number of poems per poet is only one yardstick, however. The other is the number of pages per poet, because of course some poets make longer poems than others. In *An Tuil*, for example, I tried to make a statement about the importance of traditional verse by giving more pages to Donald Macintyre than to Sorley MacLean.

Did John do anything similar? Yes, he did. With thirty-seven poems in forty-three pages, Donnchadh Bàn appears to be his favourite poet, but only just. With thirty-two poems in thirty-two pages Rob Donn comes a good second by one yardstick, but a poor third by the other, for although Mac Mhaighstir Alastair is allowed only twenty-three poems, these are spread over forty-two pages – nearly as many as Donnchadh Bàn himself. In fourth place is William Ross, with twenty-one poems in twenty-one pages, while hard on his heels by one yardstick is Iain Lom, with thirteen poems in twenty pages. It can thus be argued that, for all John’s strictures, there appear to be varying agendas at work. He suppresses Mac Mhaighstir Alastair’s satires, and makes him nearly his favourite; he does not – cannot – suppress Rob Donn’s satires, and makes him another favourite.

It all adds up to an exquisite balance of opinions, poems and pages. I cannot fault the totality of John’s judgement. His elevation of Donnchadh Bàn, who was still alive when John was born, was courageous from a literary point of view but the right thing to do in popular terms. He had noticed Duncan’s subtlety and does not patronise him in any way. “He was a man of observation and thought,” he says (p. 218), “and revolved the subject of his study often in his mind.” It is a knowing judgement, light years away from the travesty which emerged among some later commentators, such as ‘a simple country-lover who would cheerfully churn out indifferent Gaelic verse on such themes as his superiors desired’ (Grimble 1979: 71).

John loved the work of Màiri nighean Alastair Ruaidh and praises her greatly, concluding magnificently that ‘her versification runs like a mountain stream over a smooth bed of polished granite’. This is criticism of the best kind, for it offers an idea which deeper study can build upon.

I would personally develop it by saying that the mountain stream is Mary's experience, talent and imagination, while the smooth bed of polished granite is what Dr MacInnes has called 'the panegyric code'. We have to ponder however why John liked Màiri's work so much when he was, as he put it himself, 'blind to any poetic grandeur' in the work of Mairearad nighean Lachlainn. There are, I think, two answers. One is that John's tastes were eighteenth-century, pre-Ossianic, pre-Romantic – he liked grandeur well enough, but liked it cheerful. The other can be expressed in one word: localism. Localism has vitiated a great deal of commentary on Gaelic literature. Derick Thomson, whose strength as a critic is that he always has views hard enough to hang one's hat upon, said (1974: 259) of the poems of Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna that 'the horror of the Somme becomes almost trite' and of those of Dòmhnall Iain Dhonnchaidh (*Gairm* no. 185, An Geamhradh 1998: 91): *Còrdaidh an leabhar seo gu h-àraid ri na h-Uibhistich*. "This book will appeal especially to Uist folk."

John Mackenzie and Derick Thomson have much in common, yet their views on Màiri are diametrically opposite – the former calls Màiri 'the most original of all our poets', the latter (1974: 135) that 'she wears the narrow strait-jacket of the bardic panegyrist without his learning, his occasional wit, and his metrical virtuosity'. Is this because John thought that Màiri had invented Gaelic poetry out of nothing, *às a seasamh* as it were, while Thomson knew better? I think not. To me, the explanation lies in John's footnote (p. 21):

We knew an old man, called Alexander McRae, a tailor in Mellen of Gairloch, whom we have heard sing many of Mary's songs, not one of which has ever been printed. Some of these were excellent, and we had designed to take them down from his recitation, but were prevented by his sudden death, which happened in the year 1833. Among these was a rather extraordinary piece, resembling McDonald's "*Birlinn*," composed upon occasion of John, son of Sir Norman, taking her out to get a sail in a new boat.

What this tells us is that Màiri's songs were woven in and out of John's memories of growing up in Meallan Teàrlaich. Mairearad's, on the other hand, he is unlikely to have heard performed in Ross-shire. It is evident from p. 6 of *A' Bheithir-Bheuma* (see below) that John had visited her native island, Mull, but he tells us that he had seen twenty-five of her songs in manuscript, and that must be how he thought of them – as dead things on a page. His view of her work might have been altered had he heard 'Gaoir nam Ban Muileach' as the Rev. Archibald Farquharson of Tiree heard it (1875–76: 182, quoted in Black 2001: 390): "When two or three sing it together, and the whole join in chorus at the sixth line, I have seldom heard singing like it."

The 'Beauties of Gaelic Poetry' were, I believe, in the ear of the beholder.

One way to measure the significance of *Sàr Obair* is to point to statements that later biographers have been forced to struggle with, to accept or reject – that Iain Lom 'received a yearly pension from Charles II. as his bard' (p. 34), that Alastair Mac Mhaighstir Alastair and Rob Donn were elders of the Church of Scotland (pp. 101–02, 186), or that Kenneth MacKenzie in later life was in the habit of 'literally caressing such of his countrymen as chance or business led in his way' (p. 271), a classic piece of innuendo which I, for one, found impossible to ignore (Black 2001: 509).

I have discussed elsewhere (Black 2001: xiv–xv) the fundamental importance of anecdote to

traditional Gaelic literary criticism, and the corresponding prominence given to anecdote in John's lives of the poets. I might have added, considering the outstanding work of the Puilean (Caimbeul 1973), that it is as important to Gaelic autobiography as to biography. Due to the oral nature of Gaelic literature, ceilidh-house criticism was, I believe, essentially linear – it was easy to contextualise a song within a story, harder to discuss it line by line or phrase by phrase. Kenneth MacKenzie's 'Aoir do dh'Alastair Mac an Tòisich' (for which see Black 2001: 318–27) is a superb example of such contextualisation. Not only is it, as John says (pp. 270–71), 'a satire of great merit', a 'cynic production' in which the poet 'pours forth periods of fire', an 'impetuous torrent of bitter irony and withering declamation, rich in the essential ingredients of its kind', but it also, he says, killed its victim – which is, I assume, why he could not include it in *Sàr Obair*, much though he would have liked to, since its author was still alive in Irish exile as recently as 1837, and the memories which it evoked in the Inverness district would have been painful.

A different example of contextualisation is furnished by John's presentation of 'Cuachag nan Craobh'. In a note on the poem, he shores up his attribution of it to William Ross – not by demonstrating from internal evidence that its imagery and preoccupations are characteristic of Ross's work, as a modern scholar would do, but by writing it into the poet's biography (*Sàr Obair*, p. 293):

The poet, crossed in love, suffered such poignancy of grief that it ultimately brought on a consumption and he was for sometime bed-ridden. On a fine evening in May, he rose and walked out through the woods to indulge his melancholy alone.—Arriving at a large tree, he threw himself on the green sward beneath its branches, and was not long in his sequestered sylvan situation ere the cuckoo began to carol above him.—“The son of song and sorrow” immediately tunes his lyre, and sings an address to the feathered vocalist.—He pours out his complaints before the shy bird, and solicits its sympathies.—Had Burns been a Gaelic Scholar, we should have no hesitation in accusing him of plagiarism when he sung:—

“How can ye chaunt, ye little birds  
While I'm so wae an' fu' o' care?”

But Ross embodies finer feelings and sentiments into his fugitive pieces than even the bard of Coila.

There was still a charge of plagiarism hanging over John himself with regard to Ross's poems; insinuating that it was levelled at Ross himself, John has the effrontery to deflect it upon Robert Burns.

*Sàr Obair* is undoubtedly a work of great character, reflecting to the full the tastes, the prejudices, the *weltanschauung* of Iain Alastair Òig himself. If I were to sum up these elements I would cite, first of all, the aesthetic concept inherent in the words *Sàr* and *Beauties* – John wishes to emphasise craftsmanship and its underlying social dynamic. Secondly, I would describe his political creed as old-fashioned Highland Jacobitism galvanised by the ideals of the French Revolution. Thirdly, he revels in the subversive qualities of satire, leading a Victorian critic, Nigel MacNeill, to remark caustically (1892: 172) that he 'delighted in unearthing and publishing all the moral dirt he could lay his hands on'. Lastly, he possessed a view of the world which was clear,

objective, sharply-focused and not a little rose-tinted in so far as that world was contained within the ample boundaries of his native Ross-shire; outside these limits there appears to be a gradual loss of focus, so that Islay, in particular, is beyond the edge of his universe (as will become evident in connection with his dictionary). I will try to justify this summary by means of a small number of examples, given in the order in which they occur in the book.

At pp. 68–75 John perpetrates a spectacular error by mixing up the Clanranald poet Iain Dubh mac Iain mhic Ailein with the MacLean poet Iain mac Ailein (Ó Baoill 1994; Black 2001: 379, 402). Under the name and biography of the former he gives two items by the latter (‘Marbhrann do Shir Iain Mac-Illeain Triath Dhubhairt’ and ‘Crosdhanachd Fhir nan Druimnean’) as well as three by the former (‘Oran do Mhac-Mhic-Ailein’, ‘Marbhrann do Mhac Mhic-Ailein’, ‘Oran nam Fineachan Gaelach’). His only excuse is that Turner, himself an Argyll man, makes the same mistake (Mac-an-Tuairneir 1813: 108). The error is the more surprising in that Iain mac Ailein is the one Gaelic poet who is mentioned, and whose work is described, in the whole of Johnson’s *Journey* and Boswell’s *Journal of a Tour* – “Miss McLean produced some Erse poems by John McLean, who was a famous bard in Mull,” says Boswell (Chapman 1970: 372), “and had died only a few years ago.”

At p. 80 John devotes more than half of his entire biography of the Skye poet Lachlan MacKinnon (Lachann mac Theàrlaich) to an unedifying story about how he once badly abused the hospitality of a farmer in Lochalsh by deflowering his daughter and murdering her pet dog. MacKinnon was a highly accomplished poet and an excellent satirist who had left Skye for a while, grief-stricken at the death of his young wife, to live in Kintail, where he got a tack of land from Seaforth. He spent four lonely years there, satirising his new neighbours and becoming increasingly unpopular. He is said to have fled across Loch Duich to an uncle in Knoydart, pursued by Kintail men whom he and his uncle defeated in pitched battle at Inverie (Black 2001: 367–68). The accounts which we have of Lachlan from Skye sources are highly complimentary, so it is clear that views of him were polarised between Skye and Ross-shire, and that John’s biography reflects Ross-shire opinion. His comic song ‘Sgian Dubh an Sprogain Chaim’ is central to the issue, for it satirises the ‘Hairy MacRaes’ (*Clann ’ic Rath Mholach*) of Kintail while containing much self-mockery as well. Given its subject-matter, the song was unlikely to be popular in Ross-shire, and John appears to have got the twelve-stanza version which he prints in *Sàr Obair* from Turner’s collection (Mac-an-Tuairneir 1813: 339–42), making some improvements to the text here and there. A twenty-one-stanza version could be reconstructed with the help of NLS MS 14876, a manuscript of poems written in 1776. It is difficult to read, and whether it contains material which was known to John but rejected either because it was too obscene or too offensive to Ross-shire sensibilities, I have no idea. It is a task for the future.

At p. 96, the Blind Piper’s ‘Beannachadh Baird do Shir Alasdair Mac-Choinnich’ illustrates John’s aesthetic approach. In the unusually short eleven-quatrain form in which it appeared in the supplement to John’s 1834 edition of Ross’s work, and thence in *Sàr Obair* (and Watson’s *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig*), it may be described as the perfect poem – a simple lapidary compliment to a young lady from Strathspey on the occasion of her wedding to Sir Alexander MacKenzie of Gairloch. I soon discovered, however, that John had achieved this polished effect by taking a twelve-quatrain version in the Stewart collection (1804: 225–27) and dropping from it a verse which could be described as less than perfect:

*Gheibhte aig siol Ailpein nam fiagh dearg,  
Leis 'm bu mhiann gach sealg a frith,  
Fir mhaiseach, ghasda gun cheilg,  
'N am dhol an seilbh an stri.*

“Obtained from Clan Alpin of the red deer / Who loved every hunt in the forest / Were handsome men who’d be stalk-like and guileless / When getting to grips with strife.” This corresponds roughly to lines 21–24 of my own edition (Black 2001: 122). It will be noticed that it has nothing directly to do with the bride, being merely a compliment to her Grant relatives. In researching the poem further, I found that as originally known in Gairloch it had three more quatrains (*ibid.*, lines 17–20, 53–60), making a total of fifteen. As a Gairloch man himself, John must have known these; on the other hand, they add little to the poem’s sparkle, and are in any case mainly concerned with the fish in the Spey and the pleasant time had by all at the wedding. It is easy to see why John omitted them.

At p. 101, in the biography of Mac Mhaighstir Alastair, is a footnote which deserves our attention – for two reasons. The first is that John, for once, provides the source of an anecdote, foreshadowing good fieldwork practice as established a couple of decades later by Campbell of Islay. The second is that the old man thus honoured, Duncan McKenzie, Kilchoan (who had been taught by the poet himself, ‘who lived to the great age of ninety-four; and, in 1828, communicated to us this information’), bore the same surname as John, one which is far from common in Ardnamurchan. Was some sort of Ross-shire connection operating here?

At p. 373 John prints a poem consisting of seven quatrains and a chorus under the title ‘Oran do Phriunnsa Tearlach’. It was the latest (but the first published) of three early texts of this item; I have now been able to print a version consisting of thirteen quatrains and chorus under the title ‘Achadh nan Comhaichean’ (Black 2001: 182–87). As I have tried to demonstrate (*ibid.*: 452–54), according to a style which was previously characteristic of waulking-songs, it mixes three interconnected themes: in this case, a poor girl’s love for a man of higher status; Prince Charles; and the traumatic aftermath of Culloden. The result of this mingling is a sense that we are being admitted to a set of random thoughts in the mind of a traumatised young girl of the post-Culloden period. John’s verses, and those in the shorter of the two manuscript versions, contain everything in the song that relates clearly to the ’45, and it appears that it had undergone a process of editorial filleting to emphasise its Jacobite content. I am not suggesting that John was responsible for this filleting, but as he informs us that ‘various MS. copies of it are in our possession’, it appears likely that the more overtly Jacobite version is the one he selected for *Sàr Obair*.

The last of these illustrations of my summary comes from pp. 373–74, where John prints under the title ‘Cumha do dh’ Uilleam Siseal’ a version of the song best known today as ‘Mo Rùn Geal Òg’. While there was nothing original about John’s text, other than some editorial tinkering to which I have drawn attention elsewhere (Black 2001: 446–47), he had a great deal of interest to say with regard to the story behind the song. Its author, he said, was Christiana Fergusson, a blacksmith’s daughter from Contin in Ross-shire (her father ‘made dirks and other implements of war’), and its subject was her husband William Chisholm, tacksman of Inns’-nan-Ceann in Strathglass, who, he claimed, bore the Chisholm banner at Culloden: when the Chisholms were

trapped by redcoats in a barn he ‘hewed down all who came within reach of his sword’, and died a hero with seven bullets in his back.

There are a number of reasons for being sceptical about this account. No William Chisholm of Innis nan Ceann appears to exist in historical record; Alexander Mackenzie tells us (1891: 222) that the Chisholm standard was borne at Culloden by a man called John Macdonald, *Iain na Brataich*, who survived long after the ’45 and eventually emigrated to Canada; earlier versions of the song attribute it to a lady in Strathglass (in one case for her husband Gillies MacBean) or to the wife of Robert MacGillivray, who is said in one source to have killed seven redcoats after Culloden with the tram of a peat-cart; William’s alleged feat echoes better-attested stories about MacBean and MacGillivray, and is not mentioned in the account of Culloden in John’s own *Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa* (though admittedly this book was translated from materials supplied by the publisher). One has to tread cautiously, however, where local sensitivities are involved, not least because a stone was erected at Innis nan Ceann in the late nineteenth century bearing the legend: “W. C. / 1746 / Mo Run Geal Og.”

The truth, however, appears to lie in a contribution, expressed for tact’s sake in fairly elegant English verse, to *The Celtic Monthly* by an Angus Mackintosh, Brookman’s Park, Hertfordshire (1895), which reveals William Chisholm as a coward who was goaded by his wife into following his kinsmen to Culloden, where he fought well and was killed. No mention is made of banners or barns. This elicited a spirited response from the elderly Colin Chisholm (1895), which, however, consisted mainly of a reiteration of John’s account, prefaced with the words: “Let me quote what an independent writer of eminence (in his line) said of ‘Fear-Innis-nan-ceann’ and his most amiable and talented spouse, Christina Fergusson.” This argument is suspect, as we know that Chisholm met John in Liverpool in the late 1830s when working there as a customs officer (Mackenzie 1891: 146), and since it concerns Strathglass it is highly likely that John’s account derived from him in the first place. More usefully, Chisholm added:

For the first twenty years of my life I lived next door to the son of one of the men who accompanied William Chisholm when he went to Contin to marry Miss Christina Fergusson, the armourer’s daughter. In relating his father’s account of the reception the party had and the wedding festivities, it seemed to me the Fergussons were in easy circumstances.

Three conclusions may thus be drawn. Firstly, John’s account is correct, but only in its bare essentials. The song was indeed composed by Christiana Fergusson, an armourer’s daughter from Contin, to her husband William Chisholm of Innis nan Ceann in Strathglass, who was last seen on his way to Culloden, and died there. Secondly, Christiana comes across as a frustrated wife who had married beneath herself. Since he is absent from the historical record, her husband cannot have been a tacksman, and may have been a landless cottar. Thirdly, as internal evidence shows, Christiana fled to the safety of Skye, where she poured out her remorse in song for the man she wished she had had (MacilleDhuibh 2001g).

*Sàr Obair* is conspicuously shot through with poems, stories and footnotes about pipers, piping and pipe music. It is noticeable that John prefers the spelling ‘piobaireachds’ to Scott’s ‘pibrochs’ (p. 95); it has a modern look, being the form used in the piping literature today. Dixon (1886: 190)

offers us a glimpse of John's personal life in the *Sàr Obair* years which brings to mind the young boy with the pocket-knife who made himself a set of bagpipes: "He became well known as a good piper; he and John Macrae of Raasay used to be judges of pipe music at the Edinburgh competitions." Dixon also calls him 'an excellent piper' (*ibid.*: 175), while MacLennan (1972b: 25) calls him 'piper, poet and author', adding that he 'was allowed to be a very good performer'. The 'Edinburgh competitions' can only be those run by the Highland Society of Scotland on behalf of the Highland Society of London, celebrated in Gaelic literature for the six prizewinning odes composed by Duncan Ban Macintyre during the 1780s on the set subject 'Gaelic and the Bagpipe' (MacLeod 1952: 270–99). They were held in a theatre in the city, annually until 1826, then triennially until 1844, when they were abandoned (Black 1986a: 9–10). Commenting on the first ode in his 1848 edition of *Donnchadh Bàn* (App., no. 33), John says (pp. 194–95):

This, and the five following pieces, are the successful prize poems composed for the Highland Society in London, in the years denoted by their respective titles; these meetings for the preservation and improvement of Highland poetry and music, were held in Edinburgh and Falkirk. It is to be regretted that they have been discontinued. The Highland Society of Scotland was originally established on principles which included this as one of its three primary objects. The third article of its printed "objects" states, that "the Society shall pay a proper attention to the preservation of the language, poetry, and music of the Highlands." Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the Highland Society for its efforts in the advancement of agriculture, yet its deviation from this [*sic*] objects of its constitution must be lamented by all admirers of Celtic music and poetry.

It was a more restrained comment than his earlier one (1841: 325; cf. MacInnes 1988: 304), provoked by the society's becoming in 1834 'The Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland', that its original name 'had reference to the mental culture of their Caledonian countrymen, instead of as now, unfortunately, to the physical development of the points of the inferior animals'. As for Dixon's 'John Macrae', this must be an error for John Mackay (1814–48) from Raasay, whom I mentioned in an earlier article (Black 1986a: 10) as performing the sword dance, a rare accomplishment at that time, at the Edinburgh competition of 1832. Mackay was a competitor in the Edinburgh events of 1832 and 1835, subsequently becoming piper to Admiral MacDougall of Dunollie and then to P. C. Leslie of Invergarry (MacLennan 1972a: 14–16).

It was impossible for John Mackenzie or John Mackay to act as judges, as they were not of the required social class – the pattern at these competitions was for a hard core of committee members to be joined on the bench by whatever high-ranking chiefs and military officers happened to be present, knowledge of piping being a secondary consideration (MacInnes 1988: 51). It is possible however that they were asked to make themselves available for consultation by the judges, as was sometimes done (*ibid.*: 52–53). In John Mackay's case, this would have been in 1838, 1841 and 1844, on the strength of the reputation of his MacCrimmon-taught father, also John Mackay (1767–1848), who had composed at least six big tunes; in John Mackenzie's, it would have been in 1841 and 1844, on the strength of *Sàr Obair*.

The year 1842 was marked by a curious piece of fallout from the book. The Rev. Duncan

MacCallum, Arisaig, produced a little volume entitled *Dàin agus Òrain: Poems and Songs*. Published by P. Campbell & Co. at 24 Glassford Street, it went through Khull's presses – and therefore John's accounts – in Dunlop Street. MacCallum's name does not appear on the title-page. He reproduces the preface to *Co-Chruinneacha Dhan, Orain, &c. &c.* which he had published anonymously in 1821 – the work now known as 'MacCallum's Collection'. This time he subscribes it: "D. M." In it he says, among other things (p. iv):

It is to be regretted that no attempt has been made to rescue the memories of our Bards from oblivion, by preserving anecdotes and memoirs of their lives along with their works. The Editor could not venture to supply the loss in this Collection, but in a very limited manner.

He thus appears to be saying: "Look! I thought of *Sàr Obair* first." Next he prints a five-page foreword entitled 'Preface to the Third Edition. / The Third Edition of "Collath" and Other Poems' and subscribed: "D. M. / October, 1842." He has a confession to make (pp. vii–viii).

After a lapse of twenty years, the editor of "The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry" took the ancient poem of *Mòrdubh* from the Inverness Collection, 1821 . . . and next the poem of *Collath* . . . and the learned author of the long introduction to the well-got-up collection, "The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry," passed it as an ancient poem, and both seemed to think it worthy of the rank assigned to it. As, therefore, the poem of *Collath* has obtained so honourable a station, which has given it a chance of longer existence than the Author, who almost forgot it, could have expected, and of being regarded an ancient poem of the first class, he thought it his duty to undeceive any future editor and the public . . . Time, that tries and proves all things, has decided in favour of *Collath*; and it only now remains for the Author to remove the deception, if poetical license might be so called . . . *Collath* was composed about the beginning of the present century.

So he squirms in embarrassment, but makes a clean breast of it in the end. It is difficult for the anthologist to be sure that things are always what they seem – in *An Tuil* I published a song which I understood to be by Angus Morrison, Ullapool, but it is little more than a version of a traditional *port á beul* (Black 1999: 34–37, 719).

### ***Eachdraidh a' Phrionnsa***

With *Sàr Obair* safely launched upon the public, its distinguished – and deservedly elated – editor threw himself into his next project, a Gaelic history of the '45. Whether it took shape in his mind as an original work of his own, I do not know; at any rate, it finished up as the first of a long series of translations. John's agreement, in his own handwriting, with D. R. Collie of Thornton & Collie, 19 St David's Street, Edinburgh, regarding *Eachdraidh a' Phrionnsa* (App., no. 14) ultimately reached Clach's desk in Inverness; it 'conveys a pathetic tale', he says (p. 204), meaning – quite rightly – that it arouses our sympathy for the translator.



EDINBURGH, March 21st, 1843.

1. It is hereby agreed by the subscribers, that John Mackenzie shall translate into Gaelic the History of Prince Charles Edward, from materials in English to be furnished to him by D. R. Collie, for which he shall be allowed the sum of three pounds sterling for his trouble, in the first place.
2. That as soon as John Mackenzie shall procure two hundred and fifty *bona fide* subscribers for the work, D. R. Collie shall get it printed according to the terms of prospectus—500 subscribers' copies on fine foolscap 8vo., and 500 on demy 12mo.
3. That besides the three pounds to be paid for translating as above, John Mackenzie shall be allowed sixpence for each subscriber procured by him to the list, and another sixpence for delivering each subscriber's copy—that is, each copy shall be paid for by him at the rate of four shillings, until the account for printing, paper, and binding is paid; and after that, any number of copies may be purchased by either party at the trade price of three shillings and sixpence per copy—money paid before delivery.
4. The remaining profits, if any, arising from the sale of the work, after the first expenses have been cleared, shall be equally divided between John Mackenzie and D. R. Collie.
5. That none of the cheap copies shall be sold until the first expense of printing the whole has been paid off.
6. That in the event of a second, or more, editions of the work being called for, it is hereby expressly stipulated that the one party cannot print, or make any arrangement with a third party for printing or publishing the said work, without the full knowledge and consent of the other; and any profits to be derived from the sale of any future edition, after paying the expenses, shall be shared equally between John Mackenzie and D. R. Collie.

In witness thereof, we mutually copy and sign this agreement, this present  
23d day of March 1843.

(Signed) JOHN MACKENZIE.

(Signed) D. R. COLLIE.

We are to understand from this, I think, that the price of the book was to be five shillings. Each subscriber was to pay this amount to John, out of which he retained sixpence as his commission, and another sixpence as his fee for delivering the book to the subscriber. He therefore had to pay the publisher four shillings for each book until the cost of paper, printing and binding had been paid. From that point on the remaining stock belonged equally to both parties, either of whom might dispose of it as he wished on payment of 3s 6d per copy to the other.

The subscription list was crucial. When John had obtained 250 names – and only then – Collie would have 1,000 copies printed. Clearly it was in John's interest to obtain as much of the subscription money as possible at the point of first commitment, before the book even existed, because in due course he was going to have to pay Collie 4s for every copy, this being reduced to 3s 6d only after the printer's bill was paid. No doubt John's task of obtaining subscriptions was made a little easier by the success of *Sàr Obair*; on the other hand, Collie appears to have considered that John's capacity for embroidering the truth must be kept firmly under control.

At any rate, thanks to the fact that a handwritten list of subscribers found its way in due course

to Clach's magnetic-sounding desk, we know that it consisted of 291 names neatly arranged (no doubt beginning with the aristocracy, in the manner of the time, then continuing with the rest in alphabetical order) followed by another dozen or so scattered about on different pages. Referring to point 2 of the agreement, Clach remarks (p. 204): "He had thus over three hundred to begin with."

The twenty-two names which Clach singles out for mention indicate for us the milieu of friends and patrons amongst whom John was operating at this time. Some we have met already, others we will meet again later. I will give them exactly as they come, with my comments.

'John Sobieski and Charles Edward Stuart, "Eilean Aigais" (2 copies each)' are those extraordinary brothers whose true names were revealed in due course as John Hay Allan and Charles Stuart Hay Allan. They lived on Eilean Aigas in the Beaully River in a house crammed with memorabilia and hunting trophies, granted them rent free by Lord Lovat. The book was dedicated to Charles (see App., no. 14). John kept up a regular correspondence with them, several specimens of which reached the desk of Clach, who claims, presumably on the basis of these letters (p. 206), that John 'was by them considered the great authority on all disputed questions of Gaelic orthography, when preparing their "Lays of the Cavaliers" and other works'. Clach's 'Cavaliers' is a Freudian slip for 'Deer Forest', but his point is of great interest. The brothers had learned what Gaelic they had from John's friend Sgt Donald MacPherson in London (*DNB*), and they published three substantial works around this time which deserve to be better remembered today for their content than for their authors: (1) *The Costume of the Clans* (Edinburgh, 1845), a physically massive work whose introduction contains much of interest on Gaelic manuscripts; (2) *Tales of the Century or Sketches of the Romance of History between the Years 1746 and 1846* (Edinburgh, 1847); and (3) *Lays of the Deer Forest, with Sketches of Olden and Modern Deer-Hunting; Traits of Natural History in the Forest: Traditions of the Clans; Miscellaneous Notes* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1848). They enjoyed sprinkling these works with Gaelic quotations (duly footnoted) and writing forewords for translation into Gaelic, the Gaelic version being placed before the English. (They cite *Sàr Obair* where appropriate, but thank nobody.) All of their large body of work was published during John's brief spell of fame between *Sàr Obair* and his death; given Clach's evidence, it seems likely that John was one of their translators.

'Neil MacAlpine, Islay (2 copies)' (1786–1867) was parish schoolmaster of Kilmeny. Now presumably John's friend, he later became his foe. Born in Kilchoman, he was a gentle giant, 6 feet 4 inches tall and well-proportioned, but, as his biographer insinuated (Macalpine 1930: xii), 'not your pushful man for aggressive work'. After completing his university course he registered as a divinity student; divinity student he remained all his life, never achieving his goal of ordination as a parish minister.

'The late John Maclachlan, bookseller' is John's future employer. His company, Maclachlan, Stewart & Co. of Edinburgh, was founded in 1818.

'James Logan' we have met.

'Duncan Macneill, solicitor-general', the future Lord Colonsay, was of the talented legal family which we have met in the person of Archibald McNeil, WS.

'Archibald Sinclair, *Chronicle* office' is, I suppose, the man of that name from Islay who subsequently set up a printing-press at 62 Argyle Street, Glasgow, where he published books of Gaelic verse in 1859 and 1869. The *Chronicle* will be the *Glasgow Chronicle*, which ran from

1811 to 1857 (Mackenzie 1994: 197). In 1876–79 his son, also Archibald, published *An t-Òranaiche*, the only anthology of Gaelic verse whose popularity has ever rivalled that of *Sàr Obair*.

‘John Forbes, schoolmaster, Fort-Augustus’ (1818–63) is another present friend and future foe. Seemingly a native of Strathglass, he taught in Fort Augustus from 1843 to 1848 and became minister of Sleat in 1851. In 1843 he published an intelligent but complex work of 377 pages entitled *Gràmar Dùbailt, Beurla ’us Gàelig, anns am bheil Stéidhean na Dà Chainnt Minichte gu Soilleir; a’ Co-Ghiùlan nan Ainmean, nam Brighardan agus nan Rialtan Gràmarail, le Cleachdaidhean Lionmhor air Pairteachadh agus Ceartachadh: A Double Grammar, of English and Gaelic, in which the Principles of Both Languages are Clearly Explained; Containing the Grammatical Terms, Definitions, and Rules, with Copious Exercises for Parsing and Correction*. It was a Utopian answer to a practical problem. As Forbes pointed out in his preface, it was ‘a well known and an acknowledged fact, that many in the Highlands who can read and spell English fluently, can scarcely connect a single idea with the words read by them, being taught only the art of reading the language or sounding its vocables’; with his *Gràmar Dùbailt*, on the other hand, ‘the natives might learn the structure of both English and Gaelic, or either, through the medium of the Gaelic itself, their vernacular language’. Had the Gaelic schools of the 1840s gone from strength to strength and entrenched their aims in the fabric of the nation, leading to a confidently bilingual Scotland with two official languages, Forbes’s book might have become a blueprint as fundamental to public life as the *Caighdeán* in the Republic of Ireland; instead the glens were emptied, the Education Act of 1872 swept away the Gaelic schools, the ensuing struggle was for minimal rights to the land, and Highland children who might have gained much from the *Gràmar Dùbailt* learned a very different kind of English on the back streets of Partick and Govan. Forbes’s son Alexander wrote a strange but serviceable work, *Gaelic Names of Beasts (Mammalia), Birds, Fishes, Insects, Reptiles, etc.* (Edinburgh, 1905), from which his initials AF are familiar to all users of Dwelly’s dictionary.

‘Cluny Macpherson of Cluny (2 copies)’ is another gentleman whom we will meet again. Ewen MacPherson (1804–84), who succeeded to the MacPherson chiefship in 1817, was generally known in the Highlands as ‘Cluny’. He was grandson of his namesake of the ’45.

‘Colin Chisholm (late President of the Gaelic Society), London’ was a native of Strathglass. A customs officer, he was transferred from Liverpool in 1843 and became president of the Gaelic Society of London. Following his retirement in 1876 he moved back north and was for many years a stalwart of the Gaelic Society of Inverness (Mackenzie 1891: 146–47). We have already come across him in both Liverpool and Inverness.

‘G. A. Mackenzie of Applecross’ is George Alexander Mackenzie, a Liverpool merchant of the Applecross family who died in 1874 (Mackenzie 1879: 447–48).

‘G. A. Mackenzie of Dundonell’ is George Alexander Mackenzie of Dundonell, born 1818 (Mackenzie 1879: 284).

It is curious that Clach mentions no Gairloch Mackenzies at all.

‘Evan Maccoll, Liverpool, the well-known Gaelic bard, now of Kingston, Canada’ (1808–98) was from Kenmore on Lochfyneside, where he is fondly remembered. He had published the first edition of his poems in 1836. A friend and contemporary of John’s and of Colin Chisholm’s, he was the last and youngest of the thirty-six poets featured in the main section of *Sàr Obair*. In his

biography of him, at p. 357 of *Sàr Obair*, John mentions two other individuals who appear further down the list:

It is well for dependant merit that there are gentlemen who have something ethereal in them: much to their honour, Mr Fletcher of Dunans, and Mr Campbell of Islay, patronized our author, and through the generously exercised influence of either, or both of these gentlemen, McColl was appointed to a situation, which he now holds, in the Liverpool Custom-house.

‘Colin Fraser, now F.C. minister, Strathglass’ must I think be a reference to the Colin Fraser who laboured as Free Church missionary (but not minister) in Strathglass from c. 1854 to 1880 (Ewing 1914: 210).

‘W. F. Skene’ is the future Historiographer Royal, Knoydart-born William Forbes Skene (1809–92), another close contemporary of John’s; his *Highlanders of Scotland* had appeared in 1836.

‘J. F. Campbell, yr. of Islay’, *Iain Òg Ìle* (1822–85), was to achieve everlasting fame as the founding father of the study of Gaelic folklore. In 1843 he was a 21-year-old student at Edinburgh University.

‘W. B. C. Campbell, Islay House’ must be in error for Walter Frederick Campbell, laird of Islay and father of the above. He was, after all, one of the two gentlemen who had, in John’s rich phrase, ‘something ethereal in them’. His younger son, Walter Douglas Somerset, was not born until 1840.

‘Mary Ann Jane Clephane Douglas Maclean’ will be a lady otherwise on record as Mrs Marianne Maclean Clephane, daughter and heiress of Maclean of Torloisk, for whom see Sinclair 1899: 461; Grierson 1932: vii, 162–63, 189–92, 226–30, 260–62, 366–67, 489; Ó Baoill 1979, xxvi, xxvii, 155, 168–69. Two of her daughters were Margaret and Anna Jane Douglas Maclean Clephane, whose ‘Songs Collected in the Western Isles of Scotland’ – including eighteen Gaelic items and three harp tunes – were privately printed, apparently at Torloisk itself, in 1808 (NLS MS 14949 and m/f 266).

‘Lord Lovat’ is Thomas Alexander Fraser, 12th Lord Fraser of Lovat (1802–75), who succeeded to the title in 1803. For many years he was Lord-Lieutenant of Inverness (Paul 1908: 546).

‘A. Fletcher of Dunans’ is Angus Fletcher (1804–75), son of John Fletcher of Dunans in Argyll. A Roman Catholic, he became Solicitor of the Inland Revenue in 1842 and Comptroller of the Inland Revenue c. 1856 (Walker 1987: 54; Loudon 2001: 158). It is clear how he was able to help Evan MacColl get a job in the Customs; as for the ‘ethereal’ part of his nature, it ran in the family. His grand-uncle Archibald Fletcher, Advocate (1746–1828), was a celebrated pamphleteer, father of burgh reform, and supporter of the American and French revolutions (*DNB*). His grand-aunt Eliza (1770–1858) had both brains and beauty – her marriage to Archibald was romantic and successful, and she left a highly readable *Autobiography* (1874). Their son, his cousin, also Angus (1799–1862), with whom he has been confused (Grant 1944: 72), qualified as Writer to the Signet in 1822, but abandoned the legal profession and became a sculptor in London (Will 1983: 107).

Clach concludes his list with ‘Lord Arthur Lennox; the Duke of Richmond, and many other well known names’. In modern parlance, John must have scored these two ‘hits’ with a ‘maildrop’. These gentlemen’s secretaries presumably had a library budget to spend. Charles Gordon-Lennox, 5th Duke of Richmond (1791–1860), had already been a member of the cabinet (*DNB*); Arthur (1806–64), 7th son of Charles, 4th Duke of Lennox, was MP for Chichester and became Master of the Ordnance and Lord of the Treasury in 1844. His wife Adelaide was a sister of Walter Frederick Campbell of Islay (Paul 1908: 367).

I do not know how long John’s job as a book-keeper in the Glasgow University printing office had lasted, but I suspect that it came to an end on or soon after 23 March 1843 when he signed his agreement with D. R. Collie in Edinburgh, for that agreement required that he go out once again in search of subscribers. The last issue of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* ever to be published appears to have been falling from the presses in May 1843 as half the ministers of the Church of Scotland walked out of the General Assembly to form what became the Free Church (cf. App., no. 13). John himself was (I guess) free at last as well. He must have spent the summer of 1843 travelling in the Highlands, and the autumn translating Collie’s materials.

*Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa, no Bliadhna Thearlaich* (App., no. 14) was duly printed and published by Thornton & Collie of Edinburgh in 1844. It is the first full-length secular prose work to be published in Gaelic. There is no foreword or preface, and no clue is given that it is a translation. There is a dedication to ‘Charles Edward Stuart’ (Charles Stuart Hay Allan). The title-page states that it is *le Iain Mac-Choinnich*, and John refers to himself in the dedication as its *Ughdar* (‘author’). In fact, roughly seven eighths of the book may reasonably be described as an abridged translation (or translated abridgement) of the fifth edition (1840) of Robert Chambers’s comprehensive *History of the Rebellion in Scotland in 1745–6*, drawing extensively upon Gaelic poetry and tradition for its imagery, and choc-a-bloc with errors, misunderstandings and John’s own creative intellect. The other eighth, threaded through the work, consists of reliable oral evidence mixed with glimpses of the past picked up by John in countless ceilidh-houses throughout his career.

I have found no evidence that John used any published work other than Chambers’s *History*, but it is impossible to be sure of this without making a detailed comparison of his text with every book, pamphlet, article and essay about the ’45, especially in matters concerning Ross-shire and where there is some evidence that John’s information came from oral sources. He tends to go into particular detail (and provides much new information) in matters related to piping, clothing, food and timber. Although an eccentric production in many ways, *Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa* is of great value as Gaelic literature and as a window upon issues relating to translation (MacilleDhuibh 2006).

At the end of *Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa* is a collection of seventeen Jacobite songs. Clearly Collie, having previously published John’s *Cruiteara*, agreed that it would be a good idea to test the market for such a collection, and decided that the reaction was positive. Before the year was out, in association with Duncan Macvean of Glasgow, he had published another book with John’s name on it – *An t-Aosdàna: or a Selection of the Most Popular Gaelic Songs* (App., no. 15). The Rev. Donald Maclean alleged (1915: 250) that this was ‘the same collection of songs as is appended to the 1844 edition of *Bliadhna Thearlaich*’, but this is less than the whole truth. John had in fact added two important Ross-shire satires – ‘Marbhrann Bhàtair’, a *croसानachd* which

adds greatly to our understanding of the events that followed the battle of Àth nam Muileach in Glen Affric on 2 October 1721 (MacilleDhuibh 2001a–f), and ‘Daibhidh Greosgach, Crom, Ciar’, a lighter piece whose significance lies in its authorship (it is by the celebrated Aonghas Dubh, the Rev. Angus Morrison, minister of Contin and brother of the *Clàrsair Dall*) and by the way it includes verses which set out to praise the same man, but only succeed in satirising him further (MacilleDhuibh 2003a–b). Also of interest is John’s dedication to Ewen MacPherson, whom we met as a subscriber to *Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa*. I print the original below (App., no. 15); here is a translation.

TO CLUNY, CHIEF OF THE MACPHERSONS – MAGNANIMOUS SIR, I am publishing this little book under your illustrious name, with every hope that it will obtain your protection, since you are the only one surviving today (who understands and respects the rhetoric which it contains) of the remnant of the princely, brave Chiefs who rose up in the epicentre of danger and destruction in order to win back for the legitimate Royal exile, who awoke the sympathy of the sweet-voiced bards who sang these poems, the ancient allegiance of the People of Scotland. I have in truth the honour to be, with great respect, your most humble servant, JOHN MACKENZIE.

John thus points out that, of all the surviving Highland chiefs descended from those who fought on the Prince’s side in the ’45, Cluny is the only Gaelic speaker. The description is entirely in line with that of the *DNB*: “While thoroughly loyal to the reigning dynasty, he cherished the Jacobite sentiments of his ancestors, and was specially attached to old highland customs and manners. So far as possible he endeavoured to live among his people the life of the old highland chiefs, of whom he was probably the last representative.” John addresses him as *thu* in preference to formal *sibh*; this is in line with his practice in *Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa*, where Prince Charles addresses his father as *thu* in the same way (p. 19).

### **Glasgow: *A’ Bheithir-Bheuma* and *The Harp of Caledonia***

According to Clach (p. 205) *Sàr Obair* and *Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa* secured John ‘considerable fame in literary circles’. Soon after the publication of the latter (which must have taken place early in 1844) he ‘obtained an engagement with Messrs Maclachlan and Stewart, Edinburgh, at what would now be considered, even in a *Celtic* literary engagement, starvation wages, namely, one pound per week’. Clach’s word *Celtic* – the italics are his – echoes the name of his own periodical. It can be seen in retrospect, then, that towards the end of 1843, Iain Alastair Òig’s life changed once more: this time for ever, but not necessarily for the better. He had left behind him the variety of *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, his humdrum post in Khull’s office, and the writing of books on poetry and song; in exchange he accepted the holy grail of a regular job in Gaelic which involved translation from English and the correction of Gaelic books for the press (Murchison 1947–48: 126). The year 1844 thus marked the appearance not only of *Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa* and *An t-Aosdàna* but also of five other books, all religious in nature, of which he may be said to have been the editor of four (App., nos. 16–19) and the translator of one (App., no. 20).

For the time being, however, John remained a ‘Glasgow Gael’. When in January 1845 he published his forgotten satirical masterpiece *A’ Bheithir-Bheuma* (App., no. 21), he was still in his adopted city.

The story of *A' Bheithir-Bheuma* is as follows. From January 1844 to January 1845 John Forbes of Fort Augustus appears to have edited thirteen numbers of a periodical called *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal*, with which he attempted to build upon the good name of *An Teachdaire Gàelach* (1829–31), *An Teachdaire Ùr Gàidhealach* (1835–36) and *Cuairtear nan Gleann* (1840–43). Thirteen, at any rate, is the number of issues which Maclean (1915: 312) once saw advertised in a sale catalogue; he himself had only ever seen nos. 1, 2 and 8, and although Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 2668) list five issues in NLS and EUL (the latter said to be imperfect), all I have found is two copies of no. 1 in NLS and no trace of the periodical at all in EUL. Still, just as Maclean says of *A' Bheithir-Bheuma*, for me the first issue of *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal* is 'quite enough'. The editor's name does not appear, and none of the articles are signed in any way. Most of its four pages consist of news rather than opinions, but at pp. 3–4, under the heading 'Leabhraichean ura Gaelig', is a vitriolic review of *Eachdraidh a' Phrionnsa*. It begins:

Chaidh sinn troimh an leabhar seo bho thoiseach gu deireadh, cha b'ann gun chràdh inntinn no gun ruthadh gruadhach ri faicinn an riaslaidh agus an ablachaidh a rinneadh leis an ughdair air seanachas cuimhneachain an laoich rioghail . . . 'S cinnteach sinn nach 'eil an diugh anns an Roinn Eorpa, cainnt eil' anns am biodh a' chridh aig neach leabhar a' chur a' mach far am faicte folluiseach, aineolas, di-fiosrachaidh agus cioncuraim cho iomarcach agus cho soilleir 's a chithear anns an leabhar seo. 'S goirid an ùine bho' n dh'fhaodadh gach neach a thairneadh camacha dubha air paipeir, leabhar a chur a mach 's a ghaidhlig gun eagal bèuma no cronachaidh bho theanga sgeileadair no bho bhèul caraid; ach tha 'chuis a' nis iar atharachadh, rinn Gràmàran an Stiubhartaich, an Rothaich agus an Fhoirbeisich, suilean nan Gaidheal fhosgladh, agus ged tha iad fathast tuille is fàbhorach ri oibrichibh mi-loineil bheadagan bathaiseach nach fios c'iu 's laotha 'naire no 'n eanachainn, gidheadh 's math is faithne dhaibh co 'chuireas gaidhlig an ordugh air shéol ceart, agus 'g am faithne snas-chainnt a' chur sios a' réir riaghailtean grammarail.

("We have gone through this book from start to finish, not without mental anguish or blushing cheek in seeing the chaos and confusion inflicted by the author upon the biography of the royal hero . . . We are certain that there is no other language today in Europe in which a person would dare publish a book in which ignorance, disinformation and carelessness would be paraded as abundantly and as prominently as is to be seen in this book. It is not long since everyone who could draw black curves on paper could publish a book in Gaelic without fear of complaint or criticism from the tongue of a critic or the mouth of a friend; but the situation has now changed, the Grammars of Stewart, Munro and Forbes have opened the eyes of the Gael, and although they are still excessively indulgent towards the disorderly works of impudent amateurs who do not know whether their shame or their brain is the smaller, they nevertheless know very well who has got Gaelic organised in the proper manner, and who knows how to write elegant language according to grammatical rules.")

It is clear what irks Forbes. He has put enormous labour into writing a grammar-book, yet the public continue to give a warm reception to works like John's which cheerfully ignore its rules.

He now launches into a discussion of specific examples of John's phraseology, such as *fo iomadh comain An Ughdair* in the dedication, remarking:

Mur h-i seo a chainnt a ta fearsgriobhaidh eachdraidh na gaidhlig ag innseadh dhuinn a labhradh leis na bruidean ma 'n do chruthaich Adhamh, cha 'n aithne dhuinne c' aite 'n do labhradh riabh i, ach mu bharrasgoileireachd Iain mhic Choinnich, 's è ar barail gur h-è b'fhearr a b' ainm dhi sgopsgoileireachd, mar a nochdar leinn ma 'n dealaich sinn.

("Unless this is the kind of language that the writer of the history of Gaelic tells us was spoken by the brutes before Adam was created, we don't know where it was ever spoken; but as far as John Mackenzie's super-scholarship is concerned, in our opinion a better name for it would be frothy-scholarship, as we shall show before we part company.")

Our 'anonymous' reviewer is becoming dangerously personal. Many of his criticisms are justified, however, and he leavens them with a little humour.

Air t. d. 44, "Cha luaithe fhuair iad *crathadh an fhir* de laimh mhìn an Diuc." Am b'aill leat gu'm faigheadh iad crathadh na mnatha, Iain? Air t. d. 47, "Air faighinn nam bàtaichean deas *air an cinn*." Sin thu MhicChoinnich! Cha bu chli air an casaibh iad. Air t. d. 199. "Anns an robh e *dha fhalach fein*." Cia mar a fhreagradh, bho fhalach fein duit ughdair? Air t. d. 202. "Cho luath 's a chuir Fear Chise Borgh Tearlach a steach do Sheomar mor nan Aoidhean, *Chaidh e thogail bean an taighe*." 'S olc nach d' innis thu 'cudthrom' dhuinn mar an ceudna.

("On p. 44, 'No sooner had they got *crathadh an fhir* ("the man's shake", i.e. a shake per man) of the Duke's smooth hand.' Would you like them to have got *crathadh na mnatha* ("the woman's shake"), John? On p. 47, 'After getting the boats *deas air an cinn* ("on their heads to the right", i.e. ready for them).' There you go Mackenzie! They weren't on their feet to the left. On p. 199, 'In which he was *dha fhalach fein* ("to his own hiding", i.e. hiding himself).' How would *bho fhalach fein* ("from his own hiding") suit you, author? On p. 202, 'As soon as the tacksman of Kingsburgh had put Charles into the large Guest Room, he went *a thogail* ("to raise", i.e. wake up) the woman of the house.' It's a pity you didn't tell us her weight while you were at it.")

He also points to historical errors such as the statements that the battle of Kilsyth was fought in 1645 for James III (p. 11) and that Forts George, Augustus and William were built between 1715 and 1745 (p. 15). It was problematic for John in the opposite way to that in which 'Ossian' had been problematic for James Macpherson, for he had been obliged by his contract, as we have seen, to base his work on materials provided by the publisher, which means that *Eachdraidh a' Phrionnsa* was basically a translation, even though John's name was given as author. This helps to explain, though not to excuse, the historical errors and what Forbes calls *gaidhlig ghallda 'n sgriobhadair*, 'the writer's Lowland Gaelic' – it is difficult for us not to notice that phrases like *cha do dhearbha a' chùis so 'bhi mar shaoil le Tearlach* ('this affair did not prove to be as Charles



expected', p. 22) are best read as if they were English. However, Forbes had a one-track mind. He might reasonably have summed up the book as ambitious and entertaining while vitiated by poor proof-reading and unanswered questions about authorship and source-material; he might have added that, depending on the answers to such questions, the book was perhaps an important one. Instead, clearly consumed by jealousy at the success of *Sàr Obair*, he concludes:

Tha e soilleir nach aithne do 'n ughdair tri facail a chur 'an ordugh ceart, ann an litreachadh no 'n claonadh, agus ma dh' eirich dha cainnt cheart a sgrìobhadh ann an aite no 'n aite, 's dearbhte gur h-ann bho thuiteamas 'a thachair dha 'dheanamh; cha 'n ann bho' ionnsachadh. Chithear ainmeanan ann an aon aite firionnta agus na h-ainmeanan ceudna ann an ait' eile boirionnta. Chithear iad anns an chor ainmeach 'n uair bu choir dhaibh a bhi anns a chor bhuinteach. Chithear iad anns a chor bhuinteach an uair bu choir dhaibh a bith [*sic*] anns a chor roi-lideach; cha 'n 'eil duilleag air an seall sinn anns nach 'eil mearachd air muin mearaichd, agus b' e ar comhairle dhùrachdach do 'n ugdair [*sic*] e 'leigeadh dheth sgrìobhaidh, agus tionndadh ri ceaird onaraich sam bith leis am faigheadh e teachd an tìr agus aodach, oir 's cinnteach sinn nach cuir na 'sgrìobhas e air an doigh seo, airgiod 'na phoca no cliu air ainm; na mealladh sè e fein agus na tugadh e feairt air luchd mìodail; ged rinn an luchd dealbh-bhreacaidh an cuid fein deth le raga paiper agus ailtbhreacadh agus ged bhiodh an leabhar iar a sgrìobhadh ann an sàr-ghaidhlig Albannaich, bhiodh e daor, daor air trì tasdain an aite nan coig sgilleanan gealla [*sic*] sasunnach, mar a phàigheas gach neach a cheannachas [*sic*] e ma'm faigh se 'na dhorn e, ach 's e ar barail gur h-ainneamh iad a dh iarras seilbh air.

("The author has obviously no idea how to put three words together with regard to spelling or declension, and if he has succeeded in writing correct language in one or two places, it is evident that he has only chanced to do so by pure accident; not from his learning. Nouns can be found masculine in one place and the same nouns feminine in another. They can be found in the nominative case when they should be in the genitive case. They can be found in the genitive case when they should be in the prepositional case; there is no page we look at in which there is not error upon error, and it would be our earnest advice to the author that he give up writing, and turn to any honourable trade which might bring him a livelihood and put clothes on his back, for we are certain that what he writes in this manner will neither put money in his pocket nor enhance his reputation; let him not deceive himself and let him pay no attention to flatterers; although the printers have played their own part well, with excellent paper and printing, and even if the book were written in splendid Scottish Gaelic, it would be very expensive at three shillings, never mind the five silver shillings sterling that everyone must pay to buy it before he can have it in his fist; but we believe that few people will wish to possess it.")

John responded by founding a new periodical himself, *A' Bheithir Bheuma*, the first and only number of which was published in Glasgow in January 1845. The name means 'The Smiting

Dragon’ (cf. Cheape 1999: 76). For my own part I cannot recall reading anything written in the nineteenth century which has given me quite as much pleasure. It is a classic satirical magazine, clearly focused, full of character and genuine wit, entirely in Gaelic except for the publisher’s imprint, utilising upper and lower registers of the language to the full – that is to say, John revels in idioms, *dubhfhacail* and dialect. The following is a brief catalogue of its contents by page, column and line.

1a1. Editorial. The magazine’s aim is to publish *cuid do sheann seanachas agus do bhàrdachd Ghàèlach, ni tha sinn lan-chinnteach a bheir ni’s mò do thaitneas daibh-san aig am beil spéis do dh’fhior leughadh Gàèlach, no ged chuireamaid cuid do Sgrìobhaidhean Beurla gu Gaelig mar bu ghna leosan a chaidh air thoiseach oirnn* (‘some of the old traditions and verse of the Highlands, which we are quite sure will give greater pleasure to those who enjoy real Gaelic reading than our translating a few English writings into Gaelic, as has been the practice of our predecessors’). It is thirteen years since the *Beithir-Bheuma* last struck. (What does this refer to?) *Tha buaidh shònraichte innte agus se sin, gach duine anns an sàth i a gath gu’m fās e ’na chontom air an dean madraidh na dùch’ an dileag san dol seachad.* “She has a particular virtue, namely that everyone into whom she sinks her fangs turns into a dog-hillock which is pee’d upon in passing by the local canines.” She has been awakened, the editorial concludes, by the Post announcing with his horn the arrival of the *Gràmar Dubailt*.

1b11. ‘Teachdaire nan Gaidheal.’ This review announces the publication of the new journal by *comunn a’ chul-taigh ann am Baile nam breabadairean* (‘the back-green association in Tradeston’?) whom it names as ‘an Cuairtear’, ‘am Pungar’, ‘am Post’ and ‘an Gille Fionn-umh’. It mocks their platitudinous poetry and their bad Gaelic, detailing their many errors at length.

3b25. ‘Comhradh Eadar Murchadh Grè, Coinneach Mac Shuinn, Eobhan Mor ’s am Pungar, mu’n Ghramar Dhubailt!! (Air a sgrìobhadh do rèir lathailt’ Ghramarail a’ Phungar féin.)’ This review article on Forbes’s *Gràmar Dubailt* is the jewel in the crown of *A’ Bheithir-Bheuma*, and John knew it – he appears also to have issued it separately (App., no. 22). Utilising the dialogue mode so favoured by nineteenth-century periodical writers, it reveals John as a comic writer of brilliance who clearly knew his Shakespeare.

*Pung.* Am beil Laidin agadas fòs?

*Mur.* Mo righe tha ’s Fraincis, is beagan dhe na “*Chainnt Bheurla*,”—parly voo Francy, a bhall urramaich? honey’s sweet quo’ Mally Spense—nemo me impune lacessit,—eadh. “Olc air fear an uilc;” agus, ma shuidheas tòin rùist air cluaran, stobas e i.

(“*Pung.* Do you speak Latin too?

*Mur.* Indeed I do, and French, and a little ‘Broad Scots,’—parly voo Francy, distinguished member? honey’s sweet quo’ Mally Spense—nemo me impune lacessit,—yes. ‘Evil to him who evil thinks;’ and, if bare backside sitteth upon thistle, it pricketh it.”)

Had he received encouragement and a little guidance, he might have produced a body of prose work fit to put beside that of Iain Crichton Smith, John Murray and Norman and Alasdair Campbell in Scottish Gaelic, Flann O’Brien in Irish, and James Joyce in English. Were he alive today he would receive Arts Council grants for writing like this, provided he avoided libel. As it

is, I know of no contemporary views upon *A' Bheithir-Bheuma*, but the climate of his day is probably well represented by the Rev. Donald Maclean (1915: 250, 313), who called *Comhradh . . . mu'n Ghramar Dhubailt* 'scurrilous but somewhat clever' then spoiled it by saying that one number of *A' Bheithir-Bheuma* was 'quite enough'.

5b60. 'Cleachdadh air Casan bàrdail.' This section consists of comic verses in the style of (mostly) famous poems by established poets such as Eoghainn MacLachlainn, Donnchadh Bàn, Iain Dubh mac Iain mhic Ailein and Uilleam Ros. The technique re-emerged strongly in the 1960s, see for example Norman Campbell's 'Mi Fhìn agus a' Revolution agus mo Bhata Darach' (Black 1999: xlviii, 584–93). John's sole aim in every case is to satirise the *Gràmar Dhubailt* or *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal* (or both). It begins:

Na'm faighinn cothrom ort fo'n phlaid.  
Chuirinn 's an sdaid *shéidicht'* thu.  
Hi ri, ho ro mo dhéideagan.  
*Ceannaiche Muin.*

'Nuair bha Gàelig aig na h-eòin  
'S a thuigadh iad glòr nan dàn  
Na'n cluinnag iad Gàelig Fòb  
Bhiog sileag an tòin gu làr.  
*McLachuinn.*

("If I could get you under the blanket  
I would mutate you by *aspiration*.  
Hi ri, ho ro my darling one.  
*Ceannaiche Muin.*

When the birds were Gaelic-speaking  
And understood poetic sound,  
If they heard Fòb's kind of Gaelic  
They'd have shat upon the ground.  
*MacLachlan.*")

For *sdaid shéidichte* ('lenition, aspiration') see 6b12. *Ceannaiche muin* will be 'a prostitute's client', or more literally 'a purchaser of sex'. As for *McLachuinn*, perhaps he is Art MacLachuinn, see 7a16.

6b12. 'Gaelig a' Phungar'. Choice quotes from Forbes's work, with humorous commentary. The second quote is: "Tha'n ginteach aonar boir, iar a chumadh o'n ghinteach aonar fhear, le tilgeadh na staide séidichte; agus ma's aonsmid e, tha e dunadh gu cumanta le *e* 'us air uairibh le *a*." The commentary on this highly technical point is subtly ribald: attributed to *Catriona Bhuidhe Nic-an-t-Sriùcair o Thobar-Mhuire, cailin òg grinn aig am beil bròd na Gàellig* ('Catriona MacRascal from Tobermory, a gorgeous young blonde who speaks very good Gaelic'), it begins: *Cia b'e air bith a sgrìobh a' Ghàellig sin, is dòigh leam gur math an gaisgeach anns an dorch e, is domhain a labhair e, ach bheireadh seillean math mil á chainnt . . .* ("Whoever it was who wrote that Gaelic, I'm sure he's a fine performer in the dark, he spoke in some depth, but a good bee could find honey in his speech . . .")

7a16. ‘Buth Ur Dhibhe.’ (‘New Pub.’) The complete text is:

Tha’n Gàel Còir fialaidh sin Mr. Art Mac-Lachuinn, a bha grathunn a cumail an taigh-òsda mhòir fharsuinn aig iochdar Sràid *Shimeica*, mar thig thu nall air drochait ùr Glascho; a nis air fosgladh bùth ùr aig àireamh *trì fichead ’sa sè deug* do Shràid mhòr Chluaidh.—Gàel ’sam bith a bhios air son pinnt leanna no cairteal uisge-bheatha òl gu’n ghlampar luchd-misge, no masladh graisge ’na lòrg, ruigeadh e ar caraid Mr. McLachuinn agus gheibh e drùchd nam beann gun truailleadh, a’ ruith cho fallain agus cho siùbhlach á chuid feadan sa bha e riabh. *Air son barrachd fiosrachaidh, faic “Cuil nam Bard” air an ath taobh-duilleig.*

(“That kind and generous Gael Mr Artt McLachlan who for some time ran the large spacious public-house at the foot of Jamaica Street, as you come across the new Glasgow bridge, has now opened new premises at no. 76 Great Clyde Street. Any Gael who wishes to enjoy a pint of beer or a quarter of whisky unaccompanied by the wrangling of drunkards or the jeers of riff-raff, let him find his way to our friend Mr McLachlan and he will receive the unpolluted mountain dew, flowing from his tubes as wholesomely and as freely as ever. For more information see ‘Poets’ Corner’ on the next page.”)

This genial publican will be the native of Luing referred to in *Sàr Obair*, p. 56, as ‘Mr Artt McLachlan, of Glasgow, a gentleman well known for his zeal in every thing tending to promote the honour of Highlanders, and the Highlands’. He was a Roman Catholic. In 1855 the Islay poet William Livingston published a song to him, ‘Oran do Artt Mac Lachainn’, in broadsheet (Mac Dhunleibhe 1882: 164–66; Maclean 1915: 165). John had said in 1841 that he was about to erect ‘a tomb-stone, with a suitable Gaelic inscription’ in his native island to the memory of its most celebrated poet, Diorbhail Nic a’ Bhriuthainn (Dorothy Brown), but it had still not been done when he died in 1884, aged 88 (Mac a Phi 1938: 140; public records).

7a31. ‘Bas Teachdaire nan Gaidheal.’ A gleeful announcement that *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal mac a’ Chuairtear* has ceased publication, and that *comunn a’ chul-taigh* has announced that it will be replaced in due course by a fresh periodical, this time without mistakes.

7b21. ‘Naigheachd Mhor ann am Baile Beag.’ A satirical piece on ‘an Gille Fionn-umh’, referring to his lack of success in love and his intention to emigrate to America.

8a1. ‘Cuil nam Bard: Gill’ an Osdair.’ A poem in praise of the beer sold in Artt McLachlan’s pub, see 7a16 above. There is no indication of authorship, but it is probably by John himself – it does not appear amongst Livingston’s collected works. Here it is: the spelling is John’s, the translation is mine.

*’S ann tha mi smaointeachadh an drasd  
Air fleasgach àluinn, ainmeil,  
Bhios uain’ a’s glas an dara h-uair,  
’S air chaochladh snuaidh ri leanmhuinn,  
’Nuair théid a tharruinn gu finealt,  
As na pìopan margaidh,  
Gu’n éirich pìrbhuic ghlas ma cheann,  
’S gur mòr a mheall i dh’airgead.*

I am thinking at the moment  
Of a handsome famous hero  
Who’s green and grey half the time  
With other hues to follow —  
For when he’s pulled so neatly  
Out through the pipes for selling,  
A grey wig rises round his top  
That’s cost a lot of money.

*Bi sin a phìrbhuic a's glan craobh,  
O'n chridh' aotrum amasgaidh,  
'Nuair dh-éireas i bho ghrunnd an àird'  
Air druim a' chlair a' falbh i  
Fear gun bhruailean r'a òl stuaim  
Tha ioma' buaidh 'ga leanmhuinn  
'Se thogadh gruaim an fhir o'n fhuachd  
An uair bu chruaidhe 'ghaille-bheinn!*

*'S maraiche math air a' chuan thu,  
'S air bharran nan stuadh cròcach;  
'Nuair a thig a' chùis gu cruadal,  
Bheir thu buaidh mar sheòltair,  
'Nuair thig dorchadas na h-òidhch,  
'Sa bhios na tuinn 'ga stròiceadh,  
Mar a bi thu ac' an uair sin,  
Bi 'dh iad fuar neo-chnòdaidh.*

*Fleasgach nach sòradh an abhainn,  
Ri ceangal an reòta,  
'Sa chuireadh an aois bho gheilte,  
Gu seasamh na h-òige:  
Thogadh tu fonn fo na mhacnus,  
Gu eachdraidh a dòchais  
'Sa chuideachd sin a bhios as t-aonais  
Chithear coachladh neoil orr'!*

*O! Gill' an òsdair as glan fradharc,  
Gu taghadh nan daoine,  
'S ann ort nach dìobradh do chasan,  
'Stu 'n teachdair math aonaich  
Ni thu feum a muigh 'sa steach,  
As lasaidh tu le gaol iad,  
'S am fear a shaoileas a dhol seachad,  
Bheir thu staigh air thaod e.*

*'Nuair a bheir thu steach air sgeòid e,  
Se bhòrd a bhios aobhach,  
Cluich a's grinne, mir', as òran,  
'S iad gun bhròn mu'n t-saoghal,  
Bidh tu fein an ceann a' bhùird,  
'S be sin an stiùbhard rìoghail,  
'Sa' dh'aindeoin cuideachd g'am bi ann,  
Gur tus a's ceann 's a's brìgh dhaibh.*

*Fleasgach briunnach nan sùl mìogach,  
Dh-fhaodadh rìgh a phògadh,  
'S ioma' baintigh 'rn 'th'air a thì,  
Ach ciod an nì sin domh-sa?—  
Leigeamaid fo bhreth nam bàrd,  
Mar dh-fhàg mi fear na cròice,  
'S am fear a ni mholadh ni's fearr,  
'Se-féin a phàidheas còrr e.*

Full-blooded comes that periwig  
From a light and merry heart  
When it rises from the bottom  
To float upon the top;  
If the quiet one is taken sober  
Many benefits ensue —  
He'd tempt a man in from the cold  
When most strongly blows the gale.

You're a good sailor of the sea,  
On crests of foam-capped waves,  
For when hardihood is called for  
You perform a seaman's task —  
When the night is falling darkly  
And the waves are torn asunder,  
If they don't have you at that time  
They will be cold and wretched.

A hero who'd not shun the river  
When it's encased in frost  
And who'd defy decrepitude  
In stout defence of youth,  
You'd raise a tune from merriment  
To tell of its presumption,  
While those who are without you  
Can be seen another hue.

O! The publican's assistant  
With an eye for choosing people,  
Your legs would not forsake you,  
You're a good fairground runner;  
Both out and in you're useful  
And you light them up with love —  
As for him who means to go on past,  
You lead him in on a halter!

When you bring him in by the lappet  
It's his table will be merry:  
The best gaming, fun and song  
With not a care in the world;  
You'll be on the table-top,  
And what a royal steward!  
For no matter the company,  
You're their head and substance.

The fair youth with smiling eyes,  
A king could kiss him himself,  
Many ladies pursue him —  
But what use is that to me?  
Let's put to poets' judgement  
How I've praised the foam-topped one,  
And let him who does it better  
Be the man who pays for more!

8b1. ‘Iongantasan!’ The complete text is: *Tobraichean Ghlinn-Iuch!—Mòr-chùis a’ Phuist!—Drochait Abar-Pheallaidh!—Clach a’ choire a’m Baile-pheatrais! Cluig-Pheairt!—A’ Chlach-Tholl an Asaint ’us an Gramar-Dùbailt! Seachd iongantasan mòra, mòra, na h-Albann!* (“The wells of Linlithgow!—The conceit of ‘am Post’!—The bridge of Aberfeldy!—The kettle stone in Balephetrish! The bells of Perth!—The stone with the hole in it in Assynt and the Double Grammar! The seven great, great wonders of Scotland!”) See Maclean 1845: 206; Beveridge 1903: 115; MacDougall and Cameron n.d.: 82; MacKinnon 1992, no. 10; Miller 1994: 158; Brownlie 1995: 30–31; Black 2005: 396–97, 558, 597; MacilleDhuibh 2005a–b.

8b7. A spoof postbag section. It begins with a not very sincere-sounding apology, signed ‘A’ Bheithir Bheuma’, for harping so much on the same theme, with the explanation that when the ‘Beithir’ has something to chew (*mir-cagnaidh*) it likes to grind it into chaff (*a dheanauh cho mìn ’sa chàth*). To prove the point, the editor proceeds to reassure one of his four alleged correspondents, *Beul gun Fhaitheam, an Dun-Breatainn* (‘Unzipped Mouth, in Dumbarton’) that ‘turas a’ Phuist thun na h-airidh’ (‘The Postman’s Trip to the Shieling’) will be published at the first opportunity.

8b56. “Glasgow:—Printed by Wilkinson & Co. 24 Miller Street, and conducted by J. Mackenzie, for himself and the other Proprietors, at No. 25 East Clyde Street, where all Communications are requested to be sent.—Sold by the Booksellers in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Greenock.”

Thanks to *A’ Bheithir-Bheuma*, then, we have John’s address, 25 East Clyde Street, and we know that he enjoyed a pint of beer in Artt McLachlan’s public-house at 76 Clyde Street, formerly at the foot of Jamaica Street. I suspect he means Great (or West) Clyde Street on the north side of the river, rather than the *new* Clyde Street in Tradeston on the south bank, given that prior to the construction of Tradeston in the 1790s Great (West) and East Clyde Streets had been a single entity, Clyde Street, as indeed they are again today (MacGregor 1881: 377; Moore 1996, plates 3–6). We are of course tempted to wonder if Artt McLachlan the Glasgow publican was by any chance related to John Maclachlan the Edinburgh bookseller and publisher, for it seems that, despite (or perhaps because of?) engaging him at one pound per week, the latter had our John on a remarkably loose rein. It was all made possible by the Glasgow–Edinburgh railway line, which had opened on 18 February 1842. Perhaps we may be permitted to visualise the lanky figure of John on a day early in 1844 as he sits in the snug of Artt McLachlan’s riverside tavern, turning from the dreary toil of translating Bunyan’s *Come and Welcome* to order a pint and a mutton chop, spluttering in rage at Artt McLachlan over *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal*, then calming himself, pushing Bunyan gladly to one side and jotting down some ideas for *A’ Bheithir-Bheuma* instead. Indeed, it would not surprise me to learn that *A’ Bheithir-Bheuma* was produced to win a wager.

Once every couple of months or so during the course of 1844 John must have boarded the ‘iron horse’ to bring his latest bundle of translations and corrected proofs to John Maclachlan in Edinburgh. Maclachlan would not have been impressed with *A’ Bheithir-Bheuma*. He will have wanted to have Iain Alastair Òig where he could see him. He had ambitious plans, and I think he must have insisted that John come to live in Edinburgh. Following *A’ Bheithir-Bheuma* and its spin-off *Còmhradh mu’n Ghràmar Dhùbailt*, John published nothing else in Glasgow, with the possible exception of *The Harp of Caledonia*.

*The Harp of Caledonia* (App., no. 23) was Glasgow’s answer to the *Cruiteara*. The nineteenth-

century predecessor of *The Ceilidh Song-Book* which went through so many reprints in the twentieth, it provided the words of popular Gaelic songs for use at concerts. I have seen a number of copies, each from a different Glasgow publisher. None bears a date or the name of the compiler. It is impossible to know for sure when it was first published; all that can be said with certainty is that it was repeatedly re-issued during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Throughout these fifty years the text of *The Harp of Caledonia* (pp. 3–64) never varied in any way. Clearly it was stereotyped. As pointed out by Baoill (1979: xxix–xxx), internal evidence links it with John’s work, but I see no reason to assume that its contents were plagiarised from his *Cruiteara*, *Co’-Chruinneachadh* and *Sàr Obair* after his death. It contains thirty-nine songs. At pp. 19–21 is one of John’s favourites, ‘A’ Bhanarach Dhonn’. At pp. 36–37 are eight stanzas headed ‘Oran. / Le Uilleam Mac-Coinnich’, beginning ‘*S cianail m’ aigne o na mhadainn*. At pp. 48–49 is Ross’s ‘Òran anns am bheil am Bàrd a’ Moladh a Leannain agus a Dhùthcha Fhéin’, here entitled: “Mo Run an Cailin.—Le U. Ros.” At pp. 53–55 is ‘S Trom Leam an Airidh’ in all its phallic glory – the only song by Rob Donn in the entire collection. At pp. 57–59 is a Gaelic song in six stanzas headed ‘The Flower of Dunblain’, beginning *Chaidh a’ ghrian as an t-sealladh*. In the index at p. 64 it is described as ‘Translated’; I wonder if John was the translator. At pp. 60–62 is Lachlan MacKinnon’s ‘Oran do Nighean Fir Gheambail’, as in *Sàr Obair*, pp. 82–83. At p. 55, imitating the footnote ‘19th September, 1802’ at p. 228 of *Sàr Obair*, the first line of Donnchadh Bàn’s ‘Cead Deireannach nam Beann’ is footnoted: “September, 19th, 1802, in the 79th year of his age.” And in another footnote, at p. 63, a song entitled ‘An Cagaran’ is said to have been ‘taken from the mouth of an old woman in Lochaber, who sang it to her grandson’.

I believe, therefore, that John was the compiler of *The Harp of Caledonia*. As to when he compiled it, all I can say is that as it was clearly published in Glasgow, and as John seems to have moved permanently to Edinburgh in 1845, it is likely to have made its first appearance in or about that year.

### Edinburgh: the dictionary

During 1845 John prepared four more religious translations for the press (App., nos. 24–27), all for Maclachlan & Stewart. Other than *A’ Bheithir-Bheuma*, however, the highlight of 1845 for him must have been the second edition of *Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa* (App., no. 28), published in this most appropriate of years by Thornton & Collie, as before. In 1846 he prepared just two more religious translations for the press (App., nos. 29 and 30), for the very good reason that he was now hard at work compiling an English–Gaelic dictionary.

All Gaelic translators discover the many deficiencies in existing English–Gaelic dictionaries and curse them frequently. It is an occupational hazard, translations being necessarily focused on a particular subject in depth, while dictionaries attempt to cover all subjects in breadth. The next stage in the translator’s mind, one which almost never comes to fruition, is a resolve – some day – to turn his coinages and other hard-won knowledge into an alphabetical word-list for his own use and that of others, in order that the wheel should not have to be re-invented every time a fresh translation is begun. It is easy to imagine John pointing this out to his employer, and equally easy to imagine Maclachlan’s reply: “No, John, there’s no market for specialist dictionaries. But we was the behaving of a generation!”<sup>14</sup> That is, it was the behaviour of a generation which led John straight into controversy and is

still with us today. It involved a third party, Neil Macalpine, whom we have already met as a subscriber to *Eachdraidh a' Phrionnsa*, now sixty years old. In 1832 Niall Mór, as he was called in Islay, had produced a substantial Gaelic–English lexicon titled in some editions *The Argyleshire Pronouncing Gaelic Dictionary* and in others *A Pronouncing Gaelic Dictionary*. It included ‘A Concise but Most Comprehensive Gaelic Grammar’, and was already into its third edition by the following year.

An academic foundation for Gaelic lexicography had been laid by the large, expensive Gaelic–English/English–Gaelic dictionaries of Robert Armstrong in 1825 and the Highland Society of Scotland (which threw Latin into the mix as well) in 1828; now, thanks to the writings and periodicals of Caraid nan Gaidheal, the era of the smaller, cheaper, more popular Gaelic dictionary had arrived. Macalpine’s work came hard on the heels of MacLeod and Dewar’s of 1831, which was itself little more than a stripped-down version of the Highland Society’s, compiled neither by MacLeod (Caraid nan Gaidheal) nor by Dewar but by Patrick MacFarlane and his son Donald (Macalpine 1930: xiii–xiv). Armstrong’s cost £3 13s 6d, the Highland Society’s £7 7s 0d or £10 10s 6d, even MacLeod and Dewar’s was no snip at £1 1s 0d; John Maclachlan will have known well that whoever produced a small, cheap Gaelic–English/English–Gaelic dictionary could corner the market.

Maclachlan therefore commissioned Macalpine to produce a definitive edition of his Gaelic–English dictionary, while setting John to work on a new English–Gaelic part. Macalpine had little to do, and Maclachlan first published his work in 1845. John also worked fast (invigorated no doubt by the change of occupation), and his dictionary was duly published early in 1847 along with a reprint of Macalpine’s (App., no. 31).

A deal appears to have been struck by which the entire work was to appear under Macalpine’s name and title but with a preface by John, signed and dated. No doubt this compromise was the product of furious argument, refereed by Maclachlan. The chaos caused by John’s liking for polemics is well conveyed by Clach’s choice of words (p. 206).

His Preface, written for his own part—the English–Gaelic—of what is known as MacAlpine’s Dictionary, was by the publishers inserted at the beginning of the book—prefaced, indeed, to MacAlpine’s share of the work; and as the preface somewhat unfavourably criticises MacAlpine’s portion of the work, the latter became furious, and continued Mackenzie’s inveterate enemy as long as he lived—so much so, it is said, that the last words he uttered were the very opposite of blessings on the man who wrote the unfavourable preface, which, contrary to the writer’s intention, had been, by some unaccountable mistake, prefaced to the Gaelic–English, instead of the English–Gaelic, part of the Dictionary. To make matters worse, the work is also issued separately—MacAlpine’s part with Mackenzie’s preface, and Mackenzie’s part without a preface at all.

It is not difficult to see what upset Macalpine so badly. Near the beginning of a lucid, scholarly and sensible disquisition on Gaelic grammar, dialectology and orthography (dated January 1847) in which he goes out of his way to name Thomas Ross (Lochbroom), James Macintyre (Glasgow), James Munro (Fort William) and Alexander Munro (Glasgow) as ‘some of the best Gaelic scholars which the present age has produced’, John writes:



The Compiler of the First Part very judiciously availed himself of the labours of his predecessors. His work is more copious; his definitions more appropriate, many useful examples of idiom and practical phrases being given; and his orthography, in general, much more correct than those who have preceded him; notwithstanding his additions and emendations, there are still omissions, and various provincialisms. Of the latter, the following instances may be given:—"Coca" for *cò-aca*; "driom" for *druim*, back; "thala" for *falbh*; "faid" for *faidh*; "gaoith" for *gaoth*; "maidinn" for *maduinn*; and "urra" for the *prep. pro.* "oirre," on or upon her, &c. &c.; and he has besides made use of other provincialisms peculiar to the Western Isles and some districts of Argyleshire; but as these are generally understood, it would be superfluous to refer to them here. These he defends, giving them a preference over words of more general acceptance, a proceeding by no means to be justified in a work of this kind, and to be accounted for, only, from his partiality to words peculiar to the circumscribed locality of which he is a native—the Island of Islay.

One wonders what Maclachlan thought. It was one thing for an employee to attack a contributor within the pages of what was supposed to be a collaborative work. It was surely another for an employee to attack a large island full of potential customers. But his relationship with Iain Alastair Òig appears to have got better rather than worse. Did Maclachlan blame himself? Did he dislike Islaymen? (I do not know where he was from.) Did he reckon that John's tantrums were good for publicity? Did he dismiss the spat with a wave of the hand: "Who reads the introductions in dictionaries anyway?"

A more sinister reason for cold-shouldering Macalpine is that he had got himself into trouble with the all-powerful landed class. The potato blight had struck the previous year, 1846, and Macalpine had written to those responsible for the relief effort (among whom was Caraid nan Gaidheal) to draw attention to the starving condition of the Islay people. As a result, a cargo of meal was sent to Lochindaal. So far so good; however, as his biographer points out (Macalpine 1930: xii–xiii), 'as is often the case the administration of such funds of charity falls into the hands of local officials who are not always careful to keep their doings clear from favouritism and from misappropriation in the way of using public charity to pay people for services rendered to themselves'. Macalpine criticised their conduct; the laird, Walter Frederick Campbell, who was facing financial ruin, took offence, and moved to have the schoolmaster dismissed from his post; his employers, the Presbytery, sided with the laird; from 1848 to 1853 the estate, now sequestered, was run by an Edinburgh accountant, James Brown, and the atmosphere became more tense than ever (Storrie 1981: 135). Chief among the 'local officials' was the avaricious and unpopular William Webster, who unfortunately survived the change of regime (Meek 2003: 40, 399). The Rev. Donald Maclean, who had strong views on matters of this kind, finishes the story (1915: 173):

Where Presbyteries are judges it is well known, or ought to be, that neither the Schoolhouse nor the Manse has the slightest chance against the Mansion House. After years of wrangling—the parishioners simply looking on, not daring to interfere or threaten on behalf of their true benefactor—McAlpine was dismissed from his school,

and thrown utterly destitute on the charity of his indigent friends. He died in receipt of parochial relief in 1867 at the age of eighty years. A very handsome tombstone of polished granite was erected to his memory by his fellow-countrymen, which bears a very suitable inscription.

The part of the inscription to which Maclean refers is: “‘An honest man’s the noblest work of God,’ / And one lies here.” Macalpine was seen by his friends as kind, inoffensive and simple-minded – qualities which can lead to victimisation, very different from those of Iain Alastair Òig.

My own guess is that Maclachlan forgave John his part in the affair many times over for the simple reason that both parts of the dictionary sold like hot cakes. It is difficult to picture Maclachlan other than puffing contentedly at a pipe and fingering his latest balance-sheet with loving attention. Far from withdrawing the offending preface, he stuck it like a flag in Macalpine’s work. In 1852, long before Macalpine’s death, he published a reprint of his *Rudiments* which not only included John’s preface, unaltered and still proudly subscribed ‘JOHN MACKENZIE. / EDINBURGH, *January* 1847’, but boasted of it on the title-page: “‘Rudiments / of / Gaelic Grammar. / by / Neil McAlpine, / student in divinity, island of Islay, Argyleshire, / author of the Gaelic dictionary. / . . . / Third Edition. / to which is prefixed the / Preface to McAlpine’s Gaelic Dictionary. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan & Stewart. / MDCCCLII.”

The Macalpine and Mackenzie dictionaries were neat, cheap and useful. They were repeatedly re-issued, individually and separately, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. John’s part was reprinted by Gairm Publications as late as 1973, after which it was superseded (in 1981) by Thomson’s excellent *New English–Gaelic Dictionary*. But it enjoyed a curious life after death and continues to cause chaos and acrimony today. In 1925 John Grant of Edinburgh published *A Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* by the Rev. Dr Malcolm MacLennan, a native of Uig in Lewis. MacLennan based his Gaelic–English section on Macalpine’s, adding words from Maceachan’s, Macbain’s, current literature and common speech (especially the speech of the west side of Lewis), but he took his English–Gaelic section from Mackenzie’s with hardly any changes or additions at all. A list of Gaelic equivalents for English words which claimed to represent the state of the Gaelic language in 1925 was thus in reality a picture of the language as it stood in 1847.

The trouble with MacLennan’s was (so to speak) that it looked good. In design, typography and print quality it was outstanding. I was therefore not entirely surprised when it was reprinted in 1979 as a very attractive paperback by Aberdeen University Press and Acair of Stornoway. At this point it could not make things any worse, because Mackenzie’s, the only English–Gaelic dictionary in existence, was becoming hard to find under its own name, and Thomson’s was still two years down the line. It is an indictment of the state of Gaelic lexicography in 1979 that it was still possible to approve wholeheartedly the endorsement of Dr Donald John MacLeod which appeared on the cover of the new edition: “The reprint of this comprehensive and reliable dictionary, and in particular its English–Gaelic section, has been long awaited both by native Gaelic speakers and by learners of Gaelic.”

When Thomson’s dictionary appeared two years later MacLeod’s statement ceased to be helpful, but the damage was done. In fact, damage has continued to be done ever since, exacerbated by a second dust-jacket endorsement – from Professor William Gillies, at that time

on the board of Acair Ltd: “For learners, speakers and teachers of Scottish Gaelic this is without doubt the most useful of existing Gaelic dictionaries.”

No doubt he believed that it was, but from 1981 onwards I was placed in the awkward position of having to warn my students not to buy MacLennan’s handy-looking dictionary (“That’s right, the green one”) but to use Dwelly’s and Thomson’s instead. My advice was seldom taken. Linguistic casualties kept limping in for treatment, because students will be students, and cannot be persuaded to spend time checking in the Gaelic–English section everything they find in the English–Gaelic one. It came to a head in 1999 when a girl from Islay wrote about meeting an old friend in a pub: *Phòg sinn agus laigh sinn sìos*. On being asked as tactfully as possible what she meant, she explained immediately: “We kissed and cuddled.”

“Have you been using the green dictionary by any chance?”

“Yes.”

It was the last straw, but by accident this hapless student had raised a fascinating thought about the origin of ‘cuddle’ – *caidil*? It led straight to the publication of MacilleDhuibh 1999, in which, before pointing out that Mackenzie’s definition of ‘cuddle’ (*laidh sìos, laidh ri làr*) had been slightly altered by MacLennan (*laigh sìos, crùb a steach*) I described our dictionary problem.

I gave my student some examples. ‘Train’ in Mackenzie is given as: *Mealladh; cuideachd, buidheann; slaod, earball, iomall; òrdugh, cùrsa; luchd-leanmhainn*. MacLennan gives exactly the same (but misprints *cuideachd* as *cuideach*). This entry was brought to my attention many years ago when a student wrote an essay about going to the station and catching a *mealladh*. It took a bit of working out, because of course *mealladh* means deception or temptation. ‘Train’ as we know it developed out of ‘train of carriages’, ‘train of waggons’ and the like and was already being used on its own by 1830. But Mackenzie, a Gairloch man living in Glasgow, would have known these principally as iron horses; to him, a ‘train’ was above all something dragged along the ground to make a scent or trail, pieces of carrion or the like laid in a line for luring (*mealladh*) foxes into a trap. A lure, in other words.

Then there’s ‘hobby’. Look up MacLennan and you will find it given as *seòrsa seabhaic; eachfiodha*. Here he has made an effort – Mackenzie’s entry in 1845 was *Seòrsa seabhaic; each-maide, làir-mhaide*. But pity the poor student who has to write about his favourite hobby and has forgotten that a hobby in the sense of pastime is *cur-seachad*. *Eachfiodha* (presumably a misprint for *each-fiodha*), *each-maide* and *làir-mhaide* are all variants on the theme of ‘wooden horse’, hobby-horse that is. But *seòrsa seabhaic*? It means ‘a kind of hawk’, and sure enough the second meaning of ‘hobby’ given in my English dictionary is ‘a small species of falcon’. What this entry shows is that Mackenzie expected his dictionary to be used by fluent Gaelic speakers like himself who needed to know what English words meant. To his users of 1845, an explanation was as good as a synonym.

In stating that Mackenzie’s dictionary appeared in 1845, I was following the imprint page of MacLaren’s 1956 edition. MacLaren’s mistake in getting the date wrong by two years is infinitely preferable to the negligence of Acair Ltd and Aberdeen University Press in allowing MacLennan’s plagiarised version of John’s dictionary to masquerade as twentieth-century lexicography.

In the context of John's achievements the dictionary was a triumph, but Maclachlan was by now a happier man than his extraordinary employee, of whom Clach says (p. 207): "The labour which he bestowed on the Dictionary, which was published in 1846 [*sic*], shook him severely, and being naturally of a very delicate constitution, the labour and close application he bestowed upon it brought about a stomach complaint, which laid him almost prostrate, and quite incapacitated him for work."

### ***Sàr Obair* again, the Bible, and death**

John was on a slippery slope, but was far from finished – 1847 saw the publication of the second religious book which John had translated from scratch (App., no. 32), this time with a translator's note subscribed 'J. McK. / *Edinburgh, 14th June 1847*', and in the same year, says Clach (pp. 205–06, cf. Mackenzie 1911: 163), he issued a prospectus for a new and greatly enlarged edition of *Sàr Obair*, to be published (by subscription) by Maclachlan & Stewart and sold to subscribers at ten shillings.

It was "to comprise the works of *forty-six* professional bards, with an Appendix, containing a general collection of songs, original and select, composed by private gentlemen, who invoked the muse only on particular occasions, or under the impulse of strong feeling excited by extraordinary events . . . Every bard considered worthy of the name, whose compositions are known, and of whose existence any tradition remains, shall be noticed. Among those lays which are particularly cherished among their countrymen, but which, notwithstanding their worth, have never before been printed, may be mentioned *Alastair Grannd* and *Alastair Buidhe MacIamhair*, of Gairloch, and *Iain MacMhurchaidh*, or Macrae, of Kintail. The works of these three Poets were unavoidably omitted in the first edition of this work, but by the liberality of the present publishers the Compiler has many advantages in making the work more satisfactory than in its former state. The songs of John MacMhurchaidh are the most pathetic and sentimental of all the modern Highland bards."

The prospectus brings into stark profile the issue of John as an unreconstructed *Rosach*. We have noted his treatment of Lachann mac Theàrlaich and of Christiana Fergusson, his unqualified ascription of 'Cuachag nan Craobh' to William Ross, his insult to the people of Islay. If John was really a Ross-shire nationalist, why did he leave three of the greatest Ross-shire poets out of the first edition of *Sàr Obair*? Why, in his own words, were they 'unavoidably omitted'?

I agree entirely with John that the inclusion of these three Ross-shire poets would have left *Sàr Obair* 'more satisfactory than in its former state'. These things can be influential; *Sàr Obair* was influential. I have treasured, read and re-read my 1877 edition of *Sàr Obair* since I lit upon it one day in John Smith's bookshop in Glasgow as a student. It bears a beautifully inscribed, and very touching, dedication on the flyleaf: "Presented to / Miss Mc. Millan, / Gowan Hill, / as a Small Tribute of Esteem / By / John Downie, / Student, / Glasgow University / Christmas 1877." I have sometimes wondered over the years if this John Downie was related to his namesake, the nemesis of William Ross, that minister of Stornoway who married Mór Ros to Captain Clough. I tell a lie – I found two copies of *Sàr Obair* on that shelf. I bought them both and sold the other to

a fellow-student (Duncan MacQuarrie HMI), who was as delighted as I was at the find. When I drew up my plan for *An Lasair* I was eager above all to translate and annotate my favourites from *Sàr Obair* and also from a cherished companion of my schooldays, Watson's *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig*. As a result, Alastair Grannd was never in my thoughts; Alastair Buidhe I knew only as the man from whom John took down Ross's poems; Iain mac Mhurchaidh was a niggling worry, a poet celebrated mainly as an emigrant in non-literary anthologies like Margaret MacDonell's *The Emigrant Experience*. I remembered him, then forgot about him again. *Sàr Obair* – the edition we have, rather than the one we never got – had cast its spell upon me.

The new edition was no mere pipe-dream. John's brother James told Clach that John left the poems of Alastair Buidhe and Alastair Grannd 'written out, in two separate manuscript volumes, ready for the printer', but that unfortunately they disappeared after John's death, and that nobody now knew where they had gone. "It is to be feared," Clach remarked (p. 206), "that the material which he possessed is now for ever lost." Clach did what he could to repair the damage, using *The Celtic Magazine* to publish various poems by Alastair Buidhe (vol. 1, pp. 8, 80–81, 249–50; vol. 6, pp. 362–63; vol. 8, pp. 107–08) and Iain mac Mhurchaidh (vol. 7, pp. 271–76, 322–25, 387–89, 426–28, 464–67; vol. 8, pp. 462–64). And see now Chaimbeul 2020.

The year 1848, the last of John's life, yielded a book which must have given him enormous pleasure – a fifth edition of Duncan Ban Macintyre's poems, corrected, with an introductory memoir on the author's life, and some notes on the poems (App., no. 33). The memoir is dated Edinburgh, 1 March 1848, and is in John's inimitable style. A quarter of it is taken up with the story of Fletcher's sword, and, just as in *Sàr Obair*, he gives us two other classic anecdotes as well. One, on John Campbell of the Bank, helps us to understand the umbilical relationship between traditional praise and satire, the other is about the time the poet was asked if he was the man that made Beinn Dòrain – with the important difference that in the latter case he now supplies Duncan's actual words.

When our bard was travelling through the Highlands to dispose of his poems in 1790, a forward young man came rudely up to him and asked,—“An sibhse rinn Beinn-dòrain?” to which the bard answered, “Ud! ud! a ghaolaich cha mi; 's ann a rinneadh Beinn-dòrain comhladh ris na beanntaichean eile, ciann mu'n d'rugadh tu-féin no mise;” that is, “Was it you that made Beinn-dòrain?” To which the Poet answered, “Tut! Tut! my good fellow, Beinn-dòrain was made along with the other mountains, long before either you or I was born; but I made a poem in praise of Beinn-dòrain.”

It was the perfect swan-song for the compiler of *Sàr Obair*.

At the time of John's death he was preparing a new edition of the Gaelic Bible, which he left in an incomplete state. Clach saw the proofs, but was unable to find out 'by whom he was engaged on this important work' (p. 207). I would be surprised if it were not John Maclachlan, given that he had agreed to publish the new edition of *Sàr Obair*, and that a new edition of the Bible was the natural culmination of all John's work for him on religious texts.

It was understood by the Gairloch people that it was John's work on the Bible that had undermined his health. Perhaps this is what he told them. It is contradicted by Clach, who points instead to the 'stomach complaint' – an ulcer, I suppose – caused by his work on the dictionary. At any rate John decided to go home, thinking, as Clach put it (p. 207), 'that a change of air might

benefit him, and if the worst came to the worst, preferring to die, lovingly and tenderly cared for, in the bosom of his own family’.

Clach says (p. 207) that when John arrived in May 1848 at his father’s house in ‘*Lon-Dubh, Poolewe*’, which Dixon (1886: 190) calls ‘Kirkton, or Inverewe’, it was ‘after an absence of fourteen years’. This speaks volumes to me about a young man who had disgraced himself in the eyes of family and community but had long since repaired the damage tenfold. It also speaks as much of his own resentment at their treatment of him. I believe it also explains the statement in his new *Sàr Obair* prospectus that ‘the works of these three Poets were unavoidably omitted in the first edition’. The manuscripts must have been stuck at home, locked away by stubborn pride. John was very weak when he arrived, presumably following a long and painful journey by mail-coach from Edinburgh to Glasgow and steamer from the Broomielaw to Poolewe. One wonders if he was well enough to sit on deck in the early summer sunshine, well wrapped up against the breeze, and enjoy the west-coast scenery for one last time as it passed by, for the world can offer no finer *via dolorosa*.

Murchison tells us (1947–48: 127) that before the end came, John’s sister Mary took to reading to him from the new edition of the Gaelic Bible which had been published in 1807. Whenever she came to a passage which had not been translated as well as he would have liked, he said: *Na leugh às a leabhar sin, a Mhàiri – leugh às a’ Bhìoball bheag agam fhéin*. “Don’t read from that book, Mary – read from my own little Bible.” And his eyes would come to rest upon a copy of Kirk’s Bible, a little red book.

Clach says (p. 207) that John ‘lingered without any improvement, but cheerful to the end, and died, apparently without pain, in the arms of his sister Mary, who still survives him, on the 19th of August 1848’. He was forty-two years, one month and two days old. It was a dramatic end, for the fame of the *mac stròdhail*, of the peculiar but clever young man, had preceded him home. His remains were followed to the grave by a large concourse of people, including almost the whole population of the district, and he was buried in the grave of his ancestors, in the ruins of the *caibeal* or pre-Reformation church in the parish churchyard of Gairloch.

### The legacy

John’s death should not be seen as some kind of welcome release from a life of grinding toil. Until now, every downward turn in his life had propelled him upwards again ever faster. His blow on the head brought him to fieldwork. His failure in love brought him to poetry. His self-imposed exile from Gairloch and Inverness brought him to steady employment and literary success in Glasgow, culminating in the lasting triumph of *Sàr Obair*. The collapse of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* led to his brilliant *A’ Bheithir-Bheuma*. His success as a translator brought him the unfailing support of John Maclachlan, and one senses that the dictionary of 1847 marks some kind of watershed – after this, in a manner very reminiscent of clause 4 of the Collie agreement of 1843, Maclachlan was more his colleague than his employee, and their plans were becoming both more interesting and more ambitious – an expanded *Sàr Obair*, the Bible . . .

Clach also has many useful things to say about John’s literary remains, those in print and those unpublished. Of the former he says (p. 205) that ‘in all, he composed, edited, or translated above thirty different publications’. My appendix demonstrates that this is true. It shows that the precise number of publications known to have come from his hand during his lifetime, including *The*

*Harp of Caledonia*, counting new editions as separate, and counting *Cuairtear nan Gleann* as a single publication, is thirty-two. If we also include reprints from the *Cuairtear* known to have been issued under separate cover during the time of his sub-editorship (App., nos. 13a and 13b), the total goes up to thirty-four.

With John's death the Gaelic language had lost an anthologist and polemicist second to none. Had he survived he could have been of enormous service to cultural regeneration and land reform. He would have been 65 when the Gaelic Society of Inverness was founded, and 80 when the Crofters' Act became law. His two greatest works stand as a monument and a guiding beacon to breadth of literary taste. To read his edition of William Ross at a sitting is to take a roller-coaster ride through the mind of a warm-blooded human being in love, while reading *Sàr Obair* is like taking a walk along a long and busy street with a garrulous young guide, seeing a rich man here, overhearing a snatch of scandal there, observing a beautiful lady alight from her carriage, peering into candle-lit windows, and watching a fight on the cobblestones. The narrow attitudes which continued to prevail for a hundred years after John's death are well represented by Murchison's verdict (1947–48: 128): *Is dòcha nach robh e cho faiceallach 's a dh'fhaodadh e mu chiod as fhiach a chur ann an leabhar, agus tha òrain ann an Sàr-Obair nach bu chòir a bhith an clò idir.* ("Perhaps he was not as careful as he might have been about what is worth putting in a book, and there are songs in *Sàr-Obair* that should not be in print at all.") This demonstrates that when John chose what to publish he was exercising not carelessness but courage.

Professor Donald Meek (2003: xiv) has described Sorley MacLean (1911–96) as 'the first native Gael to apply critical yardsticks to Gaelic song and poetry'. How he reached this judgement I do not know. As I have tried to show elsewhere (Black 2001: xiv–xix), I see Gaelic literary criticism as a continuum. In the person of John Mackenzie, it emerged from the ceilidh-house into the light of day to be taken up by Victorians such as Thomas Pattison, Nigel MacNeill and Magnus Maclean. We may not agree with their critical yardsticks today, but the fact that they applied them is not in doubt.

While *Sàr Obair* will never be forgotten, it is perhaps too easy to forget that John also played a pivotal role in assembling the corpus of three of our greatest poets. His editions of Ross, MacDonald and Macintyre all contained poems never previously published. It is also worth remembering that, in addition to his achievements as anthologist, collector, editor, translator, literary critic, lexicographer, and writer of expository prose in English and satirical prose in Gaelic, John was a competent Gaelic poet. We have noticed his song to Mary Sudge, his satirical squibs, and his praise of Artt Maclachlan's beer (assuming that it is his). While two of the four poems in *An Leobhar Liath*, 'An Oba Nodha' and 'Dòmhnallan Dubh' (Black 2001: 18–21, 78–81) are clearly old, the other two, 'An Seudagan' and 'Eachann an Slaointear' (Black 2001: 264–67, 352–53), are not, and it is possible that John made them himself. 'Eachann an Slaointear' is a very able piece of work, and of course the name Eachann is common in Gairloch; perhaps more can be said when the reference in it to *sionnach nam bruach a mharbh Mac-a-Phì* is explained (*ibid.*: 521). Clach remarks (p. 207) that John 'composed several pieces of his own' but that 'his attempts at original poetical composition are not of a very high order'; then, after discussing the song to Mary Sudge, he says: "Another excellent composition, which has not yet appeared in print, he composed to a weaver's loom in his neighbourhood, while yet a mere stripling. The reader will have an opportunity of judging of their merits in an early number."

Regrettably, Clach did not fulfil his pledge, and the ‘loom’ poem seems to be lost. I would point out, however, that John’s abilities as a poet emerge in some of his Gaelic responses to English verse. Scott’s ‘Mackrimmon’s Lament’, beginning *Macleod’s wizzard flag*, was translated directly by Norman MacLeod (*Bratach bhuidhail Mhicleòid . . .*), but a completely different version, beginning *Dh’iadh ceo nan stuchd*, appeared in John’s own *Co’-Chruinneachadh* of 1836 (App., no. 5), p. 71, and may well be by John himself (Blankenhorn 1978: 48–51 and 2019: 369–73). It is poetry in its own right. I suspect that John was also responsible for ‘Doirre Gheala-bhuinne’, the Gaelic translation of ‘The Bonnie Lass o’ Kelvingrove’ which appears at pp. 61–62 of the *Cruiteara* (see the note at p. 64). He regularly ‘improved’ the poems in *Sàr Obair*, but when a poem was a translation in the first place he was entitled to try and do better. His edition of Bunyan’s *World to Come*, for example (App., no. 19), appears to be based on one by George Munro published in Tain in 1825 (cf. Maclean 1915: 42–43); he overhauls the spelling and phraseology of Munro’s prose, then approaches the verse with relish. Munro’s poem ‘Beachd do Fhlaimheanas’ becomes ‘Sealladh de Neamh’; Munro’s poem ‘Beachd do dh’ Ifrinn’ becomes ‘Sealladh de dh’ Ifrinn’. For comparison, I will set out side by side the two versions of the first and fifth quatrains of the former, and the last quatrain of the latter.

George Munro

*Tha ’n tìr ud maiseach sòlasach,  
 ’Sa naoimh ag riaghladh ghnà:  
 Tha ’n dorch ’s gach pìan air fhogradh mach,  
 Le solus glan gu bràth.*

*Ach dirichmid Pisga chreideamh,  
 Is dearcamid an gèall,  
 ’S cha chuir Iordan sinne an agadh,  
 Le eagal dholl a null.*

*O staid ro thruagh! bhi faicinn Dhe,  
 ’Ga fholach o gu bràth;  
 ’S an ionad sin a choìdhe no ’n cein,  
 ’S nach mothaich iad a ghràdh.*

John Mackenzie

*Tha ’n tìr ud maiseach sòlasach,  
 ’S a naoimh a’ riaghladh ’ghnà:  
 Tha ’n dorchadas air dol a mach,  
 ’S tha solus glan ’na àit.’*

*Na’ n deanadh sinne mar rinn Maois,  
 ’N àm dearcadh air an fhonn  
 Cha chuireadh Iordan sinne fo gheilt,  
 Le eagal dol a null.*

*O staid ro thruagh! bhi faicinn Dhé,  
 G’a fhalach féin do ghnà;  
 ’S iadsan ann an ifrinn shìos,  
 Gu’n éiridh nios gu bràth!*

Regarding John’s unpublished *Nachlass*, Clach tells us (p. 206) that he has in his own possession some ‘Lives of the Bards’ written by John but never published, some valuable manuscripts on ‘Gaelic Orthography’, and some of the Gaelic sermons which he had composed for those ministers unable or unwilling to write their own. He concludes his memoir (p. 210):

We have in our possession, in MS., Mackenzie’s defence of the Orthography of the Gaelic language, being the “Second Part of the Highlander’s Reply to Gathelus,” and addressed to the editor of the *Scots’ Times*. Perhaps some of our readers can supply us with the First Part of this valuable correspondence, and so enable us to give it entire, with other interesting letters, in an early number. We also have, in MS., a severe criticism of Forbes’s Gaelic Grammar, which was to have appeared in pamphlet form. It is a cause of keen regret, and a loss to Celtic literature, that a large chest-full of this



valuable and interesting correspondence was heedlessly burnt a few months after his death, his family considering them of no value. Any information regarding him, or his lost manuscript collections of Gaelic poetry, will be esteemed a favour.

The ‘severe criticism of Forbes’s Gaelic Grammar’ is perhaps the manuscript of publication no. 20. Clach appears to have published just one of John’s surviving ‘lives’, that of Allan MacDougall (*Ailean Buidhe nan Òran*) of ‘Glendoran’ (*Gleann Domhainn*, Glen Doin) in Upper Craignish, who flourished during the incumbency of the Rev. William Campbell as minister of Kilchrenan (1745–93). It is highly entertaining, in John’s inimitable style, and even sheds a little light on John’s methods, for it ends (Mackenzie 1876–77: 405): “Six pieces are all that is now extant of his productions.” What John does not tell us is that six is precisely the number of poems by Ailean Buidhe published by Turner (Mac-an-Tuairneir 1813: 208–25). This suggests that John’s method in compiling *Sàr Obair* was first to arm himself with poems already published, then go out in search of information about the men and women behind them.

What happened to *Sàr Obair* after John’s death could never have been predicted. In 1863, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, a man named Norman Macdonald published a pirated edition. Macdonald (1820–98) had emigrated to Antigonish in 1843 from his native Glenuig in Moidart; he became a schoolmaster and Justice of the Peace, numbering among his pupils and friends the Rev. Alexander Maclean Sinclair, the Gaelic historian, anthologist and literary critic (Sinclair 1898). A Catholic, in 1862 he had published a Gaelic translation of Butler’s *Sum of Christian Doctrine* (Maclean 1915: 48, 85). The new *Sàr Obair* had viii + 348 pp.; its title-page is: “Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach: / or, / The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry, / and / Lives of the Highland Bards; / with / Historical and Critical Notes, / and / A Comprehensive Glossary of Provincial Words. / A New Edition Enlarged and Improved / by / Norman Macdonald, Esq. / Halifax, N. S. / Printed by James Bowes and Sons, / 1863.” At pp. iii–iv Macdonald’s unsubscribed ‘Advertisement’ explains:

In order to meet the wishes of many of the most influential and patriotic noblemen and gentlemen connected with the Highlands, as well as to gratify the desire of the natives in general, the present work—being the “BEAUTIES” selected from the native bards, both ancient and modern, known and unknown to the public at large—is now undertaken.

From what he has already published, the qualifications of the Editor, it is believed are well known to his countrymen. He has had peculiar facilities for the preparation of the present work. Pursuing the subject for many years,—he has traversed the Highlands in all directions, and has been fortunate enough to preserve many fine pieces, which, he has reason to believe, are now wholly lost among the people. Respecting the bards—he is in possession of a large collection of curious and interesting particulars, known to few others.

It is difficult to imagine anything more duplicitous. The facts fit John, but Macdonald takes advantage of the editorial third tense to allow his readers to guess for themselves whether the ‘Editor’ referred to is John (when in life) or himself (now). He has stolen not merely John’s book but his identity.

Macdonald's claim to have 'enlarged and improved' *Sàr Obair* scarcely stands up to scrutiny. The text is entirely re-set, but, as Maclean points out (1915: 249), the typographical errors of the 1841 edition are reproduced. The improvements are minimal, and with regard to quantity if not quality the losses outnumber the gains. John's preface and Logan's introduction are dropped, as are 'Mordubh' and 'Collath', and there are no engravings. 'Oran do Lochial' is added to the poems of Gilleaspuig na Ciotaig (pp. 145–46). To please the Canadian readership, one of their favourite poets is featured at pp. 322–30 after Evan MacColl – John MacLean, 'Am Bard Mac-'Illean', with four of his poems. The 'Aireamh Taghta' consist of the same thirteen songs as in the 1841 edition, ending with 'Mo Rùn Geal Òg' at pp. 343–44, followed at pp. 345–46 by three new ones: 'Marbhrann do Leanamh [sic] Gille a bha Ro-Thaitneach le Athair', beginning *Fhir a dh'fhalbh 'uam dirdaoine*; 'Marbhrann do Bhean Og Chliuiteach a bha Posda aig Alasdair Caimbeul, sa Chaochail sa Bliadhna [sic] 1859', beg. *'S gur e mise tha fo eislein*; and 'Oran Gaoil le Duine Uasal Araid', beg. *Mhari [sic] bhoidheach gur mor mo ghaol ort*. There is also a lengthy note on Archibald Campbell, author of the first two of these, a Skyeman who emigrated to Nova Scotia in 1830 and was still farming in Cape Breton in 1863. The book ends, like the 1841 edition, with John's glossary (pp. 347–48), and Maclean tells us (1915: 248–49) that 'one thousand copies were printed at 10s. on fine paper and 7s. 6d. on poor paper'.

For the extraordinarily high esteem in which *Sàr Obair* was held amongst settlers in the New World see Sinclair 1881: xxiv, Dunn 1953: 49–50, and Bennett 1989: 59–60. But for a contemporary Nova Scotian view of Norman Macdonald I consulted Maureen Williams, curator of the Father Charles Brewer Celtic Collection, Angus L. MacDonald Library, St Francis Xavier University, Antigonish. Her mother is a direct descendant of Donald, a brother of the poet Alexander MacDonald, whose father *Ailean an Ridge* emigrated from Bohuntin in Brae Lochaber in 1816. She told me (e-mail, 3 April 2003):

There is little doubt that a lot of people bought his edition of *Sàr Obair*. Next to the Bible and the Gaelic catechism I would say that this would be the book most commonly found in the Gaelic-speaking homes of Nova Scotia. It seems there was a mixed reaction in this area to his plagiarism. Maclean Sinclair didn't seem to have a problem with it – he looks upon his efforts as a contribution to Gaelic culture. On the other hand, some anonymous person, date unknown, wrote 'Pirated copy' on the title page of our shelf copy. Norman Macdonald was definitely a very colourful character so he is still well remembered today, certainly in this area. He was highly regarded for his intelligence and devotion to duty. His correspondence (Thompson papers, N.S. Archives) indicates a highly articulate (if somewhat florid) style of expression – almost bardic when he gets into high gear. Nevertheless, he should not have ignored J. Mackenzie when he published his work.

On the one hand, then, the appearance of the 'American edition' was a pleasing reflection of the strength of the transplanted Gaelic tradition in Cape Breton, and of the demand there for *Sàr Obair*. The Editor of *Scottish Studies* tells me that he believes it was a great aid to Gaelic literacy for Nova Scotians – many of the songs, he points out, were known from oral sources, and could serve as a guide to acquiring a functional command of Gaelic orthography (e-mail, 20 Nov. 2019).

Macdonald is credited in Canadian sources with ‘bringing that fine collection within reach of many Gaelic readers’ (MacLean 1976: 74; MacDonald 1988), which suggests that Macgregor, Polson & Co. had failed to reach part of their target readership. On the other hand, the magnificent triple title of John’s book had been used in all its glory and resonance, but his name had been completely suppressed, leading to Norman Macdonald being regarded by some (e.g. Rankin 1929: 256) as the author. It was certainly an outrage, and if ever there was a moment for the sleeping *beithir-bheuma* to rise and strike again in legitimate wrath, this was it.

The keepers of John’s legacy, his publishers in Glasgow and Edinburgh, kept the *beithir* chained firmly in its hole, however, and dealt with the matter quietly but efficiently. Within two years they had produced a second edition of the real *Sàr Obair*. The plates of the first edition had been stereotyped and could not by definition be changed. Even the front-matter was left untouched, except of course for the title-page, where the imprint at the foot was altered to: “Glasgow: / John Muir, Athenæum Buildings, Ingram Street; / Edinburgh: McLachlan & Stewart. / MDCCCLXV.”

The key to the action which they took lies in Maclean’s remark that ‘none of the additional songs of the later Editions are given’. In the first edition the concluding ‘Aireamh Taghta’ consisted of thirteen songs, beginning at p. 359 with ‘Moladh Chabair-Feidh’ and ending with ‘Cumha do dh’ Uilleam Siseal’, the song now known as ‘Mo Rùn Geal Òg’. This finished neatly in its double columns a little over an inch from the foot of p. 374. The book was then rounded off with John’s two-page ‘Glossary’, ending at p. 376 with the obligatory: “A’ Chrioch. / Glasgow:—Printed at the University Press, by Edward Khull.”

What John Muir & Co. now did was this. They added thirty-six more songs at the end of the ‘Aireamh Taghta’, creating a fresh pp. 375–402. (The last prelim page, following ‘An Clar-Innsidh’, was blank, but the opportunity to add the titles of the new songs here was not taken until 1872.) After the new songs they placed John’s glossary, repaginated 403–04. They followed this with a four-page ‘Clar-Amais / do reir eagair na h-aibidil.’ This index of first lines includes the new material and has no less than 369 entries, integrating as it does poems embedded in John’s notes and double entries for items beginning with refrains. It is alphabetical in the eighteenth-century sense that while it groups together first lines beginning with A, B, C and so on, within each letter the entries are left in the order in which they appear in the book. The new *Sàr Obair* thus had lxxiv + 408 pp., a perfectly formed book from a technical point of view, consisting of 480 pages (a multiple of 32). With regard to illustrations, I have seen one copy of the 1865 edition containing only ‘The Aged Bard’, and one with both ‘The Aged Bard’ and ‘Cuachag an Fhasaich’ (placed between John’s preface and Logan’s introduction).

We have to ask, however, where did John Muir get the thirty-six extra songs? The answer, I suspect, is simply that they had inherited them from their predecessors McGregor, Polson, & Co. The first edition had been an equally ‘perfect’ book of 448 ordinary pages (lxxii + 376). The ‘Aireamh Taghta’ must have been intended simply to fill out the last few pages of the book, rather like journalist’s copy which is written in such a way that it can be cut back from the end.

This is a point of some importance, because among the fresh material, at p. 400, is a note on ‘Gaoir nam Ban Muileach’ by Mairearad nighean Lachlainn (c. 1660–1751) which must have been a cause of anguish to the editor of her poems, just as it will anger any feminist literary historian:

The real name of the author of this lament was Margaret Maclean, sometimes called *Mairearead Ni' Lachuinn*, from Lachlan being the christian name of her father. She lived in the island of Mull, of which place she was a native. Like all local poets, *Ni' Lachuinn* has been applauded by her countrymen in general, though we must confess that we are blind to any poetic grandeur in her compositions. We have seen twenty-five pieces of composing, but the above seven stanzas is her *chef d'œuvre*.

Sorley MacLean found only eleven poems ascribed to her, and eleven is the number now published as her collected work (Ó Baoill 2009), so if John really saw twenty-five, the loss is great. MacLean felt that the most frequent note in her poems was 'an eerie power', and he also drew attention to a 'cutting restraint' which puts her 'nearer Voltaire than Iain Lom'. She was, he says (Gillies 1985: 181–82, 188–190), 'weighed down and wearied all the time with the great distresses that Clan Gillean suffered because of their loyalty to the Stewart family'.

These are far from trivial themes, but it may be precisely this grand elegiac tone that John so disliked. There is however a demotic touch to the 'Gaoir' which is particularly appealing today. "There is no elegy for a chief in Gaelic poetry in which the real voice of the whole clan is so poignant and certain as it is in 'The Cry of the Mull Women'," wrote MacLean (*ibid.*: 185; Black 2001: 389–90). "It could be compared with the best of them in a noble perfection of language."

It is therefore hard to know what to make of John's sudden attack of blindness. *A' Bheithir-Bheuma* demonstrates that John would have been most at home in the 1960s, and I am forcefully reminded of the extraordinary judgement on Màiri nighean Alastair Ruaidh by Derick Thomson (1974: 135) that 'there is . . . much repetition from poem to poem of basic ideas and phrases, and one can scarcely escape the conclusion that this poet's reputation has been greatly inflated'.

One may wish to argue that John was not the author of the words at p. 400, or that he would have struck them out at proof stage had they not been published posthumously. Both are theoretically possible, but John was not much in the habit of pulling his punches, and the following footnote references in the new 'Aireamh Taghta' (pp. 375–402) demonstrate, I believe, that the material was written in (or shortly before) 1841 by John Mackenzie.

With regard to dates, the evidence is as follows (relevant years given in bold). At p. 376 is a mention of Smollett's *History of England*. This was published in **1757**. At p. 398 we read of 'John McGilvray, piper to the late Mr Macdonald, of Glenaladale'. John McGilvray or MacGillivray emigrated to Nova Scotia on Glenaladale's death in **1818** (MacInnes 1988: 106, cf. Sinclair 1896: 171). At p. 384 the writer cites *McPherson's Melodies from the Gàèlic*. This book, by Donald Macpherson, was published in London in **1824** (Maclean 1915: 280). At p. 386 a song is stated to have been written by the Rev. Charles Stuart, D.D., 'late minister of Strathchur'. Stuart died in **1826** (Scott 1915–50, vol. 4: 45). At p. 397 reference is made to a 'Mr Kenneth McKenzie, late tacksman of Monkcastle and Strath-na-Sealg, in Lochbroom . . . Mr McKenzie died in **1827**'. At p. 375 the writer says: "We took down this version of the poem from the recitation of an old man in Glencoe, *anno* **1833**." At p. 383 is a mention of the Rev. Duncan Macfarlane, 'lately minister of the Gaelic chapel, Perth'. Macfarlane (1743–1841) was deposed for contumacy in **1833** and replaced in **1834** (Scott 1915–50, vol. 4: 240). 'Burns's Letters' are cited at pp. 384 and 392. These were first published in Allan Cunningham's *The Poems, Letters and Land of Robert Burns* (2 vols, **1838–40**). Finally, one piece of dating evidence is lacking, but may become available in

the future: at p. 383 Hector Mackenzie, Ullapool, author of ‘An Cailin Dìleas Donn’, is described as an old sailor, ‘still alive—verging upon ninety years of age, and resides either in Glasgow or in Liverpool’. If his date of death can be found it will provide a *terminus ante quem*.

The above is evidence for dating but not authorship. This is forthcoming, however, in matters of spelling and scandal. The title of Donald Macpherson’s book was in fact *Melodies from the Gaelic* – ‘Gàèlic’ at p. 384 is John’s trademark. At p. 399 the writer refers to ‘Alexander, son of the late Mr McLeod of Triaslan, in the Isle of Skye’, adding: “On his begetting several illegitimate children, he emigrated to America about thirty years ago.” And at p. 401, a note on the spelling *bochg* in a poem by John Munro runs as follows: “This song and the following are printed *verbatim et literatim* from the author’s own MS. being what he deemed an improvement on the received system of orthography.”

A final pointer to John’s authorship of the new ‘Aireamh Taghta’ is the inclusion of a full biography of this John Munro, a native of Creich in Sutherland who became an accountant in Glasgow. It follows the second poem, forming the last item before the glossary; the writer, who clearly knew Munro well, gives his dates as 1791–1837, and remarks that his name was ‘familiar to the religious portion of his countrymen throughout the Highlands’. Munro’s orthography is also commented on, and exemplified, by Maclean (1915: 300).

Clach pointed out (p. 207) that, by 1877 at least, not the slightest mark remained to indicate John’s last resting-place. Whether this has to do with a superstitious dislike of marked gravestones, or some lingering shame about John Mackenzie’s career, I do not know, but Clach set about righting the injustice to his memory and secured the active support of (among others) Professor J. S. Blackie, Sir Kenneth S. Mackenzie of Gairloch, Osgood Mackenzie, Charles Fraser-Mackintosh MP, John Mackay (formerly of Shrewsbury) and Donald Macgregor (London). Blackie wrote to Clach, addressing him as the representative Gael (p. 208), “Posterity will think justly you owe more to him than to Macpherson.”

Clach’s campaign involved him in a flurry of correspondence, of which the outstanding item was a reply dated 4 February 1878 from Evan MacColl, now aged 70 and living in prosperous retirement in Canada. It was so good that Clach used it in an appeal which he posted off to *The Inverness Courier*, *The Highlander*, *The Inverness Advertiser*, *The Ross-shire Journal* and *The London Scottish Journal*, as well as publishing it in his own magazine (Mackenzie 1877–78a). Clach appears to have assumed that the two men were personally unknown to each other.

Unknown indeed! Why, my dear sir, John and I have eaten at the same table and slept in the same bed hundreds of times between the winter of 1835 and the spring of 1839, at which latter date I left Scotland for Liverpool, never again to meet with him in this life. We, however, continued to occasionally exchange letters up to within a year or two of his death. It was in the town of Greenock that we first met each other, and that at the hospitable evening fireside of a most estimable friend of mine, and his too—Hugh Fraser, a citizen of Inverness, although at that time resident in Greenock, where he did business as a bookseller. Many a time have I listened, under Mr Fraser’s roof, to our friend’s favourite *Feadan* (chanter)—that inseparable companion of his, that often afterwards helped to chase dull care away from us both, when together in Glasgow ‘cultivating literature on a little oatmeal.’ Poor John! when I think of all the privations

he endured in pursuit of his favourite object—the cold shoulder so often given to him by men who, if he were now living, would be proud to call him their friend—I may well admire the perseverance which enabled him eventually to make himself ‘a name which the world will not willingly let die.’

The response far exceeded expectations. A guinea from MacColl, a guinea from ‘John Henry Dickson, Inveran Lodge’, 10s 6d from ‘Messrs Maclachlan & Stewart, booksellers, Edinburgh’, £1 2s from ‘Mr Artt Maclachlan, Glasgow’ . . . The lists of subscribers are long, and they are full of the ordinary people of Gairloch, 1s here, 2s 6d there, while the clergy are notable by their absence, with the honourable exception of the Rev. Dr Donald Tolmie Masson of the Gaelic Church in Edinburgh, who gave 5s (Mackenzie and Fraser 1877–78; Mackenzie 1877–78c: 433–34).

The original plan, as announced in April 1877, was for a granite or marble slab on the wall of the *caibéal*, the style depending upon the amount subscribed. On 26 July 1878 the monument was unveiled by Sir Kenneth in the presence of a large group of spectators. It was a granite column thirteen feet six inches high, on a projecting rock between the Gairloch churchyard and the road, bearing the following inscriptions (Mackenzie 1877–78c: 431; Dixon 1886: 191, 311; Murchison 1947–48: 128):

Thogadh an Carn-Cuimhne so do Ian MacCoinnich (de theaghlach Alastair Chaim Ghearrloch), a thionail, agus a chuir an ordugh “Sar Obair nam Bard Gaidhealach,” agus a sgrìobh, a thionail, a dheasaich, no dh’eadartheangaich 30 leabhair eile, am measg iomadh cruaidhchas. Rugadh e anns na Mealan, 1806. Chaochail e an Inbhir-iugh, 1848. 1878.

In memory of John Mackenzie (of the family of Alastair Cam of Gairloch), who compiled and edited the “Beauties of Gaelic Poetry;” and also compiled, wrote, translated, or edited, under surpassing difficulties, about 30 other works. Born at Mellan Charles, 1806. Died at Inverewe, 1848. In grateful recognition of his valuable services to Celtic literature, this monument is erected by a number of his fellow-countrymen. 1878.

Personally I think I prefer the epitaph bestowed upon John by the Rev. A. Maclean Sinclair, who said (1899–1901: 272): “He deserves the highest praise for his loyalty to Gaelic literature, and for his indefatigable labours in behalf of it. His ‘Beauties of Gaelic Poetry’ has been an exceedingly useful work.”

**Appendix: John Mackenzie's publications**

1. Ross's *Orain Ghaelach*, 1st edn, Inverness, **1830**: pp. 1–111. At p. 1 is: “Orain Ghae’lach, / le / Uilleam Ros. / Air an sgrìobhadh, agus air an co’-chruinneachadh / ri cheile, / le / Iain Mac-Choinnich, / *Ann an Inbheiriue.* / ‘S dubhach mi gun iolach shòlais, / Ach tùrsa bròin a ’sior eigheachd, / A chruit chiuil is binne mire, / Cha duisg mo chridhe gu h-eibhneas: / Cha chluinn mi tuille do chòradh, / Bu bhinne na ceòl na’n teudan, / Na smeorach ’san ghleannan fhàsaich, / ’S na cuthag air bharr na geige!’ / Inverness: / Printed by R. Carruthers, / For Lewis Grant, and D. Macculloch, Booksellers. / 1830.” At p. 2 is: “Entered in Stationer’s Hall.” At pp. 3–7 is ‘The Life / of / William Ross’, subscribed: “John Mackenzie. / Gairloch, May 30, 1830.” The texts are at pp. 9–110; at p. 111 is an index of first lines. Maclean says (1915: 334): “Circumstances seem to indicate that the work was printed in 1833 and not in 1830 . . . A very rare Edition.” See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 2484.

2. *An Leobhar Liath*, Glasgow or Paisley, **1833(?)**: pp. 1–8. At p. 1 is: “An / Leobhar Liath; / anns am beil / Ceithir Oranan Rò Ghasda: / Se sin:— Eachunn an Slaointear— / An Obair-Nogha— / An Seudagan Beag Greannar— / Agus Donullan Dubh. / Air an dianamh / *le Daoin’ Uaisl’ Iunnsaichte*: / A nis air an cuir a mach air iartas, / agus cosgais moran de luchd-gràidh / na fir bhàrdach. / — ’S Leobhar an “*Leobhar Liath*,” / ‘Thereir iasg ris a’ bhreac bheag; / ‘Canar nead ri nead gach eoin, / ‘S nead an dreadhainn duinn gur nead.’ / Clo-bhuailte ann am Baile nam Breabadairean; / agus ri’n reic fos-n’iosal leis na leabhar- / reiceadairean ioma-shiubhlach. / 1801.” The texts are at pp. 2–8, subscribed simply: “Crioich.” Maclean says (1915: 247): “The Editorship of this very free poetical work is attributed to John Mackenzie, notwithstanding the difference in orthography. The year of publication is of course ante-dated. It was printed in Glasgow about 1845. *Excessively rare*. Only one copy known.” According to Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 1332) there are copies in GUL and the British Library, with a photocopy in Glasgow University’s Dept of Celtic.

3. Ross’s *Òrain Ghàèlach*, 2nd edn, Glasgow, **1834**: pp. i–xii, 13–200. At p. i is: “Òrain Ghàèlach, / le / Uilleam Ròs. / Air an co-chruinneachadh ri cheile / le / Iain Mac-Choinnich, / ann an Inbhirieue. / An Dara Clò-Bhualadh. / MDCCCXXXIV. / Glasgow: John Reid & Co. / Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd. / London: Whittaker, Arnott & Co.” At p. ii is the stanza which appears at p. 1 of the 1st edn, subscribed: “Bell and Bain, Printers, Glasgow.” At pp. iii–iv is John’s ‘Preface’ subscribed: “Glasgow, *August 20th*, 1834.” At pp. v–x is ‘A Short Memoir / of the / Life of William Ross’, and at pp. xi–xii is a list of contents. The texts are at pp. 13–178. At pp. 179–99 is a supplement headed (p. 181): “Ath-Leasachadh, / anns am beil trì dain / Le Iain MacAoidh, / Am Piobaire Dall, / Seanair an Ùdair.” At p. 200 is: “Glascho / Clò’-Bhuailte le Bell agus Bain, / Aireamh 85, Sràid na Bann-Rìgh.” Maclean says (1915: 335): “This work was stereotyped by Maclachlan & Stewart in 1868, when the press was corrected by D. C. Macpherson. In 1868, 250 copies; in 1870, 250 copies; in 1870, 300 copies; in 1877, 450 copies were printed.” See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 2485.

4a. MacDonald’s *Aiseiridh*, 4th edn, 1st impression, Glasgow, **1834**: pp. i–ii, v–vi, 1–180. The title and dedicatory ode (pp. i–ii) are as in the 2nd impression except that the date is given as 1834. There is no dedication, pp. iii–iv being missing. Contents list, text, glossary and printer’s imprint are as in 2nd impression. Described as follows in Macvean’s advertisement on the back cover of the *Co’-Chruinneachadh* (no. 5 below): “MACDONALD’S POEMS, Edited by JOHN MACKENZIE, with three new Songs, from the Author’s MSS. in the possession of his Grandson. 18mo. 1834. 2s.” Maclean says (1915: 190): “This Edition is well printed on fine paper; it is now scarce. The Editor was John Mackenzie, who *mirabile dictu* left out all the free pieces of the earlier Editions. The wrappers gave an English title. Price 2s.” See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1513.

4b. MacDonald’s *Aiseiridh*, 4th edn, 2nd impression, Glasgow, **1835**: pp. i–vi, 1–180. At p. i is: “Aiseiridh / na / Sean Chanain Albanaich. / no’n / Nuadh Òranaiche Gàèlach. / le / Alasdair Mac-Dhomhnuill, / Mac Mhaisdeir Alasdair. / ‘*Bidhidh* Ghaelig fo sge na’m fuar bheann / Aig an t-sluagh is suairce manran, / Cha dean eug no beud a glusad [*sic*], / Cha d’thoir uaigh a smuais nan cnamh i.’ / Glascho: / Clò-buailte, le

Miur, Gobhan, agus an Cuideachd, / Aireamh 42 Sraid Earra-Ghael; / agus r'an reic leis gach leabhar-  
reiceadair. / 1835." At p. ii is Latin stanza 'De Actuore Testimonium', beg. *Optime quem tellus genuit  
montana poeta*. At pp. iii–iv is dedication 'Do / Chomunn Oiseineach Ghlascho' subscribed: "Iain Mac-  
Choinnich. / Glasgho: an 10amh latha, / De'n Dara-mios-deug, 1834." At pp. v–vi is list of contents headed:  
"An Clar-Innseadh." The text (pp. 1–176) consists of 35 poems. At pp. 177–80 is 'A Glossary; / explaining,  
in English, all the words that / seem difficult in the preceding work' (most of the longer entries are piping  
terms), subscribed: "Glascho:—Clo-Bhuailte le Miur, Gobhan, agus an cuideachd; / aireamh 42, Sraid  
Earra-Ghael." Not listed in Maclean 1915, but see Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1514.

5. *Co'-Chruinneachadh*, Glasgow, **1836**: pp. 1–72. On the front cover is: "Co'-Chruinneachadh / de / dh'  
Oranan Taoghta: / iomadh dhiu / nach deach riabh roimh an ann [*sic*] clò. / A Collection / of the most /  
Popular Gaelic Songs; / including / a number of original pieces of merit / now printed for the first time. /  
Glasgow: / Published by Duncan Macvean. / 1836. / *Price One Shilling*." The title at p. 1 is identical save  
for omission of last line. The 'Preface' (pp. 3–4) is subscribed 'Glasgow, / *Sept.* 21, 1835'. The main text  
(pp. 5–72) is subscribed: "Bell and Bain, Printers, Royal Exchange Court." On the back cover is a list of  
Macvean's books for sale. On John's editorship see p. \$ above. See also Maclean 1915: 285; Ferguson and  
Matheson 1984, no. 748.

6. Ross's *Òrain Ghàèlach*, 3rd edn, Glasgow, **1836**: pp. i–xii, 13–200. At p. i is: "Òrain Ghàèlach, / le /  
Uilleam Ròs. / Gaelic Songs, / by / William Ross: / collected and edited by John Mackenzie. / Second  
edition, corrected and enlarged. / Glasgow: / Printed by Bell and Bain, / for Duncan Macvean, 175, High-  
Street. / 1836." Other than that p. ii is here blank, the rest of the book is an exact reprint of the 2nd edn.  
According to Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 2486) the only surviving copies are in New College and  
the Signet Library. Further editions appeared in 1868, 1877, 1892, 1902 and 1937 (*ibid.*, nos. 2487–91).  
The circumstances of this edition are described in Macvean's advertisement on the back cover of the *Co'-  
Chruinneachadh* (no. 5 above): "ROSS'S SONGS, the Second edition, corrected, and enlarged; with a Life  
of the author, by JOHN MACKENZIE. 12mo. 1836. D. M. having purchased all the remaining copies of this  
beautiful book; the price is now reduced from 4s. to 3s."

7. *Eachdraidh Mhic-Cruislig*, Glasgow, **1836**: pp. 1–16 + buff-coloured paper cover. On the outside front  
cover, with a picture of a lyre, is: "Eachdraidh / Mhic-Cruislig, / Sgialachd Ghàèlach. / 'Sgéul' ri aithris  
air àm o aois; / Gnìomh' làthaibh nam bliadhna dh' àom.'—Oisian. / Glascho: / Clo-bhuailte airson an  
udair le Bell agus Bain, / Aireamh 85, Sraid na Bann-rìgh. / 1836. / *A few copies only printed for private  
circulation, Price One Shilling*." The title is repeated, except for the last line, at p. 1. The preface (p. 3),  
subscribed 'J. McK. / GLASGOW, *August 8th*, 1836', is quoted in full above, p. \$. The text, at pp. 4–16, is  
subscribed: "Crioich. / Bell agus Bain, clo-bhuailtearan ann an Glascho." On the outside back cover is a list  
of books with dates and prices headed: "Gaelic Books Sold by D. Macvean, / *Opposite the College,  
Glasgow*." Maclean says (1915: 249): "The above is rather a free production in prose, printed appropriately  
on *blue paper*. Price 1s. It is now *extremely rare*." The blue paper is a figment of Maclean's imagination.  
According to Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 1857) there are copies in New College, the Signet Library  
and the British Library, with a photocopy in Glasgow University Dept of Celtic.

8. *An Cruiteara Gàèlach*, Edinburgh, **1838**: pp. 1–64 + card cover (yellow on outside). On the outside  
front cover, along with an illustration of a piper, is: "An / Cruiteara / Gàèlach. / Edinburgh: Printed and  
sold by D. R. Collie. / 1838. / *Price Fourpence*." I have seen different versions of the title-page (p. 1). One  
is: "The Gaelic / Melodist, / being a / Selection of the most Popular / Highland Love Songs / collected and  
arranged by / John Mackenzie, / *Honorary Member of the Glasgow Ossianic Society; / Editor of the Songs  
of Ross; &c. &c.* / Stereotype Edition. / Edinburgh: / D. R. Collie and Son. / *Price Fourpence*." Another  
concludes: "Printed and sold by D. R. Collie, / 1838. / *Price Fourpence*." This tiny book (it measures 10.5  
x 6.5 cms) contains the words of forty-one songs, many of which were subsequently published in *Sàr  
Obair*. John's own song 'Oran Sugraidh' (pp. 22–23) is the only one footnoted. At pp. 63–64 is an index  
in which authors' names are given as initials. Following it (p. 64) is a note beginning: "These songs marked  
with a † in the Index, were taken down from oral recitation in different parts of the Highlands and Isles, by  
the Editor. Some verses, omitted in former copies, have been added to complete the others, and many  
phrases corrected, which had been misunderstood by former transcribers." At the foot of p. 64 is: "Printed  
by D. R. Collie." On the outside back cover is 'Sold also by' followed by a list of booksellers. To the  
locations given for this item by Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 1867) we should add EUL, whose copy



is shelfmarked Mackinnon (1924) P.18 (1). Like the one apparently seen by Maclean (1915: 251), it lacks its cover.

9. MacDonald, *Aiseiridh*, 5th edn without supplement, Glasgow, 1839: pp. i–xiv, 1–180. At p. iii is: “The Poetical Works / of Alexander Macdonald, / the Celebrated Jacobite Poet; / now first collected, / with a short account of the author. / Glasgow: / Published by Duncan Macvean. / 1839.” At p. iv is: “Glasgow: Printed by James Hutchison, 31, Argyle Street.” At pp. v–xiv is a substantial biographical ‘Memoir’ (unsubscribed, but clearly by John) which begins with the significant comment that although MacDonald died during the lifetime of many persons still living, ‘few or none of them can give any satisfactory account of the life and personal history of the greatest poet which their country has produced’, and at p. ix he adds: “As a poet, he may be placed at the head of all the Caledonian bards, ancient or modern.” Text, glossary and printer’s imprint (pp. 1–180) are exactly as in 4th edn. Maclean says (1915: 191): “The text of this Edition seems to be what was left unsold of the impression of 1834, with a new Title and Memoir added.” See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1515.

The 6th edn, published in Glasgow in 1851 by G. & J. Cameron (pp. 1–4, 1–180), is identical except for the prelim pages, where the ‘Memoir’ (pp. 2–4) is shortened by the simple expedient of removing fifteen of John’s twenty-six paragraphs. See Maclean 1915: 191; Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1517.

10. MacDonald, *Aiseiridh*, 5th edn with supplement, Glasgow, 1839: pp. i–xiv, i–vi, 1–214. The first section (pp. i–xiv) is exactly as in the main edition. This special edition is the one referred to at p. xiii of the ‘Memoir’ of the poet, where John touches on one of the songs in *An Leobhar Liath* (no. 2 above):

In his age, a song was composed by a lady of the family of Keppoch, in answer to a very indecent but clever song, called “*An obair Nogha*.” The poetess says that her ears were stunned with the sound of men’s voices singing this song; and, in her answer to it, she gives excellent advices to the young women to avoid unlawful pleasures. Songs of this description could not even be alluded to by a lady of the present day.

Several persons having expressed a wish to obtain the works of Macdonald complete.—To supply this demand, a small impression of the supplement has been printed, with this brief and imperfect account of the author and his works.

Following the ‘Memoir’, at the second p. i, is: “Aiseiridh / na / Sean Chanain Albanaich. / no’n / Nuadh Òranaiche Gàèlach. / le / Alasdair Mac-Dhomhnuill, / Mac Mhaisdeir Alasdair. / ‘*Bidhidh* Ghaelig fo sge na’m fuar bheann / Aig an t-sluagh is suairce manran, / Cha dean eug no beud a glusad [*sic*], / Cha d’thoir uaigh a smuais nan cnamh i.’ / Glascho: / Clò-buailte, le Miur, Gobhan, agus an Cuideachd, / Aireamh 42 Sraid Earra-Ghael; / agus r’an reic leis gach leabhar-reiceadair. / 1834.” At the second p. ii is the Latin ode ‘*De Actuore Testimonium*’; it is followed at pp. iii–iv by a specially-compiled ‘Contents’ which includes the supplementary pieces, then at pp. v–vi by ‘An Clar-Innseadh’ as in previous editions. The text, glossary and printer’s imprint at pp. 1–180 are also as in previous editions. At pp. 181–214 are the supplementary poems: 181–90 ‘An Airce’ beg. *’N deigh dhomh tuiteam ann mo chadal*; 191–93 ‘Oran d’a Cheile Nuadh Phòsda’ beg. *Air Allt-ghartan ghlacas bradan*; 193–200 ‘Mi-mholadh Moraig’ beg. *A Mhuideartaich dhuibh dhana*; 200–04 ‘Marbhrann do Mhairi nian Iain Mhic Eoghain; do ’n gairte an Aigionnach’ beg. *Tha mi craiteach tinn*; 204–05 ‘Oran do’n Bhana Bhard nigh’n an Notair’ beg. *A nigh’n Donnchaidh duibh nòtair*; 205 ‘Moladh air deadh bhall’ beg. *Tha ball-ratha sinnnte riut*; 205–06 ‘Tinneas na h-urchaid’ beg. *Gu bheil tinneas na h-urchaid*; 207–14 ‘Oran do dha bhodach a bha ’n Aird na morchuan; as iad a cur ri Striopachas ann an aois an ceithir fichid bliadhna’ beg. *C’aite am bheil tiunnail*; subscribed: “Crioich.” For source-list of Mac Mhaighstir Alastair’s poems see Black 1986b: 37–39. Maclean says (1915: 191): “A small impression of this Supplement, but without a Title, was actually printed in 1839. It is printed with smaller type than the rest of the work and was meant to bind with the earlier part, though in signatures it does not follow that part. It is only met with in rebound copies of the 1839 Edition. We have only met with three copies of this Supplement.” According to Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 1516) the only copies now known are in the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales.

11. *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, Glasgow, 1840–43. Monthly magazine edited by the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod and allegedly sub-edited by John Mackenzie, subscribed: “Glasgow: / Published by the Proprietors, / J. & P. Campbell, Booksellers and Stationers, / 63, Arcade. / Edward Khull, Printer to the University, Dunlop Street.” From the June 1841 issue the proprietors’ address was changed from ‘63, Arcade’ to ‘24, Glassford

Street'. Whenever space permitted a list of stockists was added; its length and contents varied, but it always began: "Edinburgh: McLachlan, Stewart, & Co." Once bound, the first volume (March 1840 – February 1841) contained iv + 284 pp., the second (March 1841 – February 1842) iv + 352 pp., and the third (March 1842 – February 1843) iv + 336 pp. The last four issues (March–June 1843) contain 118 pp. Edited as it was by a prominent minister, the *Cuairtear* became a casualty of the Disruption (May 1843). It contains no evidence of John Mackenzie's involvement, whether as sub-editor or contributor. Maclean says (1915: 312): "This Periodical sold for sixpence each monthly number. The leading contributor was the Rev. Dr. Norman Macleod of St. Columba Church, Glasgow." See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 828.

12. *Sàr Obair*, 1st edn, Glasgow, 1841: pp. i–ii, iii\*–viii\*, iii–lxvi, 1–376. At p. i is: "Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach: / or, / The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry, / and / Lives of the Highland Bards; / with / Historical and Critical Notes, / and / A Comprehensive Glossary of Provincial Words. / By John Mackenzie, Esq., / Honorary Member of the Ossianic Society of Glasgow, the Gaelic Society of London, etc., etc. / with an / Historical Introduction / containing an account of / The Manners, Habits, &c., of the Ancient Caledonians. / By James Logan, Esq., F.S.A.S., / Corresponding Member S. Ant., Normandy, Author of the Scottish Gael, &c., &c. / Glasgow: / Macgregor, Polson, & Co., 75, Argyll Street, / 11, Lothian Street, Edinburgh; 10, Upper Abbey Street, Dublin; / and 71, York Street, Belfast. / MDCCCXLI." At p. ii is: "Glasgow: / Edward Khull, printer to the University, Dunlop Street." John's 'Preface', subscribed 'University Printing Office, / Glasgow, April 1, 1841', is at pp. iii\*–viii\*; Logan's 'Introduction' is at pp. iii–lxvi, with list of contents at pp. lxiii–lxv. The main text is at pp. 1–358, and the 'Aireamh Taghta' are at pp. 359–74. The 'Glossary' (pp. 375–76) is subscribed: "Glasgow:—Printed at the University Press, by Edward Khull."

Good copies have two illustrations, 'The Aged Bard' and 'Cuachag an Fhaisaich'; some have the former only. The position of these varies. Maclean explains (1915: 247–48):

The book was stereotyped by the publishers, Messrs. McGregor, Polson & Co., Glasgow, in 1841. It was published in two volumes at 12s. for the complete work. The first volume was more in demand than the second, so that it was sold out, leaving a stock of the second volume in the hands of the publishers. A second impression of the first volume was issued to complete sets. The plates were sold to Messrs. Blackie, the Glasgow publishers, who afterwards sold them to Messrs. Maclachlan & Stewart of Edinburgh. The publishers to whom the plates were sold put their own name on the title-page of the second issue of Part I. In the First Edition there was an engraving of a rural scene taken from Alexander Macdonald's 'Dairymaid.' This plate got destroyed, and in substitution thereof, a view of Rothesay Bay is given as a frontispiece in the later Editions. The First Edition has only 376 pages; subsequent Editions have 402 pages.

The 1841 edition is usually found complete. I have seen no copies of the first volume in isolation, but I have seen two of the second volume. In both cases it consisted of the prelim pages to viii\*, Logan's introduction from p. xix to the end, the table of contents (pp. lxiii–lxv), the main text from p. 225 (beginning in the Donnchadh Bàn section) to the end, and the glossary (pp. 375–76).

I have also seen an alternative first edition without Logan's introduction: pp. i–ii, iii\*–viii\*, lxiii–lxv, 1–376. At p. i is simply: "Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach: / or, / The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry, / and / Lives of the Highland Bards; / with / Historical and Critical Notes, / and / A Comprehensive Glossary of Provincial Words. / By John Mackenzie, Esq., / Honorary Member of the Ossianic Society of Glasgow, the Gaelic Society of London, etc., etc. / Glasgow: / Macgregor, Polson, & Co., 75, Argyll Street; / 11, Lothian Street, Edinburgh; 10, Upper Abbey Street, Dublin; / and 71, York Street, Belfast. / MDCCCXLI."

The following appeared after John's lifetime: American edn, 1863 (see above, p. \$); 2nd edn, John Muir, Glasgow, 1865 (see above, p. \$); 3rd edn, Maclachlan & Stewart, Edinburgh, 1872 (includes original 1841 advertisement for the work, placed at end); 4th edn, Maclachlan & Stewart, Edinburgh, 1877; 5th edn, Maclachlan & Stewart, Edinburgh, 1882; 6th edn, Norman MacLeod, Edinburgh, 1904; 7th edn, 1907, a joint enterprise between John Grant, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, and John McNeilage, 65 Great Western Road, Glasgow, whose products were identical (text re-set, lxxii + 447 pp., John's preface dropped) save for their respective imprints on title-page; 8th edn, Keltia Publications, Edinburgh, 2001 (John's preface re-set; Logan's introduction replaced with essay by Kaledon Naddair entitled 'The Culture of the Gaedeals, Caledonians and Other Kelts'; contents-list, text, glossary and index photographically reproduced and enlarged from 3rd, 4th, 5th or 6th edn; new bibliography added). See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, nos. 1868–77.

13a. Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod's *Còmhradh mu Chor na h-Eaglais*, 1st impression, Glasgow, **1843**: pp. 1–24. At p. 1 is: “[An Dara Cuir a mach.] / Còmhradh / mu / Chor na h-Eaglais. / [Bho Chuairtear nan Gleann airson Ceud Mios an t-Samhraidh.]” At p. 24 is: “Glasgow: / J. & P. Campbell, 24, Glassford Street. / MDCCCXLIII. / Edward Khull, Printer to the University, Dunlop Street.” Reprinted (with new pagination) from *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, vol. 4 (1843), pp. 57–84. John Mackenzie may have sub-edited the original article. See Maclean 1915: 270. According to Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 2068) there are no holdings of this item outside EUL.

13b. Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod's *Còmhradh mu Chor na h-Eaglais*, 2nd impression, Glasgow, **1843**: pp. 1–24. At p. 1 is: “[An Treas Cuir a mach.] / Còmhradh / mu / Chor na h-Eaglaise. / [Bho Chuairtear nan Gleann airson Ceud Mhìos an t-Samhraidh.]” At p. 24 is: “Glasgow: / J. & P. Campbell, 24, Glassford Street. / MDCCCXLIII. / Edward Khull, Printer to the University, Dunlop Street.” See Maclean 1915: 90. According to Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 2069) there are no holdings of this item outside NLS, but there is in fact a copy in EUL, severely trimmed, shelfmarked Mackinnon (1924) P.2 (1).

14. *Eachdraidh a' Phrionnsa*, Edinburgh, **1844**: pp. i–viii, 9–312. On p. ii is a sketch of Prince Charles; at p. iii is: “Eachdraidh / a' Phrionnsa, / no Bliadhna / Thearlaich. / Le Iain Mac-Choinnich, / Ball Urramach de Chomunn Oisianach Ghlascho; / de Chomunn na Gaelig an Lunnainn, &c.; / Fear-Sgriobhaidh ‘Sar-Obair nam Bard Gael- / ach,’ agus ‘Eachdraidh Beatha nam Bard,’ &c. &c. &c. / Duneideann: / Clò-bhuailte le Thornton agus Collie. / m.dccc.xliv.” At p. v is a dedication to Charles Edward Stuart (Charles Stuart Hay Allan): “Tha'n Leabhar so / Air a chur a mach fo Thearmann / An Uasail Oirdheirc, agus / Ionnsaichte, / Tearlach Imhear Stiubhart, &c. &c. / fo iomadh comain / An Ughdair, / Iain Mac-Coinnich.” The work is in thirty-two chapters. At p. 241 is a fresh title: “Cruinneachadh Taghte / de / Dh-Òranan / a rinneadh do'n / Phrionnsa agus 'na Aobhar, / le ughdaran eugsamhail.” At p. 242 is an introductory note: “Mheas mi iomchaidh na h-òranan a leannas a chur mar leasachadh ris an leabhar so chum an ‘Eachdraidh’ a dheanamh cho iomlan sa' b'urrainn mi. Tha iad a' cur mòran soluis air còr agus dùrachd nan Gàel mu'n àm anns an d'èirich iad a mach a' chur an aghaidhean ri cruadal ‘Bliadhna Thearlaich’.” Seventeen songs follow at pp. 243–311, some footnoted (see also no. 15 below). One of these footnotes (at p. 244) provides a brief description of the Kilbride MSS then in the library of the Royal Faculty of Procurators in Glasgow, and is thus of unique value to the study of the Gaelic manuscripts of Scotland (Bannerman 1977, 2: 29). On p. 312, following list of errata, is: “Edinburgh: / Thornton & Collie, Printers, St David Street.” Maclean says (1915: 249): “This work was a Translation from MS. material supplied by the publishers.” See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1853.

For the 2nd edn see no. 28 below. A third edition (311 pp., reprinted from the 1st edn) appeared in 1864. According to Maclean (1915: 250) it was published in Glasgow, but this statement may have been made in error. Ferguson and Matheson say (1984, no. 1855) that it was published in Edinburgh by Thornton & Collie, and that the sole known copy belongs to the Highland Region Library Service, Inverness.

15. *An t-Aosdàna*, Edinburgh, **1844**: pp. 1–96 + card cover. On the outside front cover is: “An / t-Aosdàna: / or a Selection of / The Most Popular / Gaelic Jacobite Songs, / &c. &c. / Edinburgh: / published by Thornton and Collie; / and sold by D. Macvean, Glasgow. / 1844. / Price Ninepence.” At p. 4 is a sketch of Prince Charles as in *Eachdraidh a' Phrionnsa*, 1st edn, p. ii. At p. 5 is: “An / t-Aosdàna: / or a Selection of / The Most Popular / Gaelic Jacobite Songs, / &c. &c. / collected and arranged by / John Mackenzie, / Honorary Member of the Ossianic Society of Glasgow, the Gaelic Society / of London, &c. &c.; Compiler of the ‘Beauties of Gaelic Poetry, / and Biographer of the Highland Bards,’ &c. &c. &c. / Edinburgh: / published by Thornton & Collie; / and sold by D. Macvean, Glasgow. / 1844. / Price Ninepence.” At p. 7, underneath Cluny's coat of arms, is the dedication: “Do Chluainidh, / Triath Chlann-Mhuirich. / Uasail fiùghantaich, / Tha mi cur a mach an leabhair bhig so fo t' ainm aloil-sa le lan-dòchas gu'm faigh e do dhion, a thaobh gur tu an t-aon a mhain a tha maireann an diugh, (a thuigeas an uirghioll a th' air a chuir sios ann, agus aig am beil speis d'a leithid,) de dh'iarmaid nan Triath flathasach, treun a dh'èirich suas ann am buillsgean cunnairt agus leireidh chum seanna chòir SHIOL ALBA ath-chosnadh do'n dìobarach rioghail, dhligheach, a dhuigs comh-mhothachadh nam bard binn a sheinn na dana so.—Is mise da rìreadh, / Le mòr speis agus urram, / Do Sheirbhiseach fìor umhal, / Iain Mac-Choinnich. / Glascho, an treas / latha de'n Iuchar. 1844.” (For translation of this see p. § above.)

The text consists of three elements. At pp. 11–79 are the same seventeen songs which appeared in the 1st edn of *Eachdraidh a' Phrionnsa* (no. 14 above), with some minor alterations to the notes (that on the Kilbride MSS appears unchanged, except for spelling, at p. 12). At pp. 80–86 is the ‘Marbhrann

Bhatair' (with substantial editorial notes), which I have discussed at length elsewhere (MacilleDhuibh 2001a–f, see also Black 2001: 421). At p. 87 is: “[Several gentlemen who had seen the foregoing and following pieces in M.S. in the possession of the Editor, expressed a strong desire to have copies of them in print; but as they were too short for a separate publication, he hopes the reader will not be displeased to find them attached to the Jacobitical Songs, even though unconnected with the subject.]” At pp. 87–92, again with substantial editorial notes, is ‘Daibhidh Greosgach, Crom, Ciar’, consisting of a satire in verse on a certain weaver called David, followed by verses in praise of the same man, both by ‘the Rev. Angus Morrison, minister of Contine, Ross-shire, and brother to the celebrated Rory Dall the Harper’ (see Matheson 1970: 223). At p. 93 is a note on additions made by the editor to two of Mac Mhaighstir Alastair’s poems, citing as sources ‘his grandson, the late Mr A. MacDonald of Laig, Island of Egg, as well as several other individuals in the poet’s native district’. See Maclean 1915: 250; Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1852.

Maclean states (1915: 250) that a second edition of *An t-Aosdàna* was published in Edinburgh in 1871, but gives no details. There is no mention of such an edition in Ferguson and Matheson 1984, nor have I found any trace of one in library catalogues.

16. Buchanan’s *Beatha agus Iompachadh*, Edinburgh, **1844**: pp. i–iv, 1–185 (no foreword or introduction). At p. ii is: “The Life and Conversion / of Dugald Buchanan, / who died at Rannach in 1768, / (written by himself.) / to which is annexed his / Spiritual Hymns. / ‘The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.’—Ps. cxii. 6. / ‘He, being dead yet speaketh.’—Heb. xi. 4. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart, & Co. / MDCCCXLIV.” At p. iii is: “Beatha agus Iompachadh / Dhùghail Bochannain / a dh’eug ann an Ranach sa’ bhliadhna 1768. / (air a sgrìobhadh leis féin.) / maille r’a / Laoidhean Spioradail. / ‘Air chuimhne gu bràth bithidh am firean.’—Salm cxii. 6. / ‘Air dha bhi marbh, tha e fathast a’ labhairt.’—Eabh. xi. 4. / Dunéideann: / Mac Lachuinn, Stiubhard, agus an Cuideachd. / MDCCCXLIV.” At p. iv is: “Stereotype Edition.” The main text is at pp. 1–185. Bound with this volume (separate title and pagination, ii + 47 pp.) are Buchanan’s hymns. At p. i is: “Laoidhean Spioradail, / le / Dùghall Bochannan.” The text (pp. 1–47) is subscribed: “*Dunéideann Clò-bhuailte le Iain Mac-Thomais.*” Maclean says (1915: 39): “Stereotyped edition. 1000 copies struck off, and 500 copies in each of the years 1857, 1859, 1863, 1867, 1872, 1875, and 1877, and printed still at frequent intervals. The Editor was John Mackenzie.”

See also Ferguson and Matheson, no. 429.

17. Lothian’s *Teagasg, Rùn agus Nòs na Pàpanachd*, etc., Edinburgh, **1844**: pp. 1–36. At p. 1 is: “Earrann de’n Leabhar / Cheasnuighe Aithleasuichte; / a ta ’nochdadh / Teagaisg, Rùn, agus Nòis / na Pàpanachd. / clobhuailte an Dunéaidain le Daibhidh Mac Phàtraic. / MDCCCLXXIX. / Maille ri / Cònsachadh / eadar / Am Pàp’ agus Reformèision. / le / Donnchadh Loudin. / Fòs / ‘Taois Ghoirt’ na Pàpanachd. / ‘An Dunéidionn: / le / Maclachluinn, an Stiùbhartach, ’s an Cuideachd; / agus Comunn Ùr nam Meanbh-Leabhar. / MDCCCXLIV.” The prose text ‘Teagasg, Rùn, agus Nòs na Pàpanachd’ (translated by Duncan Lothian) is at pp. 3–17, the poem ‘Cònsachadh eadar Am Pàpa agus an t-Ath-Leasachadh le Donnchadh Loudin’ at pp. 19–34, and Lothian’s poem “‘Taois Ghoirt’ na Pàpanachd 1755’ at pp. 35–36. Maclean says (1915: 169), referring to this work and Lothian’s *Cònnsachadh* (see next item), “Of these two last Editions 500 copies of each were printed. The Editor was John Mackenzie.” For the 1779 editions of ‘Teagasg, Rùn agus Nòs’ see Ferguson and Matheson 1984, nos. 2433–34.

18. Lothian’s *Cònnsachadh*, Edinburgh, **1844**: pp. 1–35 + stiff paper cover. On front cover is: “Cònnsachadh / eadar / Am Pàp agus an t-Ath- / Leasachadh. / agus / Fìor Fhocail ’us Sanasan Géura. / le / Donnchadh Loudin. / Toirt Ùr. / Dunéidin: / Maclachlainn an Stiùbhartach, ’s an Cuidd. / MDCCCXLIV. / *Price Fourpence.*” The title on p. 1 is basically the same, except that the last line is omitted. The introduction (p. 2) is: “Focal do’n Leughadair. / Anns na h-argumaidibh fallain, firinneach a leanas, chithear am PÀP (*an t-ana-Criosd*) iar ’fhàsgadh ’us iar a rùsgadh o mhullach a’ chinn gu bònn a’ choise,—gun òirleach de thalamh glan aige, air an urrainn e seasamh. Tha a mhearachdan eagallach, an-so, iar am bréugachadh ’us iar an diteadh, gu-géur, le buaidh na Firinn. Is i ar dùrachd gach aon, a ta fo’n chùing dhòrch so, a bhi gu-luath iar a thoirt gu solus agus teagasg an t-soisgeil. / *Dunéidin, / An 10mh Mios* 1844.” The suffix *-ibh* and spelling *iar* suggest that John was not the writer – see his notes on orthography etc. in *Sàr Obair*, p. v\*. The contents consist of the following poems: ‘Cònnsachadh eadar Am Pàp agus an t-Athleasachadh’ (78 qq. + 2 qq. introduction from *Turus a’ Chriosdaidh*, part 3); ‘Sean Fhocail, agus Comhadan’ (57 qq.); ‘Deoch an Doruis’ (2 qq.); ‘Laoidh a’ Chreidmhich’ (31 qq.); ‘Am Bogha-Frois. The Rainbough. le C.—N.—B.’ (15 qq.). On the outside back cover is a list of books published by Maclachlan & Stewart. Earlier editions appeared in 1797 and 1833. Maclean says (1915: 169), referring to this work

and Lothian's *Teagasg, Rùn agus Nòs na Pàpanachd*, etc. (see previous item), "Of these two last Editions 500 copies of each were printed. The Editor was John Mackenzie." See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1356.

19. Bunyan's *The World to Come*, Edinburgh, **1844**: pp. i–iv, 1–172. At p. ii is: "The World to Come; / or / Visions of Heaven and Hell. / by / John Bunyan. / 'And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day / shalt thou be with me in paradise.'—Luke xxiii. 43. / For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.'—Eccles. / xii. 14. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart, & Co. / MDCCCXLIV." At p. iii is: "An Saoghal a Ta ri Teachd; no / Seallaidhean Nèimh agus Ifrinn. / le / Iain Buinian. / 'Agus thubhairt Iosa ris, Gu deimhin tha mi'g ràdh ruit [*sic*] gu'm / bi thu maille riumsa an diugh ann am pàrras.'—Luc xxiii. 43. / 'Oir bheir Dia gach obair chum breitheanais, maille ris gach / ni diomhain *ma's* math, no *ma's* olc e.'—Eccles. xii. 14. / Dunéideann: / Mac-Lachuinn, Stiubhard, agus an Cuideachd. / MDCCCXLIV." At p. iv is 'Stereo-type Edition'. Bunyan's foreword is at pp. 1–4, his introduction at pp. 5–19, and his main text at pp. 21–168. At pp. 169–72 are two hymns in full rhyme, 'Sealladh de Neamh' (8 qq.) and 'Sealladh de dh' Ifrinn' (8 qq.), subscribed: "Crioich." Lists of Gaelic books published by Maclachlan & Stewart appear on front and rear end-papers. Maclean says (1915: 43): "In 1844, 1000 copies were printed from the plates, and 500 copies in each of the following years, 1858, 1861, 1864, and 1872. The Translator was John Mackenzie." See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 499.

20. Bunyan's *Come and Welcome*, Edinburgh, **1844**: pp. i–iv, 1–282. At p. ii is: "Come and Welcome / to / Jesus Christ. / by / John Bunyan. / 'And they shall come which were ready to perish.'—Isa. xxvii. 13. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart, & Co. / MDCCCXLIV." In some copies a frontispiece portrait of Bunyan appears between pp. ii and iii. At p. iii is: "Thig agus Se Do Bheatha / chum / Iosa Criosd. / le / Iain Buinian. / 'Agus thig iadsan a bha basachadh.'—Isaiah xxvii. 13. / Duneideann: / Maclachuinn, Stiubhard, agus an Cuideachd. / MDCCCXLIV." At p. iv is: "Stereo-type Edition." Bunyan's text is at pp. 1–282, subscribed: "Crioich. / Dunéidean: / Clò-bhuailte le Iain Mac-Thòmais." Maclean says (1915: 46): "The work was stereotyped in 1846 when 1000 copies were printed, and 500 copies were printed in each of the years 1859 and 1874. The published price was two shillings. The Translator was John Mackenzie." According to Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 453) this edition survives in EUL only. There are three copies in that library.

21. *A' Bheithir-Bheuma*, Glasgow, **1845**: pp. 1–8. The first issue (January 1845) of an all-Gaelic magazine of which no further issues appeared. At p. 1 is: "A' Bheithir-Bheuma. / Aireamh 1. / Earrann 1. / Glascho, Mios Deireannach a' Gheamhraidh, 1845. / R'a reic arson / Tri sgillinn." Unusually for a Scottish Gaelic publication, the title is in Gaelic script; underneath it is an illustration showing an enormous serpent emerging from a cave at the direction of a bonneted man (intended to be John Mackenzie himself, presumably) and threatening three well-dressed gentlemen, one of whom drops a book in fright. As *A' Bheithir-Bheuma* is a brilliant piece of satirical literature, the contents are described in detail at pp. @\$-@\$ above (see also next item). The Rev. Donald Maclean, who would clearly have disagreed with this opinion, comments (1915: 313): "Only this number (and quite enough) ever appeared. The Editor was John Mackenzie." According to Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 78) *A' Bheithir-Bheuma* survives in EUL only. Its shelfmark there is Mackinnon (1924) P.19 (1).

22. *Còmhradh mu'n Ghràmar Dhùbailt*, Glasgow, **1845**: pp. 1–4. Maclean (1915: 250) lists this item as follows: "MACKENZIE (JOHN), A DIALOGUE ON FORBES' GRAMMAR. *Glasgow*, 1845. 'Comhradh eadar Murchadh Grè, Coinneach Mac Shuine, Eobhan Mor 's am Pungar, mu'n Ghramar Dhùbailt do'n nach e'm Pungar héin idir is Udar.' 8vo. 4 pp. A scurrilous but somewhat clever pamphlet. *Extremely rare*. We have seen only one copy."

I have seen no copies at all, nor is there any entry for it in Ferguson and Matheson 1984. However, it is presumably an offprint or enlargement of the feature which appears at pp. 3–5 of *A' Bheithir-Bheuma* (no. 21 above) under the title: "Comhradh Eadar Murchadh Grè, Coinneach Mac Shuinn, Eobhan Mor 's am Pungar, mu'n Ghramar Dhùbailt!! (*Air a sgrìobhadh do réir lathailt' Ghramarail a' Phungar féin.*)" It is essentially a dramatised review article, unfavourably comparing John Forbes's *Double Grammar* (Edinburgh, 1843) to the Rev. Dr Alexander Stewart's universally admired *Elements of Gaelic Grammar* (Edinburgh, 1801 and 1812). The 'Pungar' (Forbes) is shown arriving in a township with his load of books for sale; the natives, who are already familiar with his work, gather round.

Mur. An si héin a rinn a' leothar?

Pung. Is mi, a h-uil "ciallairt" is "seollairt" dh'i.

Mur. 'Sdiach 's ann agai bha 'n ceann mus do shniomh si an eaidh mhor so as! cha saoil mi gu'n d'robh mu thuath an tù so a'in aonan eil riamh a rinn a leithid dhe ghnìomh.

Coinn. Gu seadh, a Mhurchaidh, is suarrach an tac ri so an t-saothair a rinn a ministear Stiùardach a bha 'n Ionarfeotharan; cha row aigeas ach beurla chruaidh shasunnach nach tuigeag Gael.

Pung. Haic si cha d'rinn an duin sin ach a Ghàelig ionnsachduinn as a Phìobal, 's cha d'robh i math aig, ach bha i a'ms bho rugag mi, agus shiubhail mi Alab air fad ga h-iunnsachdainn gu coiliant gus nach eil coimpiar agam. Tha teisteanasan a'm bho na sgoilaran is àird an Alab nach deach riamh roimh oibir chur mach air "lathailt" na h-oibir so, agus gu'n d'thug i a chliù bho na h-uil duin a sgrìobh strāc Gàelig air thoiseachd orum; nach ceannaich si té am fear dhe na ghramar? Faolumas i dhùì "Brìghardan" agus "Rialtan labhairt na Beurla 's na Gàelig" a ta air an cur sios innt tù ri tù gu *brisg*, òrdail, soilleir, iomlan, anns an dà chainnt; gheibh si innt "eolas teagaisg gràmair, fuaimragan, cònnragan, rialtan gu cùbadh, seorsachadh fhocalan, Ainmear, Buadhar, Clisgear, Dagar, Eagar, Freagar, Glogar, Ioladair, Liugar, Martar, Naisgear, Osdair, Pocair, Pungar, Pòitear, Pàirtear, Ragair, Slaodair, Sloightear, Slimear, Traightear, Tiolpair, Ughdair."

("Murdo. Is it you that wrote the book?

Pungar. Yes, every 'ciallairt' and 'seollairt' of it.

Murdo. Well well, you must have had your head screwed on to be able to weave such a big web of cloth from it! I don't think we've ever had anyone else up here in the north who's ever done such a thing.

Kenneth. Indeed, Murdo, the magnum opus of the Stewart minister in Dingwall pales into insignificance beside this. All he wrote was plain uncompromising English that no Gaelic speaker could understand.

Pungar. Well, you see, all the Gaelic that man learned was from the Bible, so he didn't learn it properly. But I've been speaking it since I was born, and I've travelled the length and breadth of Scotland learning it to perfection, so there's none to rival me. I've got attestations from the greatest scholars in Scotland that no work like this has ever been published before, and that it puts everybody who ever wrote a single syllable of Gaelic before me in the shade. Will each of you please buy a copy of the grammar? It will teach you the 'Brìghardan' and the 'Rules for speaking English and Gaelic' that are laid down in it side by side quickly, efficiently, clearly, completely, in the two languages; in it you'll find 'how to learn grammar, vowels, consonants, rules for declension, the categorisation of words, Ainmear, Buadhar, Clisgear, Dagar, Eagar, Freagar, Glogar, Ioladair, Liugar, Martar, Naisgear, Osdair, Pocair, Pungar, Pòitear, Pàirtear, Ragair, Slaodair, Sloightear, Slimear, Traightear, Tiolpair, Ughdair.'")

The dialect is that of the Inverness area; Maclean says (1915: 125) that Forbes was from Strath, but if Hew Scott is to be believed (1915–50, vol. 7: 175), he was a native of Strathglass. At any event, the 'Pungar' has met his match, and the book receives a thoroughgoing evaluation.

Eobh. Cha'n eil 'sa leothar, a Mhurchaidh, ach Gaelic *riataich*, mar their thus, sliochd collaidh, a ghineadh eadar an *gramadair* agus a Bheurla, *ann* an cruide annuinn an tigh-sgoile; na tha do Bhéurl ann tha fios againn cò d'am buin e.

Pung. Am beil thu 'm balar gur e a *shlaid* a rinn mi?

Eobh. Is luaineach a' chogais chiontach:—'ne'n leabhar, na na th'ann tha thu 'gràdhinn.

Pung. Na th'ann.

Eobh. Ma ta tha mi fiosrach gu'n d'thug thu sop dheth as gach seid, agus á raon no dha gu'n do sguab thu leat am bàrr iomlan:

*Spùill thu 'n Rothach gu buileach,  
'S thug thu 'n còrr o Mhac Cullaich,—*

Sin na rinn thu, mar tha fhios aig do chogais. Beannachd leat.

(“*Ewen*. All that’s in the book, Murdo, is *bastard* Gaelic, as you say yourself, the fruit of fornication, conceived by intercourse between the *grammarian* and the English language in the schoolhouse loft; we know where all the English that’s in it comes from.

*Pungar*. Do you think I *plagiarised* it?

*Ewen*. Restless is the guilty conscience:—is it the book you mean, or what’s in it?

*Pungar*. What’s in it.

*Ewen*. Well, I know you’ve taken wisps of it from here and there, and from one or two fields you’ve taken away the whole harvest:

*You robbed Munro completely,  
And took the rest from MacCulloch.*

That’s what you’ve done, as your conscience well knows. Good day to you.”)

23. *The Harp of Caledonia*, Glasgow, **n.d.**: pp. 1–64. At p. 1 is: “The / Harp of Caledonia; / A Collection / of / Popular Gaelic Songs. / Clarsach na h-Alba: / no, / Orana Taghta Gaidhealach. / Bu mhòr am beud gu’m bàsaicheadh / A’ chàinain is fearr buaidh, / ’S i ’s treis’ thoir greis air àbhachd, / ’S na h-uil’ àit ’n téid a luaidh; / S i ’s fearr gu aobhar-gàire, / ’S i ’s binne, blàithe fuaim.” There were various editions, all undated. The punctuation of the above varies slightly, while the printer’s imprint underneath varies a great deal. I have seen the following, and there may be others: (1) “Glasgow: / Robert McGregor & Co., / 22 Glassford Street.” (2) “Glasgow: / Robert McGregor & Co., / (India Buildings,) / 45 Bridge Street.” (3) Glasgow: / John Cameron, Renfield Street; / and sold by all booksellers.” (4) “Glasgow: / Archibald Sinclair, / Celtic Press, / 47 Waterloo Street.” Two of these retain their cover. These covers bear advertisements which show that the book was still being printed (or at least bound) for sale in 1898. Throughout the fifty years or so during which this little book – it measures 11.5 x 7.5 cms – was reproduced, the text (pp. 3–64) never varied in any way. At p. 64 is a contents list headed: “An Clar.” See Maclean 1915: 149; Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1222.

24. Baxter’s *Call to the Unconverted*, Edinburgh, **1845**: pp. [i\*–vi\*], i–xviii, 19–174. At p. [ii\*] is: “A Call / to / The Unconverted / to / Turn and Live. / by / Richard Baxter, / Minister of the Gospel. / ‘Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye / die?’—Ezek. xxxiii. 11. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart & Co. / MDCCCXLV.” At p. [iii\*] is: “Gairm / do’n / t-Sluagh Neo-Iompaichte / Pilleadh agus a Bhi Beò. / le / Richard Baxter, / Ministear an t-Soisgeil. / ‘Pillibh, pillibh o ’ur droch shlighibh, c’arson a bhàsaich- / eas sibh?’—Esec. xxxiii. 11. / Dunéideann: / Mac-lachuinn, Stiùbhart, agus an cuideachd. / MDCCCXLV.” At p. [iv\*] is: “Stereotype Edition.” At p. [v\*] is the list of contents, and at p. [vi\*] is a brief foreword headed ‘Cunntas gearr mu thimchioll an leabhar so leis an Olla Calami’, ending: “Tha *Olla Cotton Mather* ag innse gu’n d’ rinn a leughadh urrad dhrùghadh air Prionns’ anns na h-Innsibh, ’s gu’n do shuidh e sìos ga leughadh a’ sileadh dheur gus an d’ eug e!” At p. i Baxter’s introduction is headed: “Roimh-Radh. / Do gach neach mi-naomh’ a leughas an leabhar so, gu h-àraidh do m’ luchd-éisdeachd ann an sgìreachd Chiderminster.” It is subscribed: “Richard Baxter. / Ciderminster, / Sa’ bhln: 1657.” The main text (pp. 19–174) is subscribed: “A’ Chrìoch. / Dùnéideann clò-bhuailte le Iain Mac-Thòmais.” *Call to the Unconverted* was the first work of an English divine ever to be published in Gaelic (in 1750, translated by Alexander Macfarlane). In the third edition (1811) the text was revised by Patrick Macfarlane in line with modern orthography. Maclean remarks of this edition, the fifth (1915: 10): “This version differs slightly from Macfarlane’s. It was prepared for the press by John Mackenzie.” See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 56.

25. Dyer’s *Christ’s Famous Titles*, Edinburgh, **1845**: pp. i–viii, 1–339. At p. ii is: “Christ’s Famous Titles; / Believer’s Golden Chain, / and / The Straight Way to Heaven, &c. / By William Dyer, / Minister of the Gospel. / ‘Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is the grace given, / that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of / Christ.’—Eph. iii. 8. / Edinburgh: Maclachlan, Stewart, & Co., / MDCCCXLV.” At p. iii is: “Ainmeannan Cliùiteach Chrìosd; / Slàbhraidh Òir a’ Chreidich, / agus / An t-Slighe Chumhann do Nèamh, &c. / Le Uilleam Dyer, / Ministear an t-Soisgeil. / Dhomhsa, a’s lugha na’n tì a’s lugha do na naomhaibh uile, / thugadh an gràs so, saibhreas do-rannsaichte Chrìosd a shearmonachadh / am meas nan Cinneach.’—Eph. iii. 8. / Dunéideann: Mac-Lachuinn Stiùbhart agus an

Cuideachd. / MDCCCXLV.” At p. iv is: “Stereotype Edition.” Dyer’s foreword (pp. v–vi) is headed ‘Do ’n Leughadair Chriosdail’ and subscribed: “Uilleam Dyer. / Baile Lunnainn, / Bliadhna, 1665.” The main text (pp. 1–339) is subscribed: “A’ Chrioch. / Dunéidean: Clò-bhuailte le Iain Mac-Thòmais.” The first edition of this translation was published in Glasgow in 1817 and reprinted in Charlottetown, P.E.I., in 1832. Murchison says (1947–48: 126) that the original translator was Patrick MacFarlane, but this appears to be an error, as the translator’s name is given in the 1817 edition as ‘C. Maclauruinn’ (Maclean 1915: 113). Of the new edition Maclean says (*ibid.*: 114): “The work was stereotyped by the publishers in 1845 and 1000 copies printed; 500 in 1860; 200 in 1870; 250 in 1875. This Edition was revised for the press by John Mackenzie.” According to Ferguson and Matheson (1984, no. 921) the only surviving copies are in AUL and the library of the Gaelic Society of Inverness. This is incorrect – there are no copies in Aberdeen, but EUL has three.

26. Guthrie’s *Christian’s Great Interest*, Edinburgh, **1845**: pp. i–viii, 1–258. At p. ii is: “The Christian’s / Great Interest: / in two parts. / by / William Guthrie, / Minister of the Gospel. / ‘Wherefore the [*sic*] rather, brethren, give diligence to make your / election sure.’—2 *Pet.* i. 10. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart & Co. / MDCCCXLV.” At p. iii is: “Còir Mhòr / A’ Chriosdaidh: / ann an dà earrainn. / le / Uilleam Guthrie, / Ministear an t-Soisgeil. / ‘Uime sin, a bhràithrean, deanaibh tuilleadh dìchill chum bhur / taghadh a dheanamh cinnteach.’—2 *Pead.* i. 10. / Dunéideann: / Mac-Lachuinn, Stiùbhard, agus an Cuideachd. / MDCCCXLV.” At p. iv is: “Stereotype Edition.” Guthrie’s preface is at pp. v–vi and his main text (in two parts) at pp. 1–258, subscribed: “A’ Chrioch. / *Dunéideann clò-bhuailte le Iain Mac-Thòmais.*” Maclean says (1915: 148): “This Edition was stereotyped and 1000 copies printed, and 500 copies in 1865. The work was again reprinted in 1894. The Editor was John Mackenzie.” See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1201.

27. Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Edinburgh, **1845**: pp. i–vi, 1–413. At p. ii is: “The / Pilgrim’s Progress / from this World / to the World to Come. / under the similitude of a dream. / In Three Parts. / By John Bunyan. / ‘I have used similitudes.’—Hos. xii. 10. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart, & Co. / MDCCCXLV.” A portrait of Bunyan appears as a frontispiece between pp. ii and iii. At p. iii is: “Cuairt an Eilthirich, / no / Turas a’ Chriosdaidh; / o ’n t-Saoghal so / chum an t-Saoghail a ta ri Teachd. / fo shamhla bruidhne. / Ann an Tri Earrannan. / Le Iain Buinian. / ‘Ghnàthaich mi cosamhlachdan.’—Hos. xii. 10. / Dunéideann / Mac-Lachuinn, Stiùbhard, agus an Cuideachd. / MDCCCXLV.” At p. iv is: “Stereotype Edition.” Bunyan’s foreword is at pp. v–vi, and his main text at pp. 1–413, subscribed: “A’ Chrioch. / *Dunéideann Clò-bhuailte le Iain Mac-Thòmais.*” This appears to be the fourth edition of the work, the translator of the first (1812) having been Robert MacFarlane. John’s contribution was as editor and corrector of the press (Murchison 1947–48: 126). Maclean says (1915: 41): “In 1845, 1000 copies were struck off, and 500 copies in each of the years 1856, 1860, 1862, 1864, 1872, and 1876. Price 2s. 6d. The Editor was John Mackenzie.” See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 475.

28. *Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa*, 2nd edn, Edinburgh, **1845**: pp. 1–170 + plain card covers and blank flyleaves. At p. 3 is: “Eachdraidh a’ Phrionnsa / no / Bliadhna Thearlaich: / anns am beil min-chunntas air / Taisdeal a’ Phrionnsa do dh’ Albhainn; / Tògbhail nam Fineachan Gàelach ’na Aobhar; / agus / Gach Teughbail ’bha aca r’a Naimhdean; / maille ri / Iomruagadh a’ Phrionns’ agus a Luchd-Leanmhuinn / an deigh Latha Chuil-Fhodair, &c. &c. / le / Iain Mac-Choinnich, / Ball Urramach de Chomunn Oisianach Ghlascho; de Chomunn na Gàellig ann an / Lunnainn, &c. &c.; Fear-Sgrìobhaidh ‘Sàr-Obair nam Bàrd Gàelach,’ / agus ‘Eachdraidh Beatha nam Bàrd,’ &c. &c. &c. / Dunéideann: / Clò-bhuailte le Thornton agus Collie, / agus ra’n reic leosan. / 1845.” This pocket edition contains the prose text only (re-set in smaller type), the poems having been moved into *An t-Aosdàna* (no. 15 above). See Maclean 1915: 249–50; Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1854.

For the third edition (based on the first) see no. 14 above. A fourth (based on the second but re-set in 199 pp.) was published by Alexander Gardner, Paisley, in 1906. It is not mentioned in Maclean 1915, but is described in Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1856.

29. Bunyan’s *Sighs from Hell*, Edinburgh, **1846**: pp. i–xii, 13–254. At p. iv is: “Sighs / from Hell; / or / The Groans of a Damned Soul. / by / John Bunyan. / ‘The rich man died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes.’— / Luke xvi. 22, 23. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart & Co. / MDCCCXLVI.” Pp. iii–iv consist of a plate bearing a portrait of Bunyan (this is not present in all surviving copies). At p. v is: “Osnaichean / bho Ifrinn; / no / Acain Anna Damnaite. / le Iain Buinian / ‘Fhuair an duine saoi bhir bàs agus ann an ifrinn thog e



suas a / shùilean.’—Luc xvi. 22, 23. / Dunéideann: / Mac-Lachuinn, Stiubhart, agus an Cuideachd. / MDCCCXLVI.” Bunyan’s preface is at pp. vii–xii and his main text at pp. 13–254, subscribed: “A’ Chrìoch. / Dùneideann: clò-bhuailte le Iain Mac-Thòmais.” Maclean says (1915: 44): “In 1846, 1000 copies were printed from the plates, and 500 copies in each of the years 1863 and 1872. The Translator was John Mackenzie.” It would perhaps be more accurate to say that John revised an earlier translation by Robert MacDonald which had been published in Inverness in 1829 (Maclean, *ibid.*). See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 488.

30. Bunyan’s *Water of Life*, Edinburgh, 1846: pp. i–viii, 9–96. At p. ii is: “The / Water of Life. / by / John Bunyan. / ‘And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely’— / Rev. xxii. 17. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart, & Co. / MDCCCXLVI.” In some copies a portrait of Bunyan appears as a frontispiece between pp. ii and iii. At p. iii is: “Uisge na Beatha. / le / Iain Buinian. / ‘Agus ge b’e neach leis an àill, gabhadh e uisge na beatha / gu saor.’—Tais. xxii. 17. / Dunéideann: / Mac-Lachuinn, Stiubhard, agus an Cuideachd / MDCCCXLVI.” Bunyan’s preface is at pp. v–viii, and his main text at pp. 9–96, subscribed: “A’ Chrìoch.” At p. 23, unusually, a reference to ‘uisgeachan *Epsom, Drochaid-thuna, Bhells* agus *Bhath*’ (‘the waters of Epsom, Tunbridge, Wells and Bath’) is footnoted: “Uisgeachan méin-ioc-shlainteach Shasuinn, a ta math air leigheas cuid do ghalairean, agus a ta luchd-eucail ag òl air son fallaineachd.” (“The curative mineral waters of England, which are good for healing some diseases, and which sufferers drink for health.”) Maclean says (1915: 45): “In 1846, 1000 copies were printed from the plates, and 500 copies in each of the years 1862 and 1875 . . . The Translator was John Mackenzie.” It would perhaps be more accurate to say that John revised an earlier translation by William MacDonald which had been published in Inverness in 1835 (Maclean, *ibid.*). See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 493.

31. John Mackenzie’s *Dictionary*, Edinburgh, 1847: pp. i–ii, 285–550. At p. i is: “An / English–Gaelic Dictionary: / being / Part Second / of the / Pronouncing Gaelic Dictionary. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart, & Company. / MDCCCXLVII.” The text, in double columns, is at pp. 285–550, and is subscribed: “Printed and stereotyped by Stevenson and Company, / 32 Thistle Street.” There is no introduction or preface. The copy I have seen is entitled ‘McAlpine’s Gaelic Dictionary’ on the spine, even though it consists of John’s part only. Ferguson and Matheson (1984, nos. 1858–66) list editions or reprints in 1847, 1890 (Maclachlan & Stewart, Edinburgh); 1930, 1936, 1943, 1950, 1962 (Alexander MacLaren, Glasgow); 1971, 1973 (Gairm, Glasgow). John’s *Dictionary* was plagiarised by Malcolm MacLennan in *A Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* (John Grant, Edinburgh, 1925), which was reprinted by Acair/AUP in 1979. MacLaren’s edition of 1930 was, I think, the first to include John’s preface, still subscribed ‘JOHN MACKENZIE / *Edinburgh*, January 1847’ but paged vii–x; it is described on the imprint page as first published 1845, re-issued ‘1847, 1853, 1858, etc.’, published by MacLaren 1930, and reprinted 1936, 1943, 1950 and 1956.

John’s dictionary was designed as the second part of Macalpine’s *Pronouncing Gaelic–English Dictionary*, which was first published in 1832 and sometimes entitled in earlier impressions *The Argyleshire Pronouncing Gaelic Dictionary*. This work appears to have had 281 pp. from the beginning. The plates changed hands several times and corrections continued to be made until John’s dictionary appeared with it in 1847. Both parts were then stereotyped by Stevenson & Co. This, at any rate, is my understanding of the tangled history of the enterprise – *pace* Maclean (1915: 172), I can find no evidence that John’s part existed in 1845. John’s controversial ‘Preface / by the / Compiler of Part Second’, subscribed ‘JOHN MACKENZIE / *Edinburgh*, January 1847’, was prefixed to the 1847 edition of Macalpine. Referring to 1847, Maclean says (1915: 172): “In this year Messrs. Maclachlan & Stewart bought the stereotyped plates from Stevenson, and 500 copies of the complete work were printed. 270 copies were printed in 1853; 250 in 1858; 250 in 1863; 500 in 1866; 500 in 1872; 500 in 1876. Reprints again appeared in 1881, 1891, 1903, 1906.” Ferguson and Matheson (1984, nos. 1364–93) list editions and reprints in 1832 (printed for the author); 1833 (Stirling & Kennedy, Edinburgh); 1845, 1847, 1853, 1858, 1863, 1866, 1872, 1877, 1881, 1890 (Maclachlan & Stewart, Edinburgh); 1894, 1898, 1903 (John Grant, Edinburgh); 1929, 1930, 1934, 1942, 1948, 1955, 1957, 1962 (Alexander MacLaren, Glasgow); 1971, 1973 (Gairm, Glasgow).

For most of its history the Macalpine/Mackenzie dictionary also appears to have been available bound as a single volume, see Ferguson and Matheson 1984, nos. 1367–70, 1372–78, 1380, 1382–83, 1387. My own copy was published in 1930. Entitled on the spine ‘Macalpine’s / Pronouncing / Gaelic / Dictionary / Gaelic–English / English–Gaelic / MacLaren & Sons / Glasgow’, it consists of pp. i–xvi, 1–281, i–viii, 285–549, and some unnumbered pages of advertisements (there are no pp. 282–84 at all). At the first p. i

is: “A / Pronouncing / Gaelic Dictionary / By Neil Macalpine / Glasgow: / Alexander MacLaren & Sons. / 360–362 Argyle Street.” The first p. ii refers more clearly to Macalpine’s part only: ‘First Published 1832. / Re-issued 1833, 1845, 1853, etc. / New Large Type Edition 1929. / *Reproduced for Alex. MacLaren & Sons, from the / Revised Edition of 1833, Printed at Edinburgh / by Duncan Stevenson, Printer to the University. / Printed in Germany on Paper made in Britain / Bound in Scotland*’. The first pp. v–xvi are occupied by a key to pronunciation, list of abbreviations, and seven-page biography of Macalpine, with his portrait. (Ironically, no known portrait exists of John, but see no. 21 above.) Macalpine’s text (in double columns) is at pp. 1–281. The second pp. i–viii consist of the prelim pages for John’s part: at p. iii is ‘An / English–Gaelic Dictionary / by John Mackenzie / Author of “The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry” / being part second of / The Pronouncing Gaelic Dictionary / Glasgow: / Alexander MacLaren & Sons / 360–362 Argyle Street, C.2’; at p. iv is ‘First Published 1845. / Re-issued 1847, 1853, 1858, etc. / MacLaren’s New Edition 1930. / *Reproduced for Alex. MacLaren & Sons, from the / Revised Edition of 1845, Printed at Edinburgh / Printed in Germany on Paper made in Britain / Bound in Scotland*’; at pp. v–viii is John’s original preface, dated 1847, and at pp. 285–549 is his text.

32. Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding*, Edinburgh, **1847**: pp. i–xii, 13–223. At p. ii is: “Grace Abounding / to the / Chief of Sinners. / by / John Bunyan. / ‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus / Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the / chief.’—1 Tim. i. 15. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart, & Co. / MDCCCXLVII.” In some copies a portrait of Bunyan appears as a frontispiece between pp. ii and iii. At p. iii is: “Gràs am Pailteas / do / Cheann-Feadhna nam Peacach. / le / Iain Buinian. / ‘Is fìor an ràdh so, agus is airidh e air gach aon chòr air gabh- / ail ris, gu’n tàinig Iosa Criosd do’n t-saoghal a thearnadh / pheacach; d’am mise an ceud-fhear.’—1 Tim. i. 15. / Duneideann: / Mac-Lachuinn, Stiubhard, agus an Cuideachd. / MDCCCXLVII.” At p. iv is: “*N.B.*—This Volume has been translated from ‘Bunyan’s Unabridged Works,’ being the most correct edition that could be obtained; all the late publications of this little book abound so much in omissions, misprints, and wrong marked scripture references, that the Author’s meaning, in many instances, is often done away with. The continuation of the Author’s life, beginning at p. 209, is taken from a modern revised copy. / J. McK. / *Edinburgh, 14th June 1847.*” Bunyan’s preface is at pp. v–xii and his main text at pp. 13–223, subscribed: “A’ Chrìoch. / Dùneideann: Clò-bhuailte le Iain Mac-Thòmais.” Maclean says (1915: 46): “There is a note by the Translator, John Mackenzie. In 1847, 1000 copies were printed from the plates; 500 copies were printed in each of the years 1862 and 1872.” See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 457.

33. Macintyre’s *Orain agus Dana*, 5th edn, Edinburgh, **1848**: pp. i–xii, 13–224. At p. i is: “Orain agus Dana / Gaidhealach, / le / Donnachadh Ban Mac-an-t-Saoir. / Songs and Poems, / In Gaelic, / by / Duncan Ban Macintyre. / The Fifth Edition, Corrected, / with a memoir of the author’s life, and notes in English. / Edinburgh: / Maclachlan, Stewart, & Co. / 1848.” At pp. iii–viii is ‘A Short Memoir of the Author’, subscribed: “*Edinburgh, March 1, 1848.*” The texts are at pp. 13–224. At p. 224 is: “Duneideann clò-bhuailte le Thornton agus Collie, / anns a’ bhliadhna 1848.” Maclean says (1915: 233): “Of this edition one thousand copies were printed.”

The source for John Mackenzie’s editorship is Clach. The editor’s name is not given, the longer footnotes merely being signed ‘—ED.’ The marks of John’s involvement are clear to be seen, however. The book contains the largest number of Donnachadh Bàn’s poems so far printed under one cover – sixty-four, two more than in John Reid’s 1834 edition, the additions being the bawdy ‘Òran do Chàraid Tàilleir air son Cuairt Shuirghe’, restored from the first edition, and the warmly Jacobite ‘Òran Eile air Blàr na h-Eaglaise Brice’, of which the editor says (p. 16): “This Song, was excluded by the Author from three editions of his work printed for himself, because it was a Jacobite piece, and offensive to the Campbells, who always were his best patrons. It is here inserted for the first time, at the solicitation of many of the Bard’s admirers.”

John’s style may be recognised in the note on ‘Òran nam Briogsan’ (p. 126): “The disarming and *diskilting* act was detested by the Highlanders, whose free born limbs did not agree with the fetters of the odious breeches imposed on them. There is a popular and humerous [*sic*] song, called ‘*The Turnimspike*,’ where the same complaints are brought against the *Gray-breeks*.” Moreover, in a note on ‘Òran a’ Bhotail’, Simon Fraser of Knockie is quoted with evident approval as pointing out that the air ‘has been current in the North for sixty years, as the composition of John Mac Murdo (or McRae) of Kintail, since emigrated to America’. See also Ferguson and Matheson 1984, no. 1757.

### ABBREVIATIONS

AUL	Aberdeen University Library
beg.	beginning
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
edn	edition
EUL	Edinburgh University Library
f(f).	folio(s)
GUL	Glasgow University Library
NLS	National Library of Scotland
<i>TGSI</i>	<i>Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness</i>
<i>WHFP</i>	<i>The West Highland Free Press</i>

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the unfailing courtesy and helpfulness of the staff of Edinburgh Central Library (especially the Scottish Room), Edinburgh University Library (especially Sheila Noble, Pamela MacKinnon and their colleagues in the Special Collections Dept) and the National Library of Scotland. I have also to thank Michelle Gait of the Special Libraries and Archives section of Aberdeen University Library, and Maureen Williams of the Angus L. MacDonald Library, St Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Dr Christopher Cameron, Kelso, and Alastair Campbell yr of Airds, Inverawe, have been very patient in answering my questions about medical matters and Campbells respectively.

This article was originally written in 2003–05, and I hope my efforts to bring it up to date have been successful. A great deal has been published on Gaelic literature since then, and I apologise to any scholars who may feel that their work has been overlooked. I would like to thank the Editor of *Scottish Studies* for his enthusiastic support, and my anonymous peer reviewer for saving me from numerous pitfalls.

### SOURCES

- ANON., ed.  
1806 *Co-Chruinneachadh Nuadh do Dh'Orannibh Gaidhealach*. Inverness.  
(The 'Inverness Collection'.)
- BANNERMAN, JOHN.  
1977 'The MacLachlans of Kilbride and their Manuscripts'. *Scottish Studies*,  
vol. 21: 1–34.
- BENNETT, MARGARET.  
1989 *The Last Stronghold: Scottish Gaelic Traditions of Newfoundland*.  
Edinburgh.
- BEVERIDGE, ERSKINE.  
1903 *Coll and Tiree: Their Prehistoric Forts and Ecclesiastical Antiquities*.  
Edinburgh. (Repr. Edinburgh 2000.)

BLACK, RONALD.

1968 *The Poetry of William Ross: A Critical Study*. Unpublished M.A. dissertation, Dept of Celtic, University of Glasgow.

1986a 'The Gaelic Academy: The Cultural Commitment of the Highland Society of Scotland'. *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, vol. 14, part 2: 1–38.

1986b *Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair: The Ardnamurchan Years*. Society of West Highland and Island Historical Research, Isle of Coll.

1993 'An Emigrant's Letter in Arran Gaelic, 1834'. *Scottish Studies*, vol. 31: 63–87.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed.

1999 *An Tuil: Anthology of 20th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse*. Edinburgh.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed.

2001 *An Lasair: Anthology of 18th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse*. Edinburgh.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed.

2002 *Eilein na h-Òige: The Poems of Fr Allan McDonald*. Glasgow.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed.

2005 *The Gaelic Otherworld: John Gregorson Campbell's Superstitions of the Highlands & Islands of Scotland and Witchcraft & Second Sight in the Highlands & Islands*. Edinburgh.

BLANKENHORN, VIRGINIA S.

1978 'Traditional and Bogus Elements in "MacCrimmon's Lament"'. *Scottish Studies*, vol. 22: 45–67.

2019 *Tradition, Transmission, Transformation: Essays on Scottish Gaelic Poetry and Song*. Oxford.

BOOTH, JENNIFER.

1990 *The Poetry of Alexander MacDonald, Laird of Dalness*. Unpublished M.A. dissertation, Dept of Celtic, University of Edinburgh.

BROWNLIE, NIALL M.

1995 *Bailtean is Ath-Ghairmean a Tìriodh: Townships and Echoes from Tìree*. Glendaruel.

BRUFORD, ALAN, AND DONALD A. MACDONALD, eds.

1994 *Scottish Traditional Tales*. Edinburgh.

CAIMBEUL, AONGHAS (AM PUILEAN).

1973 *Suathadh ri Iomadh Rubha*. Glasgow.

CALDER, REV. GEORGE, ed.

1937 *Gaelic Songs by William Ross*. Edinburgh.

CAMPBELL, J. F., ed.

1890 *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, 4 vols. 2nd edn, Paisley. (1st edn 1860–62.)

- 
- 1940 *More West Highland Tales*. John G. MacKay (ed.), vol. 1. Edinburgh.  
 CARMICHAEL, ALEXANDER.  
 1928 *Carmina Gadelica*, 2nd edn, vol. 1. Edinburgh. (1st edn 1900.)
- 
- 1971 *Carmina Gadelica*, vol. 6, ed. by Angus Matheson. Edinburgh.  
 CHAIMBEUL, MÀIRI SÌNE, ed.  
 2020 *Iain mac Mhurchaidh: The Life and Work of John MacRae, Kintail and North Carolina*. Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, Glasgow.  
 CHAMBERS, ROBERT.  
 1840 *History of the Rebellion in Scotland in 1745–6*. 5th edn, Edinburgh. (1st edn 1827.)
- 
- 1869 *History of the Rebellion of 1745–6*. 7th edition, Edinburgh.  
 CHAPMAN, R. W., ed.  
 1970 *Johnson’s Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and Boswell’s Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* Oxford.  
 CHEAPE, HUGH.  
 1999 ‘Etymologies and Traditions: A Lochaber Minister’s Notebook, 1858–1864’. *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, vol. 19: 66–82.  
 CHISHOLM, COLIN.  
 1895 ‘The Clan Chisholm Standard-Bearer at Culloden’. *The Celtic Monthly*, vol. 4: 40.  
 CLACH = MACKENZIE, ALEXANDER.  
 1877 ‘John Mackenzie, Editor of the “Beauties of Gaelic Poetry”’: A Memoir’. *The Celtic Magazine*, vol. 2: 201–10.  
 CLERK, REV. DR ARCHIBALD.  
 1910 *Caraid nan Gaidheal, The Friend of the Gael: A Choice Selection of Gaelic Writings by Norman MacLeod, D.D.* Edinburgh. (1st edn 1867.)  
 DIXON, JOHN H.  
 1886 *Gairloch in North-West Ross-shire*. Edinburgh. Reprinted Gairloch 1974.  
 DUGHALLACH, AILEIN.  
 1798 *Orain Ghaidhealacha*. Edinburgh.
- 
- 1829 *Orain, Marbhrannan, agus Duanagan, Ghaidhealach*. Inverness.  
 DUNN, CHARLES W.  
 1953 *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia*. Toronto.  
 EBERLY, SUSAN SCHOON.  
 1997 ‘Fairies and the Folklore of Disability’, in *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*. Peter Narváez (ed.), 2nd edn,: 227–50. Lexington (Kentucky). (1st edn New York 1991.)  
 EWING, REV. DR WILLIAM, ed.  
 1914 *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland*, vol. 2. Edinburgh.

RONALD BLACK

- FARQUHARSON, REV. ARCHIBALD (Tìree).  
1875–76 ‘The Songs and Melodies of the Gael’. *The Celtic Magazine*, vol. 1: 179–85.
- FERGUSON, MARY, AND ANN MATHESON.  
1984 *Scottish Gaelic Union Catalogue*. Edinburgh.
- FRASER, SARAH.  
2002 ‘“The wheat / Grows tallest in well-dug fields”’: Influence and Innovation in Some Early Poems by Alastair Mac Mhaighstir Alastair’, in Colm Ó Baoill and Nancy R. McGuire, eds, *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 2000*: 171–81. Aberdeen.
- GILLIES, WILLIAM.  
2000 ‘Alexander Carmichael and Clann Mhuirich’. *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, vol. 20: 1–66.
- , ed.  
1985 *Ris a’ Bhruthaich: The Criticism and Prose Writings of Sorley MacLean*. Stornoway.
- GRANT, SIR FRANCIS J.  
1944 *The Faculty of Advocates in Scotland 1532–1943*. Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh.
- GRIERSON, HERBERT, ed.  
1932 *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott 1808–1811*. London.
- GRIMBLE, IAN.  
1979 *The World of Rob Donn*. Edinburgh.
- GUNN, REV. ADAM, AND JOHN MACKAY.  
1897 *Sutherland and the Reay Country*. Glasgow.
- HENDERSON, REV. GEORGE, ed.  
1905 *Memoirs of a Highland Gentleman being the Reminiscences of Evander Maciver of Scourie*. Edinburgh.
- KENNEDY, REV. DR JOHN.  
1979 *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*. Inverness. (1st edn 1861.)
- LOUDON, JOSEPH BUIST, ed.  
2001 *The Mull Diaries: The Diary of James Robertson, Sheriff Substitute at Tobermory 1842–1846*. Dunoon.
- MACALPINE, NEIL.  
1930 *A Pronouncing Gaelic Dictionary*. Glasgow. (1st edn 1832.)
- MAC-AN-TUAIRNEIR, PARUIG.  
1813 *Comhchruinneacha do dh’ Orain Taghta, Ghaidhealach*. Edinburgh.
- MAC A’ PHARSUINN, SEUMAS EÓGHAN, ed.  
1977 ‘Bàrdachd á Bàideanach: Dòmhnall Mac a’ Phearsain, Bàrd agus Eachdraiche’, *Gairm*, An Samhradh: 207–19.
- MAC A PHI, EOGHAN, ed.  
1938 *Am Measg nam Bodach*. Glasgow.

[MACCALLUM, DUNCAN].

1821 *Co-Chruinneacha Dhan, Orain, &c. &c. A Collection of Original Poems, Songs, &c.* Inverness.

M[ACCALLUM], D[UNCAN].

1842 *Dàin agus Òrain. Poems and Songs.* Glasgow.

MAC DHUNLEIBHE, UILLEAM.

1882 *Duain agus Orain.* 2nd edn, Glasgow.

MACDONALD, KEITH NORMAN.

1900–01 ‘A Lochaber Romance’. *The Celtic Monthly*, vol. 9: 111–14.

MACDONALD, KENNETH D.

1990–92 ‘Glasgow and Gaelic Writing’. *TGSI*, vol. 57: 395–428.

MACDONALD, JUDGE RONALD A.

1988 ‘Short Biographical Sketches of the Squires of Antigonish’. Unpublished.

MACDOUGALL, HECTOR, AND REV. HECTOR CAMERON.

n.d. *Handbook to the Islands of Coll and Tiree.* Glasgow.

MACDOUGALL, REV. JAMES, AND REV. GEORGE CALDER, eds.

1910 *Folk Tales and Fairy Lore.* Edinburgh.

MACGREGOR, GEORGE.

1881 *The History of Glasgow.* Glasgow.

MACILLEDHUIBH, RAGHNALL.

1997 ‘The Eruption of Laki’. *WHFP*, 17 January.

---

1999 ‘Kisses and Cuddles All Round’. *WHFP*, 26 February.

---

2001a ‘The Mull Men’s Ford Revisited’. *WHFP*, 10 August.

---

2001b ‘Make Way for Seaforth’s Rent!’. *WHFP*, 24 August.

---

2001c ‘Fuddy Andy Duddy’. *WHFP*, 7 September.

---

2001d ‘The Cat in the Allt Grànd’. *WHFP*, 21 September.

---

2001e ‘Making Fun of Walter’s Folk’. *WHFP*, 5 October.

---

2001f ‘Murdoch Matheson, Spin Doctor’. *WHFP*, 19 October.

---

2001g ‘Her Heart’s Youthful Prize’. *WHFP*, 30 November.

---

2002 ‘Barebones and Smasher’. *WHFP*, 17 May.

---

2003a ‘Praise, Dispraise and Social Control’. *WHFP*, 2 May.

---

2003b ‘The Dean Swift of the Highlands?’. *WHFP*, 16 May.

- 2005a 'The Seven Wonders of Scotland'. *WHFP*, 8 July.
- 2005b 'The Bells of Perth'. *WHFP*, 22 July.
- 2006 'Cunnart, Eadar-Theangair ag Obair: *Eachdraidh a' Phrionnsa* le Iain MacCoinnich', in *Cànan & Cultar / Language & Culture, Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 3*. Wilson McLeod *et al.* (eds.): 73–110. Edinburgh.
- MACINNES, IAIN I.  
1988 *The Highland Bagpipe: The Impact of the Highland Societies of London and Scotland, 1781–1844*. Unpublished M.Litt. dissertation, University of Edinburgh.
- MACKAY, J. G.  
1919–22 'Social Life in Skye from Legend and Story: Part IV'. *TGSI*, vol. 30: 128–74.
- MACKAY, JOHN.  
1888–89 'Sutherland Place Names: Parish of Assynt'. *TGSI*, vol. 15: 107–22.
- MACKENZIE, ALEXANDER.  
1877–78a 'The Monument to John Mackenzie, of the "Beauties of Gaelic Poetry"'. *The Celtic Magazine*, vol. 3: 192–93.
- 1877–78b 'A Famous Highland Minister of the "Forty-Five"'. *The Celtic Magazine*, vol. 3: 261–69.
- 1877–78c 'Erection of the Monument to John Mackenzie of the "Beauties of Gaelic Poetry"'. *The Celtic Magazine*, vol. 3: 431–34.
- 1879 *History of the Clan Mackenzie*. Inverness.
- 1881–82 'John Macrae – Ian MacMhurchaidh – The Kintail Bard'. *The Celtic Magazine*, vol. 7: 271–76, 322–25, 387–89, 426–28, 464–67.
- 1891 *History of the Chisholms*. Inverness.
- 1911 'John Mackenzie of the "Beauties of Gaelic Poetry"'. *The Celtic Monthly*, vol. 19: 162–64.
- 1977 *The Prophecies of the Brahan Seer*. London. (1st edn 1877.)
- \_\_\_\_\_, AND ALEXANDER FRASER.  
1877–78 'Monument to John Mackenzie of "The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry"'. *The Celtic Magazine*, vol. 3: 39–40.
- MACKENZIE, ALICE.  
1994 *Newsplan: Report of the NEWSPLAN Project in Scotland*. London.



MACKENZIE, JOHN.

1876–77 ‘Ailean Buidhe’. *The Celtic Magazine*, vol. 2: 403–05.

———, ed.

1841 *Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach*. Glasgow.

MACKENZIE, OSGOOD.

1980 *A Hundred Years in the Highlands*. Edinburgh. (1st edn 1921.)

MACKINNON, FIONA E.

1992 *Tiree Tales: Sgeulachdan a Tiriodh*. Kirkapol.

MACKINTOSH, ANGUS.

1895 ‘Mo Run Geal Og’. *The Celtic Monthly*, vol. 3: 240.

MACLEAN, REV. DONALD.

1915 *Typographia Scoto-Gadelica*. Edinburgh.

MACLEAN, MAGNUS

1902 *The Literature of the Celts*. London.

MACLEAN, REV. NEIL.

1845 ‘Parish of Tiree and Coll’, in *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. 7, part 2: 195–222. Edinburgh.

MACLEAN, RAYMOND A.

1976 *History of Antigonish*. Antigonish.

MACLENNAN, LT. JOHN.

1972a ‘Notices of Pipers’. *The Piping Times*, vol. 24, no. 6 (March): 12–17.

———.

1972b ‘Notices of Pipers’. *The Piping Times*, vol. 24, no. 10 (July): 24–30.

MACLEOD, ANGUS, ed.

1952 *The Songs of Duncan Ban Macintyre*. Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, Edinburgh.

MACLEOD, NEIL.

1893–94 ‘Miann a’ Bhaird Aosda’. *TGSI*, vol. 19: 89–98.

[MACLEOD, NORMAN].

1829–30 ‘Litir o Fhionnladh Piobaire, mu Oidhche na Calluinne’. *An Teachdaire Gaelach*, vol. 1: 164–67.

MACLEOID, DOMHNUL.

1811 *Orain Nuadh Ghaeleach*. Inverness.

MACLEÒID, IAIN N.

1934–35 ‘Iain Mac Coinnich: Fear-Deasachaidh “Sàr obair nam Bàrd Gaidhealach”’. *An Gaidheal*, vol. 30: 36–37, 53–54.

MACLEÒID, NIALL.

1975 *Clàrsach an Doire: Dàin, Òrain is Sgeulachdan*. Glasgow. (1st edn 1883.)

MACMILLAN, HUGH.

1901 *The Highland Tay*. London.

MACNEILL, NIGEL.

1892 *The Literature of the Highlanders*. Inverness.

RONALD BLACK

- MACPHAIL, I. M. M.  
 1989 *The Crofters' War*. Stornoway.
- MACPHARLAIN, P.  
 1813 *Co'-Chruinneachadh de dh' Orain agus de Luinneagaibh Thaghta Ghae'lach*. Edinburgh.
- MATHESON, REV. WILLIAM, ed.  
 1970 *The Blind Harper: The Songs of Roderick Morison and his Music*. Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, Edinburgh.
- MEEK, DONALD, ed.  
 2003 *Caran an t-Saoghail, The Wiles of the World: Anthology of 19th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse*. Edinburgh.
- MILLER, HUGH.  
 1993 *My Schools and Schoolmasters*. Edinburgh. (1st edn 1854.)
- \_\_\_\_\_.  
 1994 *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*. Edinburgh. (1st edn 1835.)
- MOORE, JOHN N.  
 1996 *The Maps of Glasgow: A History and Cartobibliography to 1865*. Glasgow.
- MURCHISON, REV. DR T. M.  
 1947–48 'Iain MacCoinnich: Clach air a Chàrn'. *An Gaidheal*, vol. 43: 125–28.
- \_\_\_\_\_.  
 1956 'Books Worth Knowing: 4. Mackenzie's Beauties of Gaelic Poetry'. *An Gaidheal*, vol. 51: 74–75.
- NICOLSON, ALEXANDER.  
 1951 *Gaelic Proverbs*. Glasgow.
- Ó BAOILL, COLM, ed.  
 1979 *Eachann Bacach and Other Maclean Poets*. Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, Edinburgh.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed.  
 1994 *Iain Dubh: Òrain a Rinn Iain Dubh Mac Iain Mhic Ailein (c.1665–c.1725)*. Aberdeen.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed.  
 2009 *Mairghread Nighean Lachlainn, Song-Maker of Mull*. Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, Glasgow.
- PAUL, SIR JAMES BALFOUR.  
 1908 *The Scots Peerage*, vol. 5. Edinburgh.
- RANKIN, REV. D. J.  
 1929 *A History of the County of Antigonish, Nova Scotia*. Toronto.
- SCOTT, HEW.  
 1915–50 *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*. New edn, 8 vols, Edinburgh.
- SINCLAIR, REV. ALEXANDER MACLEAN.  
 1881 *Clarsach na Coille; a Collection of Gaelic Poetry*. Glasgow.

- \_\_\_\_\_.  
1894–96 ‘Old Gaelic Songs’. *TGSI*, vol. 20: 9–28.
- \_\_\_\_\_.  
1898 ‘Passing Away’. *The Casket*, 19 May. Antigonish.
- \_\_\_\_\_.  
1899 *The Clan Gillean*. Charlottetown, P.E.I.
- \_\_\_\_\_.  
1899–1901 ‘The Gaelic Bards and the Collectors of their Works’. *TGSI*, vol. 24: 259–77.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed.  
1896 *The Gaelic Bards from 1775 to 1825*. Sydney, C.B.
- STEWART, ALEXANDER AND DONALD.  
1804 *Cochruinneacha Taoghta de Shaothair nam Bard Gaëleach. A Choice Collection of the Works of the Highland Bards, Collected in the Highlands and Isles*. Edinburgh.
- STEWART, REV. ALEXANDER, ‘NETHER LOCHABER’, ed.  
1876 *The Scottish Gaël*, by James Logan, vol. 1. Inverness. Reprinted Edinburgh 1976.
- STORRIE, MARGARET C.  
1981 *Islay: Biography of an Island*. Port Ellen.
- THOMSON, DERICK S.  
1958 ‘Bogus Gaelic Literature c.1750–c.1820’. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*, vol. 5: 172–88.
- \_\_\_\_\_.  
1974 *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*. London.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed.  
1993 *Gaelic Poetry in the Eighteenth Century: A Bilingual Anthology*. Association for Scottish Literary Studies, Aberdeen.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed.  
1994 *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*. Glasgow. (1st edn 1983.)
- THOMSON, REV. DR WILLIAM.  
1845 ‘Parish of Perth’, in *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. 10: 1–142. Edinburgh.
- WALKER, STEPHEN P.  
1987 *The Faculty of Advocates 1800–1986*. Edinburgh.
- WATSON, WILLIAM J.  
1925–27 ‘Some Interactions between Gaelic and English’. *TGSI*, vol. 33: 310–26.
- \_\_\_\_\_.  
1926 ‘Varia’. *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, vol. 1: 210–14.
- WILL, RONALD K., ed.  
1983 *Register of the Society of Writers to Her Majesty’s Signet*. Edinburgh.