

Essay

Converses with the Grave: Three Modern Gaelic Laments

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Abstract: Within Scottish deathways, the Gaelic lament has long served as a poignant and powerful outlet for loss. In this creative piece, three Canadian-born, Gaelic-speaking poets present their previously unpublished Gaelic laments along with English translations. This collaborative article is designed to demonstrate, in a creative rather than an academic format, that the venerable lament tradition continues to enjoy longevity and vitality in the present day as a literary expression of grief among Gaels. This article further demonstrates that modern Gaelic laments are not constrained by a strict fidelity to literary rules but strive instead to work creatively within tradition while reaching their audiences in a relevant and resonant way. For each poem, the author offers a personal contextualization for his/her lament, which serves to explain the source of inspiration and demonstrates how the work draws upon and reflects its literary roots. In recognition of the strong oral tradition present within Gaelic poetry, this article includes an audio recording of each of the three authors' laments.

Keywords: Gaelic poetry; laments; panegyric code; Scottish diaspora; death



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1. Introduction

The lament holds a unique place in Gaelic culture. This genre of praise poetry was once integral to the experience of grief among Gaels and a staple part of the narrative themes in Gaelic oral poetic tradition (Shaw 2007, p. 19). One of the defining components of this literary tradition, which dates back to the age of professionally trained bards, *filidhean*, and the “courts of chieftains who lived like kings” (Black 2001, p. xi), is the Panegyric Code: set tropes used to reiterate traditional values and thereby soothe the clan during times of death “...when it was most necessary to reaffirm the traditional values of the community” (MacInnes 1978, p. 436). In her study addressing the use of these tropes in Scotland, Pá Coira posits that there were “two broad types” (p. 318) in the period of Gaelic poetry prior to c. 1700, which she terms “the earlier and the later models” (p. 319). The earlier model is predominantly a continuation of Irish motifs, whereas the latter model begins to develop a more autonomous and Scottish identity (Coira 2012, p. 319). Coira also elucidates that, for some kinship groups, “the rhetoric of praise has its own particular flavour” (p. 319) as each clan has its own history and ideals. John MacInnes, who studied the panegyric rhetoric in Gaelic poetry for the vernacular period between c. 1600 and c. 1745, defined it in five categories: addressing the subject by use of epithets or their *sloinneadh* (the patronymic line); referencing friends, allies, and *dùthchas* (an individual's or group's ancestral inheritance be it land, traditions, or hereditary traits); describing the subject's household (a physical account or enumeration of virtues such as hospitality and generosity); praising the subject for his social role as a leader and warrior; and describing the grave scene (pp. 446, 448, 451, 452, 457). As Scottish clan society morphed throughout the centuries from the medieval to the early modern period, so too did this code. The language of praise evolved in response to shifting clan ideals. Writing in 1978, MacInnes stated that “the style is traceable to the present day” (p. 436).

The 17th century marked an interesting transition, when poets abandoned a kind of *lingua franca* of the Classical Bardic Period (c. 1200–c. 1650) in favour of the vernacular tongue. Previously, poets were using a mostly static, archaic form of Gaelic (Watson 1932, p. xvii) that was preserved for approximately 400 years and becoming increasingly elitist. Poets simultaneously cast aside the prescriptive *dán díreach*, complex and stringent set metres that regulated syllable counts and internal and end-rhyme (Watson 1932, p. xxxvi), and began composing in stressed, rhythmic metres. These metres allowed for greater freedom of expression and inspired a wider inclusion of the poets' emotive and internal world (Thomson 2000, p. 114; MacInnes 1978, pp. 446, 464, 467; Matheson 1970, pp. lxxii–lxxiv; Shaw 1996, pp. 345–47, 350–54). There are dynamic layers to the history of Gaelic poetry as the metrics of composition and praise motifs were transformed in response to reflect an ever-changing world.

The Gaelic lament tradition travelled to North America with the Highland immigrants. Canada's 19th-century Gaelic poets, even though inspired by early lament conventions, recast the virtues, once ascribed to chieftains and warriors of old, by transferring this rhetoric to a wide variety of departed such as esteemed religious leaders, political figures, Gaelic champions, and cherished wives. The shift in service from the clan chieftain to the community (Watson 2007, p. 198) signalled "the emergence" of "new sorts of community leaders who were the appropriate subject of panegyric verse in the context of nineteenth century *Gàidhealtachd* communities" (Dunbar 2007, p. 386). The panegyric tradition continued to hold sway over the "emigrant generation" (Dunbar 2008, pp. 22–125) as a means to eulogize their dead and to meditate upon death's profound meaning. In this way, it continued to play a central role in their oral memorial culture.

As in Scotland, the Gaels' "centuries-old poetic culture of remembrance" fulfilled many functions in North America, most notably memorializing the dead, fortifying communal ideals, and mitigating the impact of "loss of leadership through death", while simultaneously praising the personal qualities of the deceased and restating "the ideals" to which potential leaders should aspire (Chedgzoy 2007, p. 111; Newton 2015, p. 262). In this way, the poet served as the community spokesperson, "guardian of its values" and "community builder" (Dunbar 2007, pp. 335, 387). These often-plaintive outpourings were not meant to neutralize grief, but to own it. In short, they were "works of memory and contributions to historical record", written for the benefit of the past and the future (Chedgzoy 2007, p. 124). As song-poems, their elegies also contained a blend of details particularizing the location, time of death, emotional impact, and the deceased's status or role. Michael Newton's *Memory-Keepers of the Forest: Anthology of Scottish Gaelic Literature of Canada* contains a cross-section of 19th-century Gaelic laments, ranging from a lament to John MacGillivray "Am Piobaire Mòr" written in 1860, which celebrates the deceased's piping virtuosity, retentive memory, and devotion to Gaelic poetry, to a lament for Father Neil MacLeod, who, as a champion and protector of his Gaelic flock, echoed the "warrior prowess" of a Highland chieftain (Newton 2015, p. 289).

In discussing this literary tradition, academics highlight the distinctions between the elegy (*marbhrann*) and the lament (*cumha*). The former was more formal in tone and diction, with the poet's emotions kept in check by the dictates of classical poetic conventions, whereas the latter was less structured and more spontaneous and subjective in its verbal articulation of grief. By the early 19th century, the boundaries between these categories tended to blur in Scotland and Nova Scotia. According to Effie Rankin, "some immigrant poets tended to use the term *cumha* more often in their poetic titles" and the classifications became increasingly conflated (Rankin 2020).

Although scholarly studies focus extensively on earlier iterations of the historic Gaelic lament tradition, this genre has had remarkable staying power into the 20th and 21st centuries. It did not lose its relevance as a vehicle for expressing individual and collective grief, paying homage to the deceased, comforting mourners, or linking the living with the dead. The long-established Gaelic genre, however durable, survived because of its adaptive flexibility. A case in point is the moving Gaelic lament which famed Scottish

Gaelic poet, Sorley MacLean, wrote for his younger brother, Calum Iain MacLean, who died prematurely in 1960. The lament, “*Cumha Chaluim Iain MhicGill-Eain*”, celebrates his brother’s achievements, thereby echoing the panegyric elements of earlier examples of this literary genre (Sorley MacLean Trust n.d.). Using “traditional methods in a modern setting”, MacLean places his brother, the intrepid folklorist, on the same elevated plane as a heroic warrior or clan chief (Dymock 2011, p. 80). He “breathed new life” into a revered art form, while introducing some significant “subversions” of “conventional patterns” (Poncarová 2014, p. 70). In this way, the Gaelic lament tradition has renewed and perpetuated itself into the present century.

The three Gaelic laments presented below (with English translations) give a modern-day take on this venerable literary genre. The first, *Fhuair Mi Sanas Bho Fheachd an Nèimh* (“I Received a Message from the Heavenly Host”) (see Video S2), by Brian James MacLeod, is not a traditional lament, inasmuch as the adherence to conventional panegyric tropes has been eschewed in favour of a more personal investment in the poetry. This lament is subjective in its tone and resonates with an intense sense of loss. It is doubly understandable that emotions are present within this featured poem as it marks the death of the poet’s mother, Patricia Florence MacLeod (née McClennon) of Baddeck, Cape Breton, who passed on 6 March 2020. The accompanying English translation is done in a more artistic rather than literal style.

In *Nar Dùisgeadh o’n Bhàs* (“Our Death Awakening”) (see Video S3), Lodaidh MacFhionghain of Nova Scotia pays homage to all deceased Gaels of his home province. The poem delivers an instructive message when it relates that ancestors may depart this life, but their influence will remain within this world. In this way, Lodaidh MacFhionghain serves the function of a traditional bard by comforting present-day Gaels with assurances of the successful continuity of their culture. The author has written the piece in an orthography that is familiar to and characteristic of Nova Scotian Gaelic poets.

In *Aonghais Ùisdein Raghnaill Ruairidh* (“O Angus Hughie Ranald Rory”) (see Video S1) by Chelsey MacPherson of Glengarry County, Ontario, the Panegyric Code is seen in modernity. Here the subject, who centuries ago would have been praised for his warrior or hunting prowess, is lauded for his ability to uphold Gaelic traditions. The mentioning of relevant ancestral locations (Knoydart and St. Raphael’s), addressing the subject by his *sloinneadh*, and providing a sobering image of his graveside are all elements that adhere to the code. This poem is also a reminder that not all laments are male-authored. As “professional and bardic practices” yielded to a “more open and permeable poetic culture” during the 17th century, the women of Scottish Gaeldom began to engage more fully in the “poetry of loss” (Chedgzoy 2007, pp. 105, 108). This 21st-century example indicates that they continue to add their voices to this genre.

2. Foreword to *Fhuair Mi Sanas Bho Fheachd an Nèimh*

Fhuair Mi Sanas Bho Fheachd an Nèimh was originally submitted to the 2020 competition for the Second Annual Sister Margaret MacDonell Prize. The suggested subject material of the competition was the broad category of “isolation and connection”. The circumstances surrounding my mother’s passing while I was in Scotland, with a COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in the offing, added to the visceral immediacy and intensity of poetic expression with which I infused my work. In common with most of my previously produced Gaelic poetry, I have tried to maintain a close affinity to the lyrical and rhythmic cadences and rhyming patterns which are traditionally associated with Gaelic poetry in the vernacular canon. I cannot claim to have been influenced by any Gaelic poets in particular, choosing rather to follow my own innate aesthetic impulses. What I do try to emulate are those rhetorical and structural characteristics of Gaelic lyricism which for me embody the best qualities of Gaelic poetry, such as alliteration, vocalic rhyming techniques, and stressed cadences which imbue my poetry with a natural musicality.

Fhuair Mi Sanas Bho Fheachd an Nèimh

Gur meanbh meud mo lèirsinn air m’aineol,

'S i strì ri soillseachadh ceum mo shlighe
Fo sgàil-bhrat gorm nan speuran àlainn,
'S mi teannadh ri lorg ceann-uidhe mo mhiann.

Ri buaireas na gaoithe chuir mi m'aghaidh 's mo dhùbhlán,
Air tòir na chuireadh an dân dhomh fhèin.
Dh'fhàg mi mo bheannachd aig na h-uile
'S aig na bha fhathast ann de luchd mo dhream.

Ge domhain, daingeann dàimh ar n-eachdraidh,
Amhail mar chumhachd ceangal ar càirdeis,
Am faighte leam idir sealladh air tìr choimhich
Dhen ghràdh an-asgaidh, gu tur neo-airtnealach?

Bha fiamh a dh'fhiosam gun dealaicheamaid,
Ged nach b' àill leam fianais do ghnùis fhaicinn.
Chan urrainn dhuinn casg chur air cuairt an t-saoghail,
A bheireadh dhuinn furtachd air dubhas 'nar n-èiginn.

Mo bheannachd air innleachd a sgaoileas na sgaradh
Càirdeas ar teaghlaich, ge b' e 'n t-astar eadarainn.
Ann an sgàilean fòin-làimhe, aodann mo mhàthar,
'S blàths ar còmhraidh, ìocshlaint ar n-èislein.

Dè 'n dioladh as fhiach air eallach ar comain'
Ri cridheachan ciatach a thug dhuinn fasnadh.
Ge farsaing an cuan, thar thonn gun àireamh,
Cha bhacadh e dlighe ar gaoil a phàigheadh.

Thàinig An Galar gun truas 'nar còmhdhail,
Ach bha mi mar-tha ri caoidh, 's tu air siubhal.
Cha dèan fèin-aonranachd leigheas air lèireadh,
'S gun chomas bhith agam mo smalan a chàradh.

Air deireadh do shaoghail, cha robh cuideachd gad dhìth,
An coimeas rium fhìn, 's mi 'n ceilt thar a' chuain,
'S thug mi tairgs' mo ghràidh dhut à doimhneachd mo bhith,
Mar thèarmann sàmhach tharad, 's tu 'nad shuain.

Thèid turas an Domhain seachad oirnn uile,
'S gun fhios againn idir mun adhbhar a bh' ann,
'S ged nach eil duin' againn gheibhte gun choire,
Nach fhaigheamaid rèit' air an dearbh cheann thall.

I Received a Message from the Heavenly Host

My vision is weak on a distant strand,
As it strives to light each step on my path
Beneath the beautiful blue canopy of the skies,
As I begin my search for the source of my desires.

I set my face defiantly to the tempestuous wind,
On the path of that which fate had ordained for me.
I left my blessings with one and all,
And especially with those who were left of my kin.

Though deep and enduring are our historical bonds,
As strong as our ties of kinship,
Shall I ever find here in a foreign land
Such a love, freely given, void of worry or care?

I had my suspicions that we would part,
 Though I could not bear to see it written in your face.
 We've no power to stop the wheels of the world,
 Which might give us solace in our time of need.

My blessings on devices which hinder that which
 Might sever our familial ties, whatever the distance between us.
 In the smartphone's screen, my mother's face,
 The warmth of our voices, a balm for our sorrow.

What recompense is fitting for the burden of our obligation
 Towards those pleasant hearts which gave us shelter and protection.
 However wide the ocean, over an expanse of countless waves,
 We are still bound by our duty to repay this love.

Mercilessly, the pandemic came upon us,
 But I was already in mourning, for you had departed.
 Self-isolation is no salvation from pain,
 And I with no chance to heal my grief.
 At the end of your life, your people were with you,
 Unlike myself, in seclusion on the far side of the sea.
 I offered you my love from the depth of my being,
 Enveloping you like a silent sanctuary as you slept.

The course of the universe passes us by,
 And we have no answers for the mystery of life.
 And though none of us is fully without fault,
 A reconciliation will surely grace us when we reach that far shore.

3. Foreword to *'Nar Dùisgeadh o'n Bhàs*

Growing up in a partial Gaelic community on Nova Scotia's mainland, I became familiar with some of the death beliefs that existed among earlier Gaels. One of those is that the souls or spirits of their beloved who died may remain present on earth for some time in the district where they were born and reared. Through research and experience, I learned that this phenomenon served a practical purpose for it connected generations of Gaels to their ancestors, a relationship solidified by mutual obligations between the living and the dead. For example, according to one folk belief, the souls of the dead would look in the windows of the houses of the living on All Souls' Day, thus giving notice that they were in need of prayers before they would be allowed out of Purgatory (MacFhionghain 2011, p. 118).

This poem, therefore, honours this perspective held by many Gaels that those who are lost are not far off. They are about and with us and have concern for our wellbeing. In this sense, I acknowledge the dichotomy that exists in the Gaelic mindset; of losing loved ones and of the grief that is intrinsic to this experience, and of the persistence of a continuity of interconnectedness between the living and the dead. In the poem, the words and images from the traditions of Nova Scotia Gaels—a portion of which I learned from my own family members—were woven into the poetry to present this perspective where death is not an end in and of itself but a condition where the spirit and essence of the person still exist, as part of the cosmos that is, in the broadest sense, continuously dying and being reborn.

I initially heard the rhyme for this lament in my head as sounds with close approximation to a song. At first, the lines were separated to create an eight-line verse, but after positioning the lines to create a four-line verse, it seemed more natural and that an air could potentially be added so that the poem could be sung. As the theme flowed and associated words and phrasing manifested, it became rendered as a nine-, ten-, and sometimes eleven-metred rhythmic verse. Stress is placed internally in each line and on the last word in the first and third lines (see bold text below). Rhyme or an assonant rhyme occurs in the last word of the second and fourth lines in each verse (see italics below). For example:

Le aghaidhean a **dh'ionnsaidh**, an iar, a' coimhead air
 Tìr nan Òg a tha thar sàil,
 Chaidh ur **tiodhlacadh**, 's an talamh **choisrigt'**,
 'Nar miosg a tha **sibh**, siod 's an **dàil**.

Though these words may be stressed in written form, when recited, they are pronounced in a less stressed, falling away type speech pattern.

'Nar Dùisgeadh o'n Bhàs

Mar bu nòs dhuinn, chaidh cur 's an ùir sibh,
 Bu ghnàth leò ur leagail, sìos 's an uaigh,
 Ged thàinig an dà là air, nuair is gainne a bhios e
 Ri bhi 'tighinn cruinn còmhla, an cladh 's an fhuachd.

Le aghaidhean a dh'ionnsaidh, an iar, a' coimhead air
 Tìr nan Òg a tha thar sàil,
 Chaidh ur tiodhlacadh, 's an talamh choisrigt',
 'Nar miosg a tha sibh, siod 's an dàil.

Air leacan tha e sgrìobhte, air feadh ar Gàidhealtachd,
 Faclan gaolach is 'gar moladh ann,
 Is an cuimhn' ur dàimh bheò, seo fòs a tha sibh,
 'Toirt taic ri 'r caraidean, 'giùlan daonnan ur call.

Ar daoine gaoil-se, a bh' air eislinnean cruaidhe,
 A' falbh bhuainne, dhan taobh thall,
 O àm 'ro' Chrìosda, thro linn na h-eaglaiseadh,
 Is follaisich' e cinnteach gun do dh'fhan sibh ann.

O, dhaoine bhochda, eadar seo is Flath Innis,
 Neo a chaidh gu nèamh ge bi càit' a bheil i?
 A-chaidh bidh sibh còmhla rinn, 'gar dìonadh gu dìleas
 O chron is ghoirt, saoghal duilich is tric' nach mhin'.

Ged théid a' seannfhacal, nach bi bàs 'na thàmh-san,
 Nach bi caochladh idir a' tighinn gu fois,
 Tha am beachd seo 'nar seann-nòs,
 'Ga fhoillseachadh uile-làthaireachd a tha a-bhos.

Nuair thig marbhphaisgean a' là seo air ar Gàidheil-se,
 Am miosg na h-uileadh a thig leò,
 Cha dìochuimhnich sinn cuairt-bheatha ar bith-sa,
 Is nuair a dh'eugas is sinne a dhùisgeas beò!

Our Death Awakening

As is customary to us, you were placed in the earth,
 Their practice was to lower you down into the grave,
 Though change has come when seldom it is,
 To be gathering together in the coldness of a cemetery.

With countenances toward the west, looking upon,
 Tìr nan Òg¹ that is over across the brine,
 You were interred in holy ground,
 Amongst us you are, there in that assembly.

On flagstones it is written throughout our Gaeldom,
Loving words, lauding you,
And in your living kin's memory, you are yet here,
Supporting your friends, who bear always your loss.

Our beloved people on hard biers,
Leaving us for the other side,
From the time before Christ through the age of the Church,
It is surely evident that you remained here.

Oh poor folk, between here and Flath Innis,ⁱⁱ
Or who went to heaven wherever that is,
Always, you'll be with us, protecting us faithfully,
From harm and hurt, in a difficult world, often not refined.

Though the proverb goes, death will not remain idle,
That change won't ever come to rest,
This view exists in our tradition,
Revealing an immanence here.

When the death shrouds of today come upon us Gaels,
Amidst all that comes with them,
We won't forget the lifecycle of our existence,
And when we die, we'll awake alive!

- i *Tìr nan Òg* "The Land of Eternal Youth."
ii *Flath Innis* "The Isle of the Heroes."

4. Foreword to *Aonghais Ùisdein Raghnaill Ruairidh*

Aonghais Ùisdein Raghnaill Ruairidh is a eulogy for Angus MacDonald of St. Raphael's, Glengarry County, Ontario. MacDonald died on 9 July 2020 while I was away in Scotland. I made a poem and sang it to an original air for him upon returning to Glengarry—I knew him to be deserving of poetry. MacDonald's Knoydart ancestors were some of the first Highlanders to come to Glengarry County in 1786. They settled on a lot not far from St. Raphael's in Charlottenburgh Township. He was the sixth generation to live on the ancestral farm and a marked tradition bearer; at times, he kept genealogies more faithfully in his mind than what was kept on paper. His passing was greatly felt within our small community.

Aonghais Ùisdein Raghnaill Ruairidh

Thàinig fios bha gu h-iomlan tiamhaidh,
Gun do ghairm an t-Athair Nèimh,
Air aon de shuinn Ghlinne Garraidh,
Do dh'àite sìorraidh-gràidh.
Aonghais Ùisdein Raghnaill Ruairidh,
Fhuair sibh an t-urram mar bu dual,
Fo mhòr mheas ur càirdean,
Is gach eòlach a bha nur measg.

Cha bhi an gleann ud gu bhith amhlaidh,
Gun sibhse fo ur cabar,
Tarsaing Naomh Raphael,
Air bail' a rèitich ur sinnsrean.
Bha gach tùr is toinìsg agaibh,
An t-àm ri ghabhail seanachas;
'S an t-àm ri innse shloinnidhean,
Cha bhiodh an clò a dhìth oirbh.

'S i Ghàidhlig cainnt ur màthar,
 Cànan binnmhor, blasmhor, treudmhor,
 Chùm sibh dhith na b' urrainn,
 Ur blas cho ceart 's a labhairadh sa ghleann ud.
 Bidh ur càirdean 'g ionndrainn ur còmhradh,
 Bidh ur nàbaidhean aonaranach àm ri òl,
 Bidh ur bean luaidh na h-aonar,
 Bidh ur càirdean Gàidhlig fo bhròn.

Is mòr am beud on a dh'fhàg sibh sinne,
 Ach cha toirear bràth do làimh Dhè,
 An dàn a bhios dhuinn uile,
 Thachair sibh ris le sìth 's le gràs.
 Càirichear an fhòid ghorm thairibh,
 Sgrath dhen fheur a chòmhaich iomadh sonn,
 Is bidh sibh nur sìor-shuain,
 Ann an companach nan Cnòideartach.

O Angus Hughie Ranald Rory

News came that was plaintive and sad—
 That the heavenly father had called
 Upon one of Glengarry's men,
 To the place of eternal peace.
 O Angus Hughie Ranald Rory,
 You earned the honour, as was right:
 Under great esteem by your friends,
 And each acquaintance among your midst.

That glen will not be the same—
 Without you—under your roof,
 Across from St. Raphael's,
 On land your ancestors settled.
 You possessed great mental faculty,
 At the time of exchanging oral lore;
 And the time of reciting genealogy,
 You had no need for the printed word.

Gaelic is the language of your mother,
 A melodious, rich, clannish tongue;
 You preserved of it what you could,
 Your accent as true as any that was uttered in that glen.
 Your friends will miss your conversation,
 Your neighbours will be lonely come time to drink,
 Your beloved wife will be alone,
 Your Gaelic friends will be grieving.

Great is the loss since you parted from us,
 But no judgement shall be cast on God's will;
 The fate that is before us all,
 You met with grace and tranquillity.
 The green sod will be placed upon you,
 A clump of earth that has covered many a person of mettle,
 And you will be in everlasting sleep,
 Within the company of the people of Knoydart.

5. Conclusions

The lament is a standard response to death within the Gaelic tradition. From formulaic expressions of cultural solidarity within the sphere of nobility in hierarchical Gaelic society, laments emerged to become a versatile vehicle for commemorating a multitude of occasions when the need to mourn the passing of someone was required. Over time and with socio-political and cultural changes, the original panegyric function became less rigid, allowing for the inclusion of more personal emotions. *Fhuair Mi Sanas Bho Fheachd an Nèimh* (“I Received a Message from the Heavenly Host”), by Brian James MacLeod demonstrates this divergence where a lament may be used as a kind of catharsis to explore the personal feelings of losing a loved one. Even the Panegyric Code, that set of rhetorical devices and tropes which has been a part of Gaelic encomiastic verse since the Middle Ages, has shown itself to be quite flexible and adaptable. In place of praising the virtues of the Gaelic nobility, it can now be used to praise a person who has embodied and upheld traditional Gaelic cultural values into the modern era as seen in *Aonghais Ùisdein Raghnaill Ruairidh* (“O Angus Hughie Ranald Rory”) by Chelsey MacPherson. Poetry as an art form has a virtually limitless capacity for finding new forms of expression; and wider subject matter, such as mourning a collective group, may be expressed through the medium of a lament to provide the community with a soothing instructive message as has been evidenced in *Nar Dùisgeadh o’n Bhàs* (“Our Death Awakening”) by Lodaigh MacFhionghain. Whichever form it takes, the lament confronts death; its reality is not circumnavigated. It is uncertain how these laments will be received by their communities, whether or not they will serve, as their predecessors once did, to honour and comprehend a loss collectively. Their sheer existence does, however, signify that there are still Gaelic-speaking poets within the Scottish diaspora who turn to poetry to record and reflect upon the enigma of death, and to perpetuate what was once a central memorial practice among the Gaels.

Supplementary Materials: The following are available online at <https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/5/1/22/s1>, Video S1: *Aonghais Ùisdein Raghnaill Ruairidh*, Video S2: *Fhuair Mi Sanas Bho Fheachd an Nèimh*, Video S3: *Nar Dùisgeadh o’n Bhàs*.

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