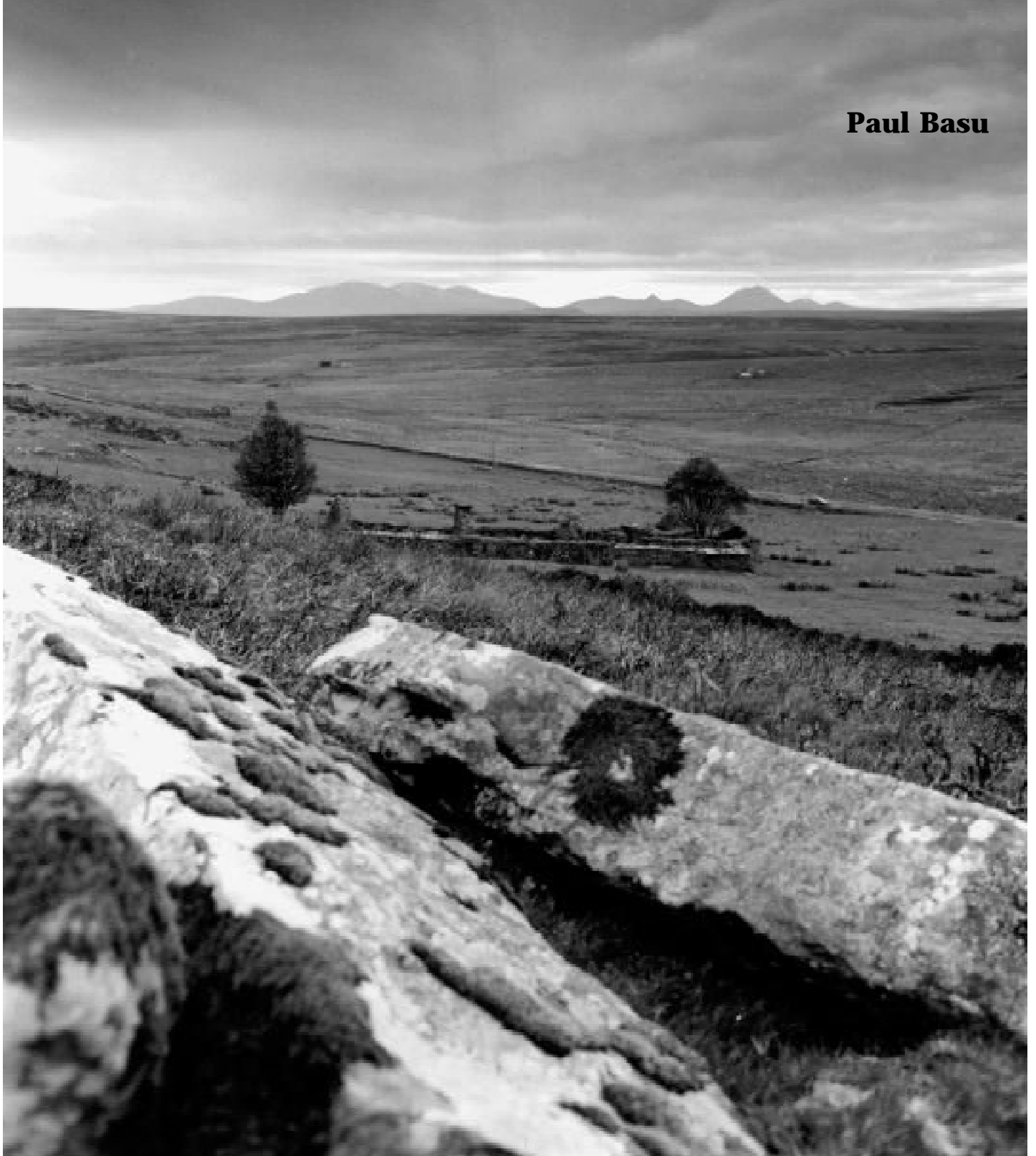


NARRATIVES IN A LANDSCAPE

Monuments & Memories of the Sutherland Clearances

Paul Basu



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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of
MSc Social Anthropology

Submission date: September 15, 1997

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A German antiquary once remarked that Scotland was a place where every stone had its history, and where there is no mouldering castle, nor heap of ruined stones, which had formed a few cottages, that is not memorable for some story of war or piety, some gleam of long past love, or dark with tale of revenge...

John Ord, *Bothy Songs and Ballads*



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ABSTRACT

STATEMENT OF INTENTION

A study of the embodiment of social and personal memory in the landscape.

The Scottish Highlands underwent a massive transformation in the period 1750 to 1850 in the name of modernisation and agricultural improvement. A hitherto settled land was cleared of its people to make way for sheep. Although much has been written about the Clearances from a social historical perspective, the landscape itself has received little academic attention. I intend to employ theoretical positions developed in ethnographic and prehistoric contexts to explore the landscape of the Clearances and its meanings for contemporary people.

Local feeling about the evictions is still strong and is focused on a number of key sites on the Sutherland-Caithness border. The ruins of the many cleared settlements which litter the interior of the country form 'unintentional monuments' and act as powerful mnemonics for past injustices, but they are also appropriated by different bodies who use them to tell different and often contradicting stories. The issues are complex and complicated by the co-existent, yet contrary, desires: to remember and to forget. Using historical and literary sources, interviews, photography and the phenomenological encounter with the landscape itself, I intend to explore some of the narratives told in, by and about places.

I hope to demonstrate how landscape can become a medium through which present identities are constructed in relation to the past, but also to question the usefulness of such constructions. The study is relevant to current debates regarding nationalism, tourism, heritage and land rights issues.

March 1997.

INTRODUCTION

LOCUS CLASSICUS

The last process of wholesale expropriation of the agricultural population from the soil is, finally, the so-called clearing of estates...what “clearing of estates” really and properly signifies, we learn only in the promised land of modern romance, the Highlands of Scotland. There the process is distinguished by its systematic character, by the magnitude of the scale on which it is carried out at one blow (in Ireland landlords have gone to the length of sweeping away several villages at once; in Scotland areas as large as German principalities are dealt with), finally by the peculiar form of property, under which the embezzled lands were held.

Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1

Of all the Highland Clearances, those that took place in the name of the Duchess/Countess of Sutherland (1765-1839) and her millionaire English husband, Lord Stafford (1758-1833, created 1st Duke of Sutherland in the year of his death), are perhaps the most notorious. Described as among “the most controversial episodes in modern British history” (Richards 1985: 360), they have come to represent the entire process of rural dispossession, evoking all the violences associated with the transition from subsistence to capitalist production.

Between the years of 1806 and 1822, amid claims of brutality and inhumane treatment, several thousand people were cleared off their ‘ancestral lands’ in the interior of Sutherland and resettled on coastal plots to enable the large-scale expansion of sheepfarming. Many emigrated, either abroad or to the industrial cities of the South. The controversy surrounding the Clearances was compounded by the nationally publicised trial of Patrick Sellar, a key figure among the clearers, for homicide. It was also in Sutherland that the word ‘burnings’ came to be associated with the Highland evictions and that the racial theme became especially prominent: the Estate owners, its managers and its sheepfarmers being identified as Lowlanders or, “still worse, as Englishmen” (Richards 1982: 284).

Although much has been written about the Clearances, the landscape over which such fierce antagonisms raged, and indeed still rage, has received surprisingly little academic attention. In 1935, Highland novelist Neil Gunn

described the sombre mood of the landscape of Kildonan, Sutherland, clan lands of the MacKeamish Gunns until cleared in 1813-14:

...in Kildonan there is today a shadow, a chill, of which any sensitive mind would, I am convinced, be vaguely aware, though possessing no knowledge of the clearances. We are affected strangely by any place from which the tide of life has ebbed (1987: 32).

Indeed, even now, nearly two-hundred years after the events, the 'memory' of the Highland Clearances still hovers like a dark cloud over many areas of Scotland. At a conference held in 1989 the late Sir Robert Cowan, Chairman of the now defunct Highlands and Islands Development Board, suggested that the ruins of the old houses that still litter the Highland landscape—the debris of the evictions—should be “cleared away” because they are “psychologically debilitating.” A reply in *The Scots Magazine* was not long in coming:

Some Tourist Board chiefs might be attracted to the strange vision of neat, tidy glens, cleansed of all embarrassing reminder[s] of the Clearances. For yes, these broken walls and piles of stones are depressing but they are a monument to the communities that were driven from their homes, the families scattered to the four corners of the earth. The fragments of long-emptied houses and abandoned barns are, as a delegate pointed out, part of our heritage. They are material for historians and archaeologists as well as precious places of pilgrimage for people of Scottish blood from all over the world (quoted in Gibson 1996b: 55).

We might call such landscapes symbolic.

METHODOLOGY

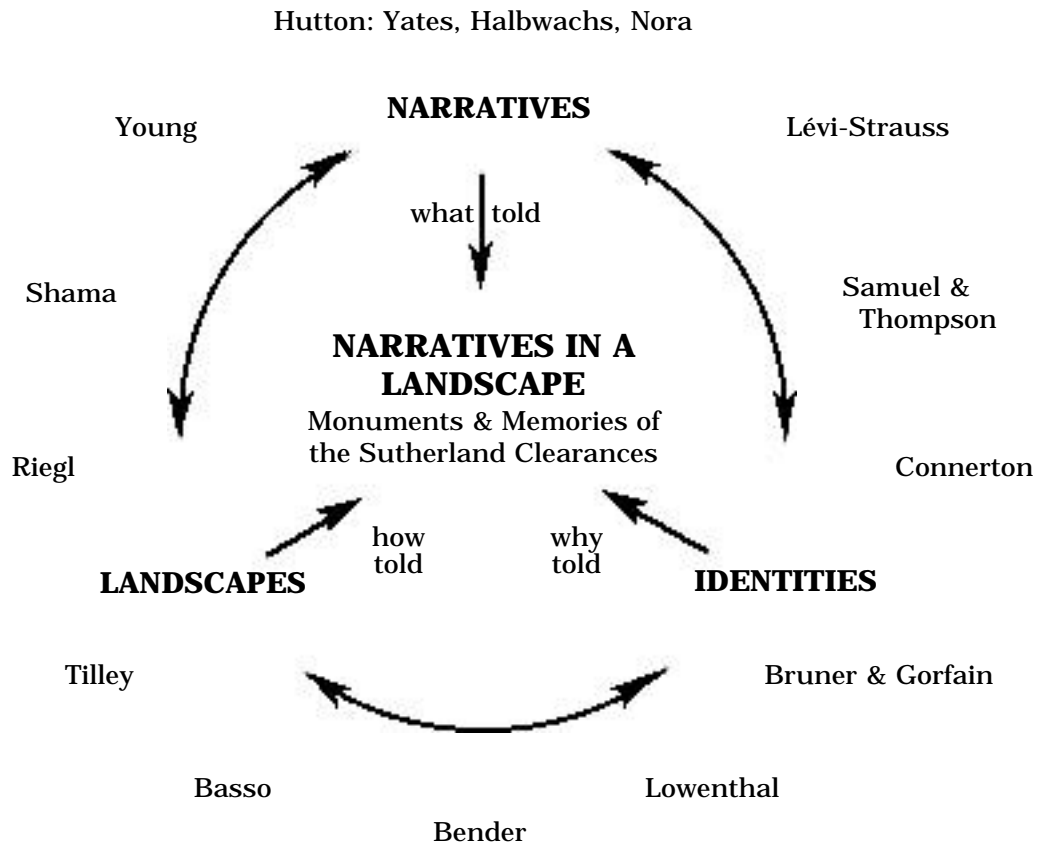
The tendency persists in which the remarkable is seen only in the exotic—in the aboriginal landscapes of Australia, Melanesia or America, perhaps, or among the standing stones and burials of prehistory. In this dissertation I attempt to employ the literature of such *exotica* in the analysis of a 'modern' landscape, and one rather closer to home. After all, the anthropological paradox remains true, that it is through the investigation of 'the other' that we may come to re-examine the familiar and find it equally remarkable.

Rosaldo, for example, writes of his perplexity when confronted with the modes of Ilongot recollection, where a great density of meaning—spatial and temporal—seems to be compressed into incessantly repeated lists of place names. He describes how his informants are moved to tears as they recite “place name after place name,” while he, “in uncomprehending boredom,” can do nothing but transcribe them (Marcus & Fischer 1986: 99).

[Ilongot]...excursions into the past are meticulously mapped onto the landscape, not onto a calendar...This is a problem as basic as it is vexing in the translation of culture. Were I to use their multiple ways of speaking about places, I would capture the tone of their texts but lose their historical sense (Rosaldo quoted in Marcus & Fischer 1986: 99).

And yet such a mode of story-telling is not without analogy in the West, perhaps not anywhere. For instance, in listing the names *Somme, Mons, Marne, Arras, Passchendale*, etc. we recall not merely places, nor even moments in history; we evoke an array of *images* of mud, trenches and barbed wire that are saturated with both blood and emotion; they are sedimented in our national psyche and reverberate in individual family histories. The names resonate through the history books of the twentieth century, through the poetry of Owen, the sculptures of Jagger, through the silences of November 11 (see Fussell 1975; Dyer 1994). *To those who know*, the names *Kildonan* and *Strathnaver, Grummore, Grumbeg, Achadh an Eas* and *Rosal* are equally redolent.

The dissertation is structured around three broad themes: NARRATIVES, LANDSCAPES and IDENTITIES. These correspond approximately to three questions one could ask of landscape narratives: *what is told? how is it told? and why is it told?* Represented diagrammatically (a combination of Leenhardt’s model of the Melanesian individual, “located by means of his [sic] relationships” (1949: 154), and a notion of a bi-directional hermeneutic circle) two kinds of movement can be discerned: (1) circular, representing the dialogic process of interpretation; and (2) centripetal, acting to define more precisely the matter under scrutiny.



The diagram also serves to situate the dissertation in terms of anthropological and historical discourse. Tilley's *A Phenomenology of Landscape* remains a key text, particularly his section on 'landscape and the arts of narrative':

...when a story becomes sedimented into the landscape, the story and the place dialectically help to construct and reproduce each other. Places help to recall stories that are associated with them, and places exist (as named locales) by virtue of their employment in a narrative. Places, like persons, have biographies inasmuch as they are formed, used and transformed in relation to practice. It can be argued that stories acquire part of their mythic value and historical relevance if they are rooted in the concrete details of locales in the landscape, acquiring material reference points that can be visited, seen and touched (1994: 33).

Much of what follows is an attempt to elaborate these assertions within the specific context of the Sutherland Clearances.

A short period of fieldwork was carried out in the course of researching this dissertation during which I was able to visit and photograph sites implicated in the 'Clearance story' in Sutherland and Caithness and where I had the opportunity

to talk with a number of local people about their personal experiences of such places and about their knowledge of the evictions in general. To sample attitudes from a more diverse group of people who nevertheless share a common heritage, a questionnaire was distributed at the 1997 international gathering of the Clan Gunn Society, a copy of which is included in Appendix A. Respectful of their privacy I have not included the names of any interviewees or informants. The remainder of the research was library-based or else carried out through correspondence. A summary of the dissertation was presented at a seminar in Inverness as part of the Highland Council's 'Archaeology Week' in August 1997.

A dilemma central to my research has been whether to survey a broad range of sites and stories connected with the Clearances in Sutherland, or else produce a much more detailed analysis of just one or two examples. Since it is not only the depth but also the variety of landscape narratives that fascinates, I have attempted to tread a middle path. If such a strategy makes the dissertation somewhat introductory in nature, it is hoped that it also suggests an agenda for further research (see Appendix D).

IMAGES & TEXTS

Barthes writes that the photograph is not "an isolated structure" but that "it is in communication with at least one other structure," namely the "text" that accompanies it: a title, caption or essay for instance. The totality of information conveyed is borne from a dialogue between image and text (1993: 195). Throughout the dissertation I develop this notion and, drawing particularly from the work of Berger (1972; 1982) and Burgin (1982; 1986), experiment with different image-text combinations to explore other "ways of telling". I employ a convention where images and texts on the left hand pages are intended to engage in a dialogue with the flow of text on the right hand pages.

Discussing the potential of such "photowork" in archaeology, Michael Shanks encourages the use of montage—"the cutting and reassembling of fragments of meanings, images, things, quotations, and borrowings"—as a way of accessing new insights, understanding and meaning (1997: 84). Where they are available, we might equally extend the range of our anthropological sources, as Jedrej and

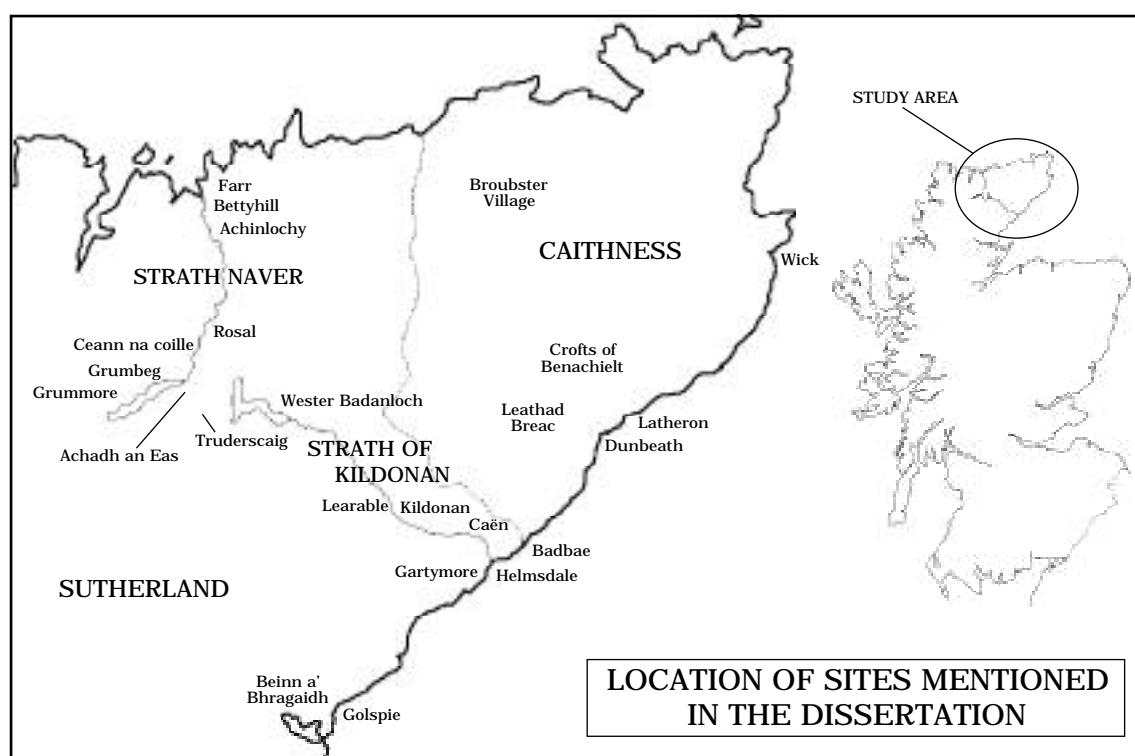
Nuttall do in their study of rural repopulation in Scotland, to include “Novels, poetry, official documents, books, newspapers, biographies, magazine articles, pamphlets, histories, programmes, advertisements, brochures, guides, academic dissertations, surveys, manifestos,” etc. (1996: 5). I have not discounted any of these avenues of investigation.

Like Shanks’ Dunstanburgh Castle, the Scottish Highland landscape “reeks of the picturesque” (1992: 148). Such an impression is made familiar through its ubiquitous representation in tourist brochures, posters and commercials and in countless ‘coffee-table’ books (Gold & Gold 1995); I attempt here to present an alternative—though, it is important to add, no less ‘conventional’—aesthetic.

References are not always given alongside their corresponding images or texts; where they are not, they are listed in full in Appendix B.

SPELLING OF PLACE NAMES

For the sake of consistency, when referring to places in the text, I have used the spellings that appear on the latest edition of the Ordnance Survey map. A gazetteer of places mentioned in the dissertation is included in Appendix C, this gives alternative spellings where used in quotation and National Grid References of the sites.



PART ONE: NARRATIVES

HISTORY-MYTH-MEMORY

VIVID SIMPLICITIES

“Occasionally, a story becomes so prominent in the consciousness of an entire society,” write Bruner and Gorfain, “that its recurrent tellings...help to constitute and reshape [that] society” (1988: 56). The Highland Clearances may be regarded as one such story.

Betrayal!

In the terrible aftermath of Culloden, the Highlanders suffered at the hands of their own clan chiefs...

Following his magnificent reconstruction of the moorland battle in *Culloden*, John Prebble recounts how the Highlanders were deserted and then betrayed into famine and poverty. While their chiefs grew rich on meat and wool, the people died of cholera and starvation or, evicted from the glens to make way for sheep, were forced to emigrate to foreign lands.

‘Mr Prebble tells a terrible story excellently. There is little need to search further to explain so much of the sadness and emptiness of the northern Highlands today’ - *The Times*
(Prebble 1969: back cover)

Despite the depth of academic research on the subject by historians, geographers and, more recently, archaeologists, the popular conception of the Clearances is one in which the power of the sensational image triumphs over the complexity of available data. “Vivid simplicities,” William Gass calls them, which are “impressed on the imagination like a decal...reimagined...re-seen” (1982: 131). Clearance ‘history’ is full of such images: the bullies setting fire to the thatch, the weeping of the exiles as they wend their ways from their ancestral lands, the scene at the coast as they gaze at the “white sailed ships” and the promise of a new start.

But where do such images come from? Contrary to a popular claim (e.g. Craig 1990) I have found little evidence for the survival of a ‘folk memory’ of the

Clearances save in the most vestigial of forms. Such a memory seems to have been replaced—its intricacies and particularities erased—by a genre of popular history-telling. Where old oral traditions have disappeared, Bangor-Jones observes, “the accounts of historians such as John Prebble have become the new oral tradition” (1993: 40). Prebble’s is still the most widely-available and most widely-read of the popular histories of the Clearances. It is his version—replete with its ‘vivid simplicities’—that has come to be the dominant account, surpassing previous ‘top down’ histories not with the rigour of its analysis, but with the dramatic nature of its prose. It is a process sometimes referred to as the ‘Prebble-isation’ of the Clearances.

This usurpation of a ‘genuine’ memory by one derived from published accounts and documentary sources is borne out in my own research where I have generally found that those who know with certainty that their ancestors were evicted (and who often know from where and in which year) tend also to be avid readers of Clearance histories and have often carried out considerable archival investigation. The following, for example, is an excerpt from a conversation between two croft-holders I recorded. They are responding to a question about local knowledge of the Clearances:

“They don’t know much. They don’t know much... Old A— C— who died, he was very interested in it and he had a sharp mind and his granny had been evicted. But apart from that very few people... R— B—...”

“Yes, we lost them, yes...”

“These people are dead... but their writings will live after them...”

“They didn’t write...”

“Oh, R— B— had lots and lots of stuff.”

“And where is that stuff?”

“I don’t know where it is.”

...

“Mr Basu was asking about the remaining resentment about the Clearances.”

“Yes.”

“They shout about it but then when...”

“Yes, but you don’t know the history...”

“No... no...”

“I know the hi...”

“If Lord Strathnaver comes around they touch their forelocks.”

“I’ve read a lot about it... and I’ve got that much... but I didn’t get much tradition passed on to me by word of mouth, do you follow? Maybe a little, a wee bit from A— C—. But most of the stuff was book-learning in my case, you see.”

A retired school-teacher from Helmsdale told me that it was thanks to historians such as John Prebble and Ian Grimble that the Clearances are not now forgotten. Her comments are particularly insightful since she later taught at the same school she had attended as a child.

“...the interest in the Clearances would have gone had it not been for John Prebble and his works. In Helmsdale School we were taught by a man from the west of Sutherland who was a red hot socialist and whose people had been cleared, and there was no mention of clearances in our history... Never heard of them in Helmsdale School. And actually I only began to take an interest in the Clearances when Ian Grimble brought out his book, *The Trial of Patrick Sellar* [1962], and it was then I went deeper and learnt more about them.”

I asked whether she had introduced the Clearances into the curriculum.

“The Clearances became very popular as history. You know the books, the *Then and There* series, there was one brought out specifically for the Clearances, and because Helmsdale was mentioned then the children were delighted, you know, that their own area was in focus... Yes, I flogged the Clearances. I certainly saturated them in Clearance history.”

When asked how she approached the subject, she admitted that she took the “wicked landlord line” with its “fire and violence” and Sellar’s infamous utterance, “*Damn the old witch, let her burn, she’s lived long enough!*”

“Oh yes, they loved that! But in a way you wonder if it’s a good thing to have done that: to breed antagonism. But how else is it remembered if there’s not something dramatic incorporated?”

Nora mourns a period of lost innocence when “true” memories concerning the “habits, customs, and folk wisdom” of a people were passed unreflectingly from generation to generation (Hutton 1993: 149). In encoding such traditions in documentary form historians materialise memory, and their documents begin to shape the way the past is remembered rather than vice versa:

One does not discover objective knowledge in data. Rather data cue particular reminiscences (150).

In exceptional circumstances where a ‘genuine’ folk memory does survive, it is often merely a fragment of a personal story or a place name woven into or provoked by the familiar narrative of published histories.

It is interesting to note in this context that a much more extensive oral

tradition survives for the period of the later land agitations and subsequent 'heyday' of the crofting community for which there is a relative dearth of historical research. Older members of such communities can often still recall the minutiae of local land transactions and list the occupants of long-abandoned croft houses. The survival of a folk memory therefore seems to vary in inverse proportion to the ingression of academic research and publication.

THE MYTH OF THE CLEARANCES

Lévi-Strauss's discussion of the structure of myth (1993: 206-231; 1966: 245-269; Leach 1996: 67-99; Tilley 1990: 35-48) may also shed some light on the process of homogenisation through which variant accounts of the Clearance experience become subsumed into a dominant narrative. Lévi-Strauss argues that history serves a similar purpose in the modern West as myth in 'traditional' societies. History, like myth, is a synthesising—and simplifying—narrative, it is a story told in which "information" and "comprehension" compete for precedence (1966: 261).

"Truly total history" amounts to incomprehensible chaos, for "where did anything take place," asks Lévi-Strauss (1966: 257), but in the mutable perceptions of a multitude of individuals? Historical narrative comes to dominate this confusion of contradictory experience, structuring it according to the logic of the mind. For Lévi-Strauss, this structure is comprised of strings of binary oppositions or *before* and *after* propositions. Such propositions (mythemes), whilst apparently diverse, are found to be remarkably consistent and can be assembled into a metanarrative or "prototype myth" which incorporates all alternative tellings. In myth, no telling is considered to be the "original" or more authentic one,

There is no single "true" version of which all the others are but copies or distortions. Every version belongs to the myth (1993: 218).

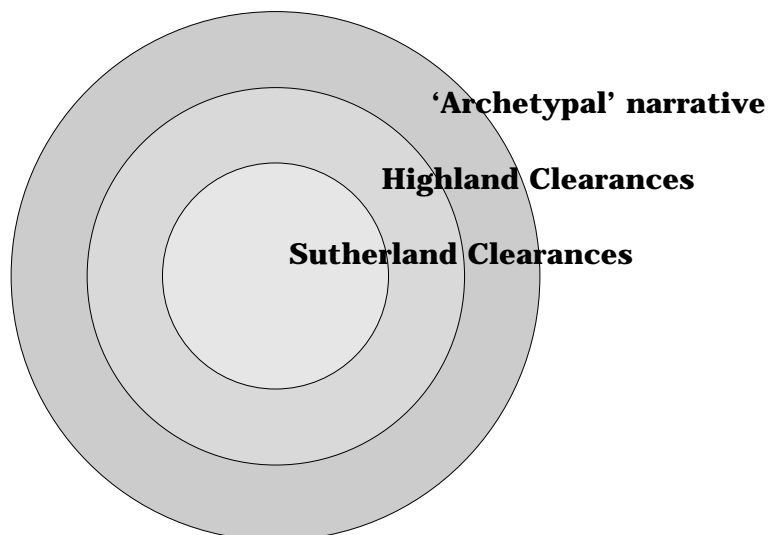
It is important to note, therefore, that, as variants of the Clearance metanarrative, the academic's and the popular historian's accounts are given equal validity, as indeed are all tellings, whether oral, documentary or material. Because they share this common structure, history, myth and memory are no longer to be seen as separate, competing versions of the past—history as the objective account, myth as a dubious fable, and memory its fallible recollection—but as interactive elements, inextricably bound to each other and to the narrative itself. "All recollections," Samuel and Thompson write,

are told from a standpoint in the present. In telling, they need to make sense of the past. That demands a selecting, ordering, and simplifying, a construction of coherent

narrative whose logic works to draw the life story towards the fable (1990: 8).

This emplotment of fragmentary experience into a 'sensible' whole relies on conscious and unconscious acts of displacement, omission and reinterpretation (5), but the process can be so subtle that, as Lowenthal warns, the coherence of the narrative can be misread as an attribute of the past itself (1995: 219).

Lévi-Strauss finds an "astounding similarity" between the myths he collected in "widely different regions" (1993: 208); indeed, in his voluminous *Mythologiques*, he assembles over 800 myths from throughout the Americas into a single 'myth system'. There is a similar tendency to situate the *metanarrative* of the Sutherland Clearances within the *meta-meta-narrative* of the Highland Clearances within the *meta-meta-meta-narrative*—the archetypal narrative?—of all eviction, emigration and exile.



Pursuing Lévi-Strauss's structuralist logic a little further, the following are examples of constituent "mythemes" of such narratives: binary oppositions conceived as a positive past and a negative future pivoting on the date of eviction and expressed as profound loss:

loss of home and homeland
loss of distinct language and culture
passing of 'golden age'
severing of hitherto unbreached continuity with ancestors
loss of control of own destiny

or as the contrast between evicted and evictor:

“Ancient respectable tenants” - “Strangers with capital”*
insider - outsider
moral - immoral
‘cultured’ - ‘uncultured’
traditional - modern
subsistence economy - capitalist economy

* (Macleod 1996: 52)

These propositions may be exemplified in each ‘layer’ of the eviction narrative, and, indeed, every story of the Clearances is, in some way, a particular expression of such general themes.

‘MEMORY-BOOKS’

This is certainly true of the content of what may be called the ‘memory books’ of the Highland Clearances: the ‘evidence’ compiled for the ‘Napier Commission’ of 1884. This Parliamentary commission into the “Condition of the Crofters and Cottars of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland” gave a unique opportunity for “ordinary people to speak directly into the historical record,” it “provides the authentic voice of the Highlands, silent for most of the decades of the clearances” (Richards 1985: 85-6). Gibson described to me how, in the 1880’s, the activities of the Commission created a “climate of remembrance” in the Highlands which tended to fix in people’s minds what had happened to them (pers. comm.). Richards describes it as a period of “collective nostalgia,” witnessing a revival of the memory of the Clearances when they had all but become “a thing of the past” (1985: 76).

As Richards notes, from an historian’s point of view (at least one trying to assemble an ‘objective’ account), there are many problems in the interpretation of such data: the witnesses, for example, “almost always recounted events several decades in the past” (86). The question regarding the reliability of these testimonies has provoked its own controversies (Mitchison 1981: 14-15; Grimble 1983: 46-7), but this is largely irrelevant when one is concerned with the subjective perception of the events recalled. Williams has written in the context of the English enclosures that the “structure of feeling” expressed in such folk testimonials “is not primarily a matter of historical explanation and analysis” but is, rather, symptomatic of even more significant social phenomena (1993: 35). And as Anderson (1983) has amply demonstrated, such ‘imagined’ entities are nevertheless *realities*, often having unequivocally *real* consequences. This is a point I believe Withers fails to make when he begins a recent article on the memorialisation of the Clearances,

“This paper is not concerned with the reality of past events in time and space but with the memory of them” (1996: 325). It is the memory of past events that creates their reality.

I include two well-known ‘constitutive stories’ of the Sutherland Clearance ‘myth’, one of which exemplifies the passing of a golden age mytheme, the other, the relative morality of evictor and evicted.

(1) Professor Donald Mackinnon taking evidence for the Napier Commission from eighty-year-old crofter Angus Mackay, Farr Church, 1883. (It is not known whether Mackinnon spoke to Mackay in Gaelic and then translated the conversation into English for the record or whether a translator was present.)

‘Where were you brought up yourself?’

‘In Strathnaver.’

‘When did you leave Strathnaver?’

‘I left when young and came to Strathy Point when the sheep commenced.’

‘Do you remember the time?’

‘Yes, I was very nearly drowned that day.’

‘Is that what makes you remember it?’

‘Yes. I will remember it as long as I live. I got a terrible fright.’

...

‘Were you old enough to remember the circumstances of the people at the time?’

‘It would be a very hard heart but would mourn to see the circumstances of the people that day. He would be a very cruel man who would not mourn for the people.’

‘What condition were they in before they left?’

‘If you were going up the strath now you would see on both sides of it the places where the towns were—you would see a mile or half a mile between every town; there were four or five families in each of these towns, and bonnie haughs between the towns, and hill pastures for miles, as far as they could wish to go. The people had plenty of flocks of goats, sheep, horses, and cattle, and they were living happy.’

‘Do you remember yourself quite well that these people were comfortably off at the time?’

‘Remarkably comfortable—that is what they were—with flesh and fish and butter and cheese and fowl and potatoes, and kail and milk, too. There was no want of anything with them; and they had the Gospel preached to them at both ends of the strath. I remember of Mr. McGillivray being there as a preacher. But what I have seen since then! There was a beggar like myself, a woman living in

Strathnaver, and she went round the shepherds; and when she came back there was one Gordon in this low country asked her, had she news from Strathnaver. "I shall tell you my news from Strathnaver." "What is it?" "The wood has been taken off the crofters' houses and it was sent to Alltnaharra for a house of revelry and drunkenness. The manse which the godly ministers of old occupied is now occupied by a fox hunter, and his study is the dog kennel. The house which yourself had, and the great big stone at which you were wont to pray, the crow now builds its nest upon the top of it" (quoted in Grimble 1993: 119-20).

This recollection of a golden age of plenty prior to the Clearances stands in stark contrast to an alternative account of Sutherland at about the same time:

Every family has a small farm which they are too poor to stock with sheep or cattle, and in a bad year, as the last, when all the Oats were spoilt with the rain, they were reduced to absolute starvation. I have seen misery in Wales, but till I came into the Country, I had no idea of human or indeed any other Creature existing in such habitations as I have seen, and their food, if possible, still worse (Grenville quoted in Richards 1982: 95).

Note also Mackay's portrayal of the blaspheming incomers with their sheep and sheepdogs, employing an imagery familiar to students of the literature of the agrarian disruptions of Tudor England:

*The townes goe downe, the land decayes
Of cornefeldes playne leyes,
Gret men makithe now a dayes
A shepecote in the Church.*

(The ballad of *Nowadays* quoted in Beresford 1983: 65)

...in my time there was not a House left inhabited of this whole lordship (except some part of the Hall) but a Shepherd only kept ale to sell in the Church.

(Description of Thorpe, Leics cleared in 1491, quoted in Beresford 1983: 92)

(2) Donald Macleod's 'eye-witness' account of Patrick Sellar's burning of William Chisholm's house at Badinloskin in 1814. Macleod's account was first published in a letter to the *Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle* in 1840. It was later re-printed in his *Gloomy Memories in the Highlands of Scotland*.

I was present at the pulling down and burning of the house of William Chisholm, Badinloskin, in which was lying his wife's mother, an old bed-ridden woman of near 100 years of age, none of the family being present. I informed the persons about to set fire to the house of this circumstance, and prevailed on them to wait

till Mr. Sellar came. On his arrival I told him of the poor old woman being in a condition unfit for removal. He replied, "Damn her, the old witch, she has lived too long; let her burn." Fire was immediately set to the house, and the blankets in which she was carried were in flames before she could be got out. She was placed in a little shed, and it was with great difficulty they were prevented from firing it also. The old woman's daughter arrived while the house was on fire, and assisted the neighbours in removing her mother out of the flames and smoke, presenting a picture of horror which I shall never forget, but cannot attempt to describe. She died within five days (Macleod 1996: 42-3).

Sellar was later tried, and acquitted, for culpable homicide. He is perhaps the most notorious character of the whole Clearance story. Indeed the folk memory of Sellar is probably the strongest surviving element of Clearance oral tradition. More than one of my informants remembered hearing his name being used as a curse in their childhood:

"there'd be some individual saying, 'oh he's a real Patrick Sellar, he cleared his father out of a croft or something...' You know, as a term of contempt."

In *The Trial of Patrick Sellar*, Grimble quotes a poem by Domhnall Baillidh which he believes to have been written soon after Sellar's acquittal. It surfaced in an 1889 collection of Gaelic poetry in Prince Edward Island, Canada. It laments that Sellar was not sentenced to a long imprisonment on bread and water, elaborates on severer punishments which would be appropriate, and forecasts that when he dies he will not receive decent burial but be flung on a dung-heap (1993: 161). Hamish Henderson has produced a Scots translation of another nineteenth century song which captures some of the force of the original Gaelic:

*Sellar, daith has ye in his grip;
Ye needa think he'll let ye slip.
Justice ye've earned, and, by the Book,
A warm assize ye winna jouk.
The fires ye lit tae gut Strathnaver
Ye'll feel them noo—and roast forever.*
(quoted in MacInnes 1964: 106)

I have already mentioned Sellar's "*Damn her, the old witch...*"; it is significant that this phrase is prominently included in a tape recording accompanying the 'wax-work' representation of the Clearances at the 'Timespan Visitor Centre' in Helmsdale, one Sutherland's more popular 'built' tourist attractions and self-proclaimed "Storehouse of Highland History" (advertising leaflet).

Donald Macleod is himself something of a folk hero: a memorial was erected in his honour in 1981, it stands on the banks of the Naver opposite the deserted village of Rosal where he was born. A “natural crusading journalist,” Macleod was devoted to “expostulating, remonstrating with, and exposing the desolators of [his] country” (Strathnaver Museum factsheet). He has appeared as a character in two of the best-known novels written about the Clearances, in Iain Crichton Smith’s *Consider the Lillies* (1968) with his own name, and in Neil Gunn’s *Butcher’s Broom* (1934) as the character Hector Sutherland.

An excerpt from Gunn’s ‘fictionalisation’ of Macleod’s account provides a fascinating demonstration of the re-working of the myth. Note how the 1840’s “witch” has become a 1930’s “bitch.” Chisholm is represented as Seumas og Sellar as Mr Heller:

There was no appearance of Seumas og anywhere. The roof was being demolished and a man with a torch was about to set fire to it.

Hector went up to him. ‘There’s an old bed-ridden woman in there,’ he said inoffensively.

‘Who told you?’ asked the man, with a jeering threat.

‘I’m telling you,’ said Hector quietly. ‘I’ll take her out.’

‘Who the hell are you?’ he shouted, and a man came up whom Hector believed to be Mr Heller, though he had never actually seen him in the flesh before.

‘What do you want?’ demanded this man in English.

Hector had no English and replied in Gaelic.

‘He’s saying there’s an old bed-ridden hag inside,’ explained the man with the torch.

‘Oh, is he?’ A venomous intensity gathered in the factor’s expression. Hector was not an evasive specimen of the native; on the contrary, his large frame and clear-cut features gathered a certain aristocratic antagonism. ‘Get out of here,’ said Mr Heller; ‘you lazy devil, clear out!’

Hector gave a pace or two before this explosive violence.

‘What about the old woman?’ cried the man with the torch, his eyes gleaming.

‘Damn her, the old bitch, she’s lived long enough. Let her burn!’ cried Mr Heller.

The men, half-mad with drink and the growing lust of destruction, gave a laugh. No half-way measure with their factor! Burn the bitch!

...

Factor Heller was a wise man. This work had to be done: it would, by God, be done thoroughly! That Gael should curse Gael, that this breed should destroy itself, was necessary for the new order of Progress. Clear them out! Rid the land of such human vermin! For himself and his schemes, he had imported, and would

continue to import, thank God, real human beings from the south! (Gunn 1991: 357-59).

The deconstruction of any such story would make a fascinating study in itself. In the present context, however, it is interesting to note how Gunn incorporates the rhetoric of 1930's Fascism in his representation of the past. Indeed, nearly 100 years earlier, Macleod himself had been vociferous on this racist theme: "If the original inhabitants could have been got rid of totally, and their language and memory eradicated, the oppressors were not disposed to be scrupulous about the means" (1996: 58). It is not surprising that such a rhetoric continues into the present day to further political ends. For example, ex-SNP Councillor Sandy Lindsay has referred to the 1st Duke of Sutherland as,

perhaps one of the most evil men there ever was. Like Stalin and Hitler, he destroyed people's homes without cause (quoted in Gibson 1996b: 14).

Others too have referred to a Gaelic or Highland Holocaust (see Gibson 1996b: 6, 12, 39), have likened the evictions to "the shipping-off of the Polish and other Jews in cattle trucks" (Craig 1990: 72), and have accused their perpetrators of committing genocide (Ewing quoted in Gibson 1996b: 41).

Such hyperbole hides a more profound kinship of the Highland experience with that of the Jewish and other diasporas, in fact with all people who for one reason or another sense the loss of a homeland. It is a "bitter inheritance" Hunter writes, "a sense of belonging to a wronged people" (1995: 25-6). Within this assertion is an implicit demand that the crimes of the past should not be forgotten, that a moral debt exists that remains unpaid. Gibson describes "a legacy of deep injustice which remains unresolved to this day (1996b: 3), "a deep wrong as yet unrighted" (Preface). Discussing the mentality of 'monumentality', Gass suggests that "it is sometimes vitally necessary to focus the thoughts of a group upon some past person or event, to get people *to remember together*, perhaps because we have a new and common enterprise in mind which demands we act together [Scottish devolution, for example], but often simply because the unity of the group is thereby affirmed" (1982: 130). For any 'dispersed nation', the sense of a shared past is, of course, doubly important.

PLACES OF MEMORY

So far I have been concerned with outlining some of the characteristics of the Sutherland Clearance narrative. It is not a isolated entity, exclusive to one region only, but is related to the wider narrative of the Highland Clearances, and beyond that to all narratives of eviction, emigration and exile. The notion of an

objective history of the events in Sutherland in the early decades of the nineteenth century is illusory, the remembered and documented past is intrinsically plural being borne out of individual subjectivity, and being constantly re-written in the light of every emerging present. This plural past is, however, defiantly consistent; this can be accounted for by a cognitive tendency to resolve contradictions through the construction of logical narratives into which we fit our disparate individual experiences. For this reason 'history' may be more accurately described as 'myth'. Although certain accounts dominate, there is no single 'authentic' version of a myth and every new telling merely adds another layer of meaning onto an already infinitely complex matrix.

As with other cultural groups whose 'foundational myths' may be said to revolve around the perceived injustices of the past, there is a resistance to forgetting. This gives rise to a culture of remembrance. Such an abstract state becomes tangible in practice: in the (inter)actions of individuals and groups, perhaps violently so. For example one informant told me how he had been involved in an arson attack on a lodge owned by a prominent public figure. Though he was heavily fined and nearly jailed, he admitted that he did not regret his actions, and saw it as "getting even" with the likes of those who had burnt his ancestors from their homes in Kildonan (although the Clearances were never mentioned in his family he is certain they were evicted in this violent manner). He has since conducted extensive genealogical research and has drawn up an elaborate family tree to give to his children. He told me that not a day passes without some mention of the Clearances, and believes that the preoccupation with the past in Sutherland will only end when Scotland achieves independence.

As we have seen, myths—memories, histories—are transmitted in numerous ways: in the telling of personal stories, for instance, which Samuel and Thompson describe as the "currency" of social relationships (1990: 15), or else through reading the 'memory-books', whether histories, archival records, eye-witness accounts, novels or poetry. Discussing Nora, Hutton suggests that,

The document was the quintessential form through which the modern historian remembered the past. But postmodern historians such as Nora place the document among the countless artifacts in which memory has been materialized. They shift the emphasis from documents themselves to the architectural places of memory in which they and other memorabilia are contained—in archives, museums, commemorative monuments (1993: 151).

Thus we may say that the 'memory' of the Clearances is also encountered in the jacket design of Prebble's book, in the taped 'recollections' of my informants, in

the postcards and wax-work dummies of a 'visitor centre', in the RCAHMS library, and in the many interactions of a school visit.

In his study of the memorialisation of the Jewish Holocaust, Young takes Nora's assertion a step further, he writes that

The sites of memory are many and diverse, deliberate and accidental. They range from archives to museums, parades to moments of silence, memorial gardens to resistance monuments, ruins to commemorative feast days, national malls to a family's Jahrzeit candle (1993: viii).

Even Young's book may be regarded "as an extension of these spaces, part of the memory-work that animates them" (ibid.). All serve as mnemonic devices, keeping the knowledge of the Holocaust from obscurity. But more than this they also bring their different formal qualities to that recollection, generating different "textures" of remembrance, so that "every 'memorial text' generates a different meaning in memory" (ibid.).

In the next section I focus attention on those 'memorial texts' manifest in the landscape itself.

PART TWO: LANDSCAPES

A JOURNEY AMONG MONUMENTS

From the Gleann Mor to Beinn a' Bhraigaidh the bare hills tell their own story of unfinished business (Gibson 1996a: 2).

Whereas one tends to accept and enjoy the wide empty expanses of the Scottish Highlands unquestioningly—one forgets that this landscape is, as Frank Fraser Darling dubbed it, “a man-made wilderness” (quoted in Gibson 1996a: 2)—the ubiquitous presence of ruined croft houses and cairn-like remains of old settlement clusters demands an explanation. Such a demand cannot be ignored and therefore has a consciousness-raising effect. For Rob Gibson, SNP-Councillor and polemicist of Highland heritage issues, the landscape was instrumental in provoking his interest in the Clearances:

“It’s not something that has come down as a folk memory to me. I have an interest as a historian of the Highlands. I mean, fundamentally, having walked the hills as a youngster and throughout my life, at various times I started to ask the questions about why there was so many empty houses when you’re walking out through glens. Why did this come about?” (Gibson pers. comm.).

The question can be satisfied by ‘placing’ the ruins within a narrative: that of the Clearances. It is a process of emplotment. The ruins *make sense* in terms of stories told elsewhere: in history books, school visits, heritage centres, in a myriad other ‘places of memory’. The place and its memory have a dialectical relationship, each creating the other. The ruin is a metaphor for the Clearances: the whole of the Clearance story is written in every ruin.

A SENSE OF PLACE

Places do much more than merely arouse curiosity. “The deserted place ‘remembers’ and grows lonely,” writes Kathleen Stewart (1996: 156). It is as if the landscape itself ‘holds’ the memory of its past and tells its own story separate from, and even indifferent to, the subject who perceives it. It is a phenomenon Magritte alluded to when he said, “This is how we see the world...we see it as being outside ourselves even though it is only a representation of what we experience on the inside” (quoted in Shama 1995: 12). The thing signified becomes confused with its signifier, and we forget that it is within us that the memory-narrative dwells. “Once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents” (Shama 1995: 61).

We may experience a 'sense of place' as if it is emitted from or dwells in the place itself, an *animus loci*, but such a sense derives from ourselves, or rather from the juxtaposition of ourselves and that place together with the circumstances of the encounter. Place is what we invest in it and what it inspires in us.

As vibrantly felt as it is vividly imagined, sense of place asserts itself at varying levels of mental and emotional intensity. Whether lived in memory or experienced on the spot, the strength of its impact is commensurate with the richness of its contents, with the range and diversity of symbolic associations that swim within its reach and move on its course (Basso 1996: 85).

We do not encounter 'place' naïvely. If we sense it, it is because we consciously or unconsciously know it—or know something of it—already. "Knowledge of place is not...subsequent to perception...but is ingredient in perception itself" (Casey 1996: 18). The landscape is never inert, never a material *tabula rasa* awaiting inscription, but is always already embedded within webs of personal and cultural narratives, memories and associations.

The same informant who was responsible for the burning of the shooting lodge told me that he walks in the hills around Kildonan nearly every day. That he feels very much a part of them. He believes that the hills and old settlements are inhabited with spirits and he consequently never feels alone on his excursions. It is a feeling others share. Another informant, a crofter whose ancestors had also been evicted from the Strath of Kildonan, told me that he, too, often walks the hills, and that whenever entering the ruins of an old dwelling he says aloud, "*Biannachdan bithiach an seo*," one of the few Gaelic phrase he has known since childhood, a salutation which translates as "Blessed be here." Even if the walls of such dwellings are now no more than low mounds under the turf, he always enters through their doorways.

The Scots Magazine article quoted earlier attests to the fact that the sites of cleared or abandoned settlements in the Highlands may be regarded as places of pilgrimage. Indeed the heritage centres that dot the Highlands are frequently visited by 'tourist-pilgrims' from the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa who have come in search of the sites of their ancestors' homes. A couple from Arizona visited while I was at the Dunbeath Heritage Centre in Caithness. One of the Centre's researchers was able to take them to the very place where their ancestors had lived. It was an emotional and very gratifying experience for all, made especially profound when they located the settlement's old well, still full of crystal-clear water—a true source.

Young describes how place may become infused with significance:

By themselves, monuments are of little value, mere stones in the landscape. But as part of a nation's rites or the object of a people's national pilgrimage, they are invested with national soul and memory (1993: 2).

What is true of 'national' pilgrimages is also true of 'personal' pilgrimages. Indeed Berger has elaborated on the ontological import of such homelands and the significance of their loss—what it means to be exiled.

Originally home meant the center of the world—not in a geographical, but an ontological sense. Mircea Eliade has demonstrated how home was the place from which the world could be *founded*. A home was established, as he says, "at the heart of the real." In traditional societies, everything that made sense of the world was real; the surrounding chaos existed and was threatening, but it was threatening because it was *unreal*. Without a home at the center of the real, one was not only shelterless, but also lost in non-being, in unreality. Without a home everything was fragmentation (1984: 55-6).

The importance of knowing where one's 'roots' lie is deeply felt, especially by those who feel they have in some way become distant from them. It is a sentiment expressed in many of the responses to the questionnaire, for instance:

"I am deeply interested in my origins and roots. Without this interest I would consider myself an eternal refugee."

"Family history is a great help to orientate oneself in the world."

"I am the product of all my ancestors. Knowing about them helps me understand myself."

One Californian respondent summed up his feelings towards the Highland landscape in the following terms:

"I'm an American and proud to be one, but my roots are in Scotland and I'm very proud of that too. It is always highly emotional for me to visit Scotland, especially the Highlands, Caithness in particular. I have been moved to tears in Kildonan. Being in that part of the world makes me feel close to my ancestors and the country is like no other that I have visited."

Through their pilgrimages to perceived 'points of origin' such people—local crofters as much as American tourists—connect their personal narratives to cultural narratives. "The consequence," say Bruner and Gorfain,

is to align individual biography with tradition...Meaning is individualised; culture becomes autobiography (1988: 73).

“Place acts dialectically so as to create the people who are of that place” (Tilley 1994: 26). By venturing there physically and mentally, we become a part of that place-story, it becomes part of us.

A sense of place, of course, is not exclusive to those who have ancestral connections with the places concerned. Whilst my own experience of the landscapes of the Clearances is bound up in the stories I have read or have been told, it is also affected by my experience of other places, my own biography, the circumstances of my visit—the accessibility of the site and weather conditions for instance—and by my attempts to contextualise the experience within my research. For example, on a particularly wet and dismal afternoon I felt troubled as I moved around the remote and extensive remains of Achadh an Eas, cleared in 1821, where one of the key witnesses of the Sutherland evictions, Rev Donald Sage, lived and preached. Conscious that in the collusion of circumstances my imagination was getting the better of me I scribbled in my notebook as I walked:

- The effect of weather on the experience of place
- Achadh an Eas - a truly desolate spot
- Experience of place bound up in the snippets of stories one knows... Achadh an Eas - the remote place where Sage was sent as a missionary
- Birds like girls' screams & sheep as shouting/groaning men - muffled by the wind and rain
- The lonely eyes of a derelict cottage - one doesn't look into them lest they look back
- The imagination takes over - the desolate tree, the hanging man
- Writing these notes is comforting

Reflected in my encounter with Achadh an Eas is the knowledge I have gleaned from my research, but such knowledge is dominated by a fantasy borne from my sense of isolation and vulnerability (the eyes of the cottage, the hanging man!).

THE MONUMENTS OF CRUELTY

Mourn, hapless Caledonia, mourn...
Thy hospitable roofs no more
Invite the stranger to the door;
In smoky ruins sunk they lie,
The monuments of cruelty.
(Smollett, *The Tears of Scotland*)

A monument insists that its meaning is worthy of remembrance (Gass 1982: 133).

As Young demonstrates in *The Texture of Memory* (1993) different places of memory evoke different kinds of memory. Riegl explores a similar theme in his classic essay, “The Modern Cult of Monuments,” written in 1903 as preface to a legislative proposal for the protection of historic monuments within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Riegl develops a typology of monuments expressing a range of different values. In its original sense, Riegl suggests, a monument is a “human creation, erected for the specific purpose of keeping single human deeds or events (or a combination thereof) alive in the minds of future generations” (1982: 21). Such monuments may be described as being “intentional” and may be either figurative or inscriptive or both.

Riegl’s essay is, however, more concerned with “unintentional” monuments. Unintentional monuments, like their intentional counterparts, have commemorative value, but “it is not their original purpose and significance that turn these works into monuments, but rather our modern perception of them” (23). Because unintentional monuments are not constrained by any notion of original purpose, they form a much more fluid category. For instance, intentional monuments may become unintentional monuments because their original purpose may be lost, but an unintentional monument, according to Riegl, cannot become an intentional one. I question this latter point since an unintentional monument can be appropriated by a particular viewpoint and ‘constructed’—(re)made—in much the same way as an intentional monument. For the moment, however, I stick to Riegl’s definitions:

INTENTIONAL MONUMENTS: “The Wee Mannie...”

...most monuments lie (Gass 1982: 140).

Perhaps the most notorious intentional monument to be associated with the Clearance story, is the statue of the 1st Duke of Sutherland which stands on the summit of Beinn a’ Bhraigaidh overlooking Golspie, Sutherland. The statue fulfils Riegl’s definition in that it was erected at the suggestion of James Loch, the Sutherland Estate Manager, to preserve the memory of the Duke who died in 1833. The monument, completed in 1838, was financed by “public subscription,” the sum of £1,400 16s 8d being raised by a total of 2,229 subscribers. As Withers notes, it is a matter of “awful irony” (1996: 330), that many of those who made donations were the same tenants who were evicted in the Duke’s programme of ‘improvement’. It is widely held that such tenants felt compelled to contribute for fear of further eviction if they did not (Gibson 1996b: 3). One of my informants told me that he feels “a certain pride” in the fact that his ancestors’ names are

missing from the list of subscribers to the statue.

Although the statue has been the subject of many “demolition rumours” throughout its life (Gibson 1996a: 13), since 1994 a well-organised body of activists—the Book of Ben Bhraggie Steering Group—has led a serious campaign for its destruction. Publicity surrounding this bid to ‘topple the Duke’ has provoked much comment in the local and national press, reinvigorating the memory of the Clearances and demonstrating dramatically how the meaning of a monument may change over time. With the iconoclasm that accompanied the disintegration of the Soviet block still fresh in the public mind, Neal Ascherson wrote in the *Independent on Sunday* that he would “Blow up the Duke of Sutherland, but leave his limbs among the heather...”

I would blow him up, not just as a statement about the Clearances but as a gesture about ‘Heritage’, for the Duke’s removal is a reminder that Heritage, after all, is not just a dry schedule of monuments. It is a ceaseless rolling judgement by a people on its past (quoted in Gibson 1996b: 16).

Mumford asserts that the very idea of the monument is an archaism bound—in its intentional form at least—to an illusion of permanence and continuity. His scathing comments seem especially appropriate in the context of the Clearances:

They write their boasts upon tombstones; they incorporate their deeds in obelisks; they place their hopes of remembrance in solid stones joined to other solid stones, dedicated to their subjects or their heirs forever, forgetful of the fact that stones that are deserted by the living are even more helpless than life that remains unprotected and preserved by stones (quoted in Young 1993: 5).

Discussing Riegl, Forster observes that the intentional monument, “is exposed to a kind of historic double jeopardy: memory is all that sustains its meaning but its physical form will have to survive the vagaries of changing perceptions and values” (1982: 6-7). In other words we could say that a monument, by virtue of its enduring materiality, may outlive the intentions of its makers: the intentional monument to one memory becomes an unintentional monument to another. Thus, instead of commemorating the deeds of a philanthropic agricultural improver, the Duke of Sutherland statue on Beinn a’ Bhragaidh now symbolises, for many, the injustices and crimes of unchecked landlordism and all the evils associated with the Clearances.

Whether the statue should stay or go is another matter. One of my informants explained why she thought the statue should be left standing:

“I feel the Duke’s statue should be left because the Clearances will be forgotten all over again unless that irritation is left there on Ben Bhraggie. I don’t think it should be pulled down at all. It’s a continued memory of man’s inhumanity to man.”

It is wrong even to assume there is a consensus of opinion contra the original meaning of the statue. In Withers words, the issue demonstrates “the conflicting purposes in the present to which commemoration of the past may be put” (1996: 332). Local people, in particular, see the whole debate as an unwelcome invasion by outsiders—particularly publicity-seeking SNP members—on their local business. For many people of Golspie the statue is benign landmark fondly referred to as ‘The Wee Mannie on Ben Bhraggie’. Gibson—one of the protagonists of the Steering Group—quotes a letter from a “self-proclaimed ‘Sutherland-lad’”:

...we feel we are HOME when Ben Bhraggie comes into sight...forget Gibson and Lindsay and other outsiders or nationalists. These people are not interested in the people of Golspie, Sutherland or Scotland. They seek personal gain/power and position of themselves as all costs, any platform to gain media attention (1996b: 21).

The Chairman the Divisional Planning Committee of the Golspie Community Council stated that

The statue is one of our best tourist attractions and we would be extremely upset to see it removed. The committee agree unanimously that it should be left alone. Removing the statue will not change history. The Clearances were cruel and tragic, but Sutherland was not the only place where they occurred. We feel that the money which would be used to remove the statue could be put to better use (quoted in Gibson 1996b: 23).

Having been refused planning permission, it is unlikely that the statue will be removed. Such a conclusion was perhaps inevitable. But it could be said that the campaigners have succeeded in achieving at least one of their aims: that of renewing the controversy of the Clearances. “This planning application has roused dormant passions which see atonement for the Highland Clearances to be unfinished business,” writes Gibson (1996b: 52).

When I asked Gibson whether the matter was now closed, the answer was a clear ‘no’. They are now campaigning for a “proper interpretation” of the statue, and there are plans for a new monument and visitor centre in Helmsdale dedicated to the Clearances which “wouldn’t rival in size, but would rival in concept that glorification of freemarket landlordism” which is the ‘Wee Mannie on Ben Bhraggie’.

“It’s a highly political and emotive issue, and I think it’s something that has to be resolved in people’s psychology, not something that can possibly be allowed to continue. You know, to live in Golspie is to live a lie because most people do not accept the vast impact it’s had [i.e. the Clearances], or, if they do, they want to forget it, and that isn’t a way to actually resolve problems, because the East of Sutherland isn’t exactly booming, it’s not the most healthy of communities” (Gibson pers. comm.).

But not all are convinced even about the new monument. One informant told me that she wasn’t sure whether it was supposed to be a monument to the Clearances, or a monument to Dennis Macleod, a millionaire who is putting forward a considerable sum towards its construction. Though notions of a £1-million memorial have now been quashed in favour of a more modest project, the sentiment expressed in one of the local papers has much sympathy:

If erecting a massive stone and metal structure is the best way of spending £1-million... a memorial on a much smaller, and cheaper scale, by all means, but spend the rest of the money on projects which will help the people currently living in the Highlands, *where hundreds of ruined cottages are the most powerful memorial to the clearances of all* (quoted in Gibson 1996b: 26 emphasis added).

It is to these “ruined cottages” I now turn.

UNINTENTIONAL MONUMENTS: Ruins in a Landscape

It is clear that the Duke of Sutherland statue is both an intentional and an unintentional monument insofar as its makers’ objectives are not forgotten (they are preserved, for instance, in Loch’s *Mémoire*), but coexist in the memorial text with subsequent ‘interpretations’. Indeed it is doubtful whether any monument is purely intentional since alternative ‘readings’ are invariably present, even at the time of its construction; “how and what we remember in the company of a monument,” writes Young, “depends very much on who we are, why we care to remember, and how we see” (1993: xii).

The columnist of *The Scots Magazine* quoted earlier describes “the broken walls and piles of stones” of the deserted Clearance townships as monuments to the communities that were driven from them. Such places have typically lost their ‘use value’, thus a ruined croft house becomes more than the crumbling remains of an old habitation, it becomes a symbol. But just as the Duke of Sutherland statue defies neat classification, so too do those places to which Riegl gives the appellation ‘unintentional monuments’. I argue that, in practice, a tendency exists in which such places are given a ‘fixed’ commemorative meaning

in a manner analogous to the makers of intentional monuments. Because they do not appear to exist in their 'pure' forms, we might thus treat Riegl's categories of intentional and unintentional monuments as 'ideal types' (after Weber).

Riegl writes that an unintentional monument must retain "at least a recognisable trace of its original form" and that "a shapeless pile of rubble" therefore conveys nothing (1982: 33). I believe such a statement requires qualification for one person's "pile of rubble" is, of course, another's settlement cluster! This is an essential point when asking what role the ruins play in keeping the 'memory' of the Clearances alive and for whom. If ruins are not recognised as such then they can play no mnemonic role. Issues that must be addressed therefore concern 'expert' knowledges as well as oral traditions, the 'signposting' of ruins (on maps, for example) and interpretation offered either at the site or in heritage centres, museums, libraries, etc. Such issues affect the character of a memorial text and therefore the character of the memory such texts recall.

Ironically the most prominent ruins of the Clearance story are not of the homes from which the "ancient respectable tenants" were cleared, but of the houses they subsequently built in the reception areas. The ruins of such dwellings are most commonly found along the coasts of Sutherland—around Helmsdale and Bettyhill, for instance—where they form an integral part of the planned crofting landscape established after the Clearances. Macleod describes how, in 1832, tenants were forced to build, at their own expense, new houses "with stone and mortar, according to prescribed plan and specification" or else face "removal" (1996: 62). The thatched roofs of these 'improved' houses may have long since rotted, but the walls and chimney stacks often stand to a considerable height.

In Gartymore, for example, a few are still occupied—or have been reoccupied—but the vast majority are derelict, their occupants forced to leave through economic necessity. Gartymore was home to a number of activists of the land agitations of the 1880's. A commemorative cairn was erected in 1981 to mark the centenary of the formation of the Sutherland Association, a fore-runner of the Highland Land League who successfully campaigned for security of tenure for crofters, in effect putting to an end the absolute power of landowners over their tenants' fates. A poignancy arises out of the juxtaposition of this intentional monument and the unintentional monuments among which it is situated. The biblical text on the memorial's plaque reads, "They laid the foundations that we might build thereupon." One of the people involved in erecting the cairn told me that the text had been chosen for its irony: today the crofts of Gartymore are again reduced to little more than those foundations.

The construction and unveiling of ‘alternative’ intentional monuments to the Clearances such as that at Gartymore, or the Donald Macleod memorial already mentioned, provide examples of what Connerton calls “performative remembering” (1989). Undaunted by a torrential downpour, Gibson recalls how, at the unveiling of the Gartymore cairn, Ewen Robertson’s nineteenth century ballad, *Mo Mhollachd aig na caoraich mhor* (“My Curses on the Big Sheep”) was revived and sung in Gaelic with its bitter condemnation of the Duke of Sutherland (1996b: 11):

*Gu’m b’ann an Iutharn an robh an shail,
Gu’m b’fhearr leam Iudas lamh rium.*

Were I with you in Hell to meet,
I’d sooner stand wi’ Judas.

At the time of the evictions, many of the cleared families left Sutherland and went to Caithness in search of employment: the majority moved to the coasts or to towns such as Wick, but others settled inland. Morrison notes that the population of Latheron Parish, Caithness rose by some 67% between the years 1811 and 1821, and suggests this can be partly attributed to the Clearances (1996: 141). In the *New Statistical Account* of 1845, Davidson describes how “The old hovels are disappearing and neat substantial houses, having vents and chimney tops in one or both ends, are occupying their places” (quoted in Morrison 1996: 146). The ‘improved’ crofts the incomers built were, however, often only occupied for a short time—perhaps one or two generations—before the process of eviction was repeated and their new landlords followed the trend in turning their estates into sheepfarms. The Caithness Clearances were a much more piece-meal affair, however, and many crofts remained occupied until relatively recently: some, indeed, still are.

It is likely that the Crofts of Benachielt were built around this time. Although the family names of the residents of these crofts listed on the 1841 census—McKays, Sutherlands, Munros, McKenzies, Hendersons, Gunns, Campbells—were known in Caithness before the evictions (George Watson pers. comm.), it is likely that at least some of them had arrived from Sutherland during the Clearances. Nestled in a landscape of stone circles, brochs and legends, the crofts occupy a prominent position along the ‘Causeymire Road’ looking south-west towards Morven, the Scarabens and the ‘homelands’ of Sutherland beyond (see photograph on front cover).

The extensive ruins at Leathad Breac in Dunbeath Strath and the planned village square of Broubster near Loch Calder are other good examples of ‘improved’

settlements. While I was wandering around the ruins of Broubster Village, a man called to me in a Yorkshire accent, “You’re not moving the stones or anything are you...destroying history like?” The ruins lie in part of his croft’s common grazing land. This man had come to Caithness from Bradford to escape city life. The other (native) share-holders now lived in Australia. It is a familiar pattern in the region. He told me that he sometimes has trouble with local kids who push over the crumbling walls and take the stones. The last inhabitant of the village did not leave until 1952.

Such sites might lack the symbolic resonance of the Clearance townships themselves, but their often extensive and well-preserved remains make them some of the most visible monuments to the evictions. They are also poignant reminders of the continued economic depression of the region with its consequent depopulation: difficulties that some would trace to the Clearances and to the archaic property rights that made them possible. Examples of such places can be seen from the main through roads and therefore catch the attention of tourists who might be inclined to ask about them or look deeper into the local history of the area.

Unlike the highly visible ruins of the ‘improved’ crofts, the remains of the Clearance settlements are not so easy to spot. The most prominent feature is often the massive stone head- or ring-dyke which separated the agricultural land from the rough grazing. The buildings themselves are sometimes little more than long rectangles of stones and small boulders breaking through the turf. This is not necessarily the result of later stone robbing, but reflects the volatile nature of the other materials used in their construction as a contemporary description makes clear:

The walls are of mud (provincially feal), and the roof made watertight with divots, or, thin sods, supported by couples and side timber of birch or fir, made in the form of a semicircle, having a few holes on the top of the roof to let out the smoke from the fire upon a hearth in the middle of the building, surrounded by the tenant, his wife and children...In some cases the walls are built with a tier of stone betwixt each tier of feal, and in some the first three feet of the walls and gables are built with stone, and the remainder with feal or sods” (Henderson quoted in Morrison 1987: 18-20).

Fairhurst lists about sixty separate townships or *clachans* in Strathnaver prior to the Clearances, some housing only two or three families others in excess of fifteen (1969: 137). As far as I am aware only two of these settlements have ‘on site’ interpretations (Rosal and Achinloch) and, unlike the upstanding ruins of

the later crofts which may be said to 'speak for themselves', the vast majority of them are incomprehensible to those that do not have 'expert' or 'local' knowledges. There are various plans to make the Clearance landscapes more accessible. For instance the Highland Council have proposed a "Gloomy Memories" trail of Strathnaver using a combination of waterproof route cards, interpretive panels at the sites and 'in car' tape cassettes, "providing an audio guide to the strath, with local stories, voices and music" (Highland Council n.d.). It should be noted, however, that enthusiasm for this 'opening up' of the landscape for 'heritage tourism' is not unanimous, as was revealed in the public meetings organised as part of the Highland Interpretive Strategy Project. One comment arising out of a meeting in Bettyhill seems especially significant: "We do not like to think of our future as tied to [a] heritable past—as some kind of Walt Disney Experience" (MacLeod & Rudie 1997: 101).

An alternative initiative is the *Highland Clearances Trail* compiled by Rob Gibson, this is a gazetteer of 'Clearance sites' throughout the Highlands, including National Grid References and brief descriptions of places of interest such as Clearance villages, museums, (intentional) monuments and so on. I asked Gibson what kinds of people purchase the book?

"It's a self-starter thing. People have used it in schools to get references, the fact that we've got a good set of references is very useful. There's a factual book for school-children which uses it as the only non-fiction reference because it's a good cheap way for people to tap into that. And I think, obviously tourists and visitors from abroad...teachers, parents of kids doing little projects on the Clearances, you know all sorts of folk like that. A wide variety... Also you give some pithy comments I hope that stimulate people to go further."

Gibson lists sixteen places of interest in Sutherland and Caithness including the Strathnaver Museum in Farr, Dunrobin Castle, Patrick Sellar's House and the Clearance settlements of Rosal, Achadh an Eas, Grumbeg and Grummore.

THE HEIGHTS OF STRATHNAVER - A Memorial Complex

A journey among the deserted settlements in what is now the Naver Forest reveals a wide variety of memorial texts which are as telling about the changing attitudes towards such sites as they are about the events they have come to recollect as unintentional monuments. Though their names, the outlines of their buildings and their various enclosures and dykes are marked on Ordnance Survey maps, the sites of Grummore, Grumbeg and Achadh an Eas, for example, which feature prominently in the Sutherland Clearance story, are not signposted on the road. They must be sought out intentionally. And yet perhaps because

they are not explicitly signposted, and because they are simply there and not encumbered with interpretive plaques or memorial cairns, they seem to have a much greater presence.

Casey suggests that places “gather” both animate and inanimate entities: “experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts” (1996: 24). Having pored over maps and consumed every account of the events one can find, the researcher’s encounter with these most poignant ‘places of memory’ can be quite profound. They are fragments of narratives that are gathered in these places, *forgotten* details brought to mind as one wanders through the landscape. Because they are *not* interpreted such places are “open emblems” (Gass 1982: 138), spacious enough to accommodate *our own thoughts* as well as the images projected on them from histories and oral tradition.

We might construct an idea of place from the sparse, dispassionate entries in the archaeological record, but, as visitors to a site rather than archaeologists, we would do as well to leave our notes behind when we go there or else they threaten to distract us from the experience of place. Of Grumbeg I had read in the Highland Council’s archaeological site reports the following:

SITE NAME: Grumbeg

GENERIC TYPE: Depopulation + kilns

TEXT: The extensive remains of Grumbeg, a depopulated clachan which was cleared, first in 1814 and finally in 1819. In 1873 only a shepherd’s house was occupied. Roy [Military Map of 1747] shows only a patch of arable with no distinguishing buildings, but the existence of an ancient graveyard (HNC 63 NW 008) indicates an early origin for the settlement. The remains all enclosed within an earth and stone bank, consist of building foundations, banks and enclosures. The buildings range from about 40m by 4m to 5m by 3m with walls up to 0.7m high. Kilns were identified at NC 63312843 and in a small building foundation at NC 63543853.

SITE NAME: Grumbeg

GENERIC TYPE: Graveyard + Cross-slab + Cup-marks, boulder

TEXT: An ancient burial ground of the Aberach Mackays, no longer in use. Situated on a rock knoll and divided into two sections; the rectangular part to the South (according to Mr. Maclennan, Shepherd, Grumbeg, Strathnaver) is a private burial ground of the Mackays although it strongly resembles a ruined chapel or meeting house. Both parts of the burial ground are littered with slab-covered graves...

SITE NAME: St Martin's Well

GENERIC TYPE: Well, holy (alleged)

TEXT: St Martin is commemorated in Tobair Martain (Tobair Claish Mhartain) NEAR Grumbeg burial place, Farr. The shepherd at Grumbeg had no knowledge of St. Martin's Well. The well shown of the 6" map at NC 63323855 was not located.

SITE NAME: Grumbeg

GENERIC TYPE: Burial cairn, chambered

TEXT: Described by RCAHM as a 'small circle surrounded by a stony bank measuring about 3ft 6ins across'. The interior space now oval, measures 7 x 9ft, the long axis being N-S. There was a space for an entrance on the S side. In Horsburgh's MS [1870] is a sketch showing a thin capstone supported on at least 4 boulders with rounded, slightly tapering tops, about 2ft 6ins high. There are a number of smaller stones lying around their bases. The site could not be located when visited in 1958.

(Highland Council site codes: HNC 63 NW 007-010)

Much of this 'expert' knowledge is grounded on oral tradition and antiquarian investigation rather than substantial archaeological survey. But whether such intriguing features as St Martin's Well or the missing cairn exist or not, the effect of this body of data is to infuse every stone at Grumbeg with significance—and the whole hillside is literally covered in stone.

With a few exceptions, it is only recently that archaeologists have begun to recognise the importance of Clearance remains and the range of values attached to them by different people.

This previous lack of attention relates to a whole variety of factors, including: the relatively recent date of many of these sites, the extensive nature of MOLRS [Medieval or Later Rural Settlement] landscapes across much of the highlands and the fact that they relate mainly to non elite members of society. This comparative lack of interest on the part of many archaeologists in the past has not been shared by many in the communities who live in the areas in which the sites are located (Hingley n.d.: 2-3).

As the number of current research projects attests (e.g. Morrison 1996; Symonds 1997; R. Turner 1997), such sites are now benefiting from a certain 'positive discrimination'. These projects characteristically involve a broadening of

archaeological practice to embrace “social history, documentary history, architectural history, environmental studies, landscape studies, local history, folklore, tourism, etc.” (Hingley n.d.: 5).

In 1991 Historic Scotland organised a seminar to discuss management and conservation issues pertaining to MOLRS landscapes, landscapes which include not only the abandoned houses, but often also the “extensive arable field systems, grazing grounds, shielings and associated tracks, mills, roads and churches” of rural populations (Hingley 1993: iii). Historian Malcolm Bangor-Jones recognised the need to select sites for protection not merely on their intrinsic archaeological merit, but on account of their “heritage value” to Highlanders both within the locality and those dispersed throughout the world (1993: 40). Bangor-Jones identifies Badinloskin, the scene of Sellar’s infamous “*Damn the old witch, let her burn...*”, as one such site worthy of especial attention (ibid.).

The significance of this recognition by official conservation bodies of the role of such symbolic ‘homelands’ should not be understated.

MOLRS...have a distinct importance in terms of their symbolic associations to modern individuals and communities, particularly in the Highlands and Islands. Over this area MOLRS and the cultural landscapes of which they form a part are associated with the sense of place and identity of local communities. Former traces of settlement in the Highlands and Western Isles play a vital role in the understanding of origins and identity for many Scots and those of Scottish extraction (Hingley n.d.: 5).

Hingley discusses the tensions that exist between three different values that are associated with such sites: information value, symbolic value and economic value. In the past, information value—the site’s archaeology—served often to dispel the dubious claims of oral tradition and popular histories attached to a site. We have seen that such claims are, however, central to the symbolic value of these places. Increasingly this rigidity of definition is breaking down and, as the MOLRS example demonstrates, academics are beginning to appreciate the ontological importance of alternative ‘readings’ of a site. Donnie Mackay, an archaeologist of Highland extraction, recognises the relative poverty of ‘meaning’ in the academic version of a narrative:

As an archaeologist, I might tell local inhabitants that the dun on the sea coast 200 metres from their home is probably (almost certainly) Iron Age, and is two thousand years old. They will laugh and say, “Nonsense! That is the castle of the Clan Mackinnon—it was built as a defence against Viking raiders.” I laugh, but we are both right: our individual belief systems set that particular monument in a

context which establishes where we are now. That past, for the local community, is an intricate part of their present. They identify with it far more than I do: as children they played hide-and-seek in it, their parents told them the story of its grim and mysterious past and knew everything about the land, the name of every small burn and hill. I tell them a story based on little fact, I survey it, record it and classify it. Their history has a good story; mine has 'ifs' and 'buts' (1993: 47).

While information value and symbolic value are able to co-exist quite comfortably (from the point of view of conservation at least), the economic exploitation of these sites, by encouraging tourism for example, is another matter. Large-scale visitor access and obstructive interpretive installations can be seen as erosive to both archaeological and symbolic values, and one cannot help but detect the conservationist's dilemma of figuring out how to keep people off a site while appearing to encourage them on!

Fairhurst's excavation and subsequent report of Rosal, Strathnaver (1969) is widely regarded as one of the ground-breaking works of the 'landscape archaeology' genre, combining "geography (historical as well as physical)," with "archaeological fieldwork, documentary research and...even folk studies" (Morrison pers. comm.). Fairhurst was particularly keen to investigate the popular assertions made of the Clearances in histories and folk tradition: the alleged violence of the evictions and the claimed continuity of settlement in these 'ancestral lands'.

Rosal, birthplace of Donald Macleod, first appears in the documentary record in 1269, its name is of Norse origin (Fairhurst 1969: 140). Whilst there is much evidence of prehistoric activity—the site boasts a Bronze Age burial cairn (alleged), an Iron Age 'souterrain' and a number of hut circle clusters—Fairhurst emphasises that this does not prove *continuous* occupation (ibid.). Neither could Fairhurst find any evidence of a violent end to any of the buildings he excavated, no indication of any burnings, and he could only conclude that "the tenants moved out with all their possessions in an orderly fashion" (143).

Aside from its 'scientific' remit as an archaeological report, Fairhurst's article is an evocative 'place of memory' in itself, juxtaposing accounts of the village's demise with the summary of his excavation, with archaeological plans and section diagrams, reproductions of estate maps and photographs of the bared walls of the site. Perhaps most poignant of all is the meagre list of small finds made in the course of excavation which attests to the poverty in which the occupants lived. Fairhurst has been criticised for making "sweeping statements" about the nature of the Clearances—particularly the question of the burnings—based on very little information (Pat Rudie pers. comm.). This has less to do with Fairhurst

than the paucity of alternative archaeological data (see Atkinson 1995 for recommendations for a research agenda). Because, until very recently, there have been so few excavations of Clearance sites, Fairhurst's findings have taken on a disproportionate significance and have sometimes been quoted as representing the archaeological view of the Clearances as a whole.

Indeed considering that Fairhurst only fully excavated one long-house and its associated out-buildings (Corcoran excavated the souterrain at the same time), the excavation itself has become somewhat 'mythologised'. Rosal is perhaps the most frequently discussed Clearance township, and one is often given the impression that the whole site went under the archaeologist's trowel. After Fairhurst's survey, the Forestry Commission preserved the site as an "island of archaeology" in the Naver forest and have subsequently laid out a heritage trail.

The following are excerpts from various texts each describing Rosal. It is interesting to note the contrasts between the accounts and the authorial 'licence' the writers have employed in shaping their descriptions according to their differing objectives.

One of the best known villages cleared at the time of the Strathnaver evictions with a well set out trail with explanatory plaques. To walk to Rossal start from the small car park 3/4 miles South of Syre along a Forestry Commission track on the east bank of the Naver, approximately 7 miles south of the museum on the B871. This village was excavated during the 1960's and artefacts from the village are in Strathnaver museum (Gibson 1996a: 7).

Donald Macleod the stonemason has no memorial except a place in the hearts of every one of his countrymen in all parts of the world. His birthplace and all its surrounding townships have been eradicated as completely as if Timur the Terrible had passed that way in anger, and it is not easy to locate the spot hallowed by so much gratitude and esteem.

The modern road that passes down the unpopulated valley of the Naver divides at the lodge at Syre. One branch of it travels through empty wastes to the almost uninhabited valley of Kildonan, the other continues beside the Naver river to its loch. No human landmark any longer recalls the vanished village of Rossal whose ruins were still visible to Sellar as he travelled that way on his journeys south (Grimble 1993 [1962]: 58).

In the slanting afternoon sunshine which has followed the earlier shower of snow, I inspect the remnants of Rossal, just one among many 'touns' to which Angus Mackay directed that royal commission [i.e. the Napier Commission] more than a hundred years ago. The foundations of several homes, together with the outlines

of their immediately adjacent byres or cowsheds, can still be clearly seen; and I recall how an archaeologist who excavated the Rossal ruins in the 1960's told me how, when digging in one of those byres, he could smell cow-dung which had somehow been preserved there, far below the turf, since the morning when Patrick Sellar's man had removed the building's roof (Hunter quoted by Mackay 1993: 43).

Before we left Strath Naver we walked through a mile of post-War forest and came out in a clearing which frames in its wide green oval the whole ambience of a township before eviction. This is Rossal, the home of Donald Macleod. The force of the man's testimony exerted itself 140 years after his native place was destroyed: the Forestry Commission left the townland unplanted and commissioned its excavation in 1962. Now you can walk about through one of the largest townships in the strath (50 acres, thirteen families) and read labels rich in information beside the low stone outlines of long-houses, kailyards and stackyards, corn-drying kilns—all the working parts of a way of life. Looking across the shallow swell of grassland it is not hard to imagine it patched with the motley green of oats, potatoes, and cabbages, the pale sun-glow of hayfields newly cleared, the figure of a neighbour in dark clothes standing at a house end and looking west across the river to the sculpted summit of Ben Loyal, wondering if there is rain on the way. It is excellent that the Commission have seen to it that, for once, the absolutely ordinary fabric of the past is on display in its own right, no art, no monuments, no retail outlet, no custodian—it is a thin substitute for the return of human activity to a habitable place—what would you feel if you came back as a *revenant* to your own village or suburb after a hundred and eighty years and found it turned into an empty green socket in a sombre forest as though razed by a single bomb? (Craig 1990: 151).

Rosal, in Sutherland should have been a good place to study the dynamics of location and the interaction between a village and its environment. After Horace Fairhurst's excavations on the site, the Forestry Commission chose to leave the village unplanted, thus creating an island of archaeology, entombed by woodland. The Commission also opened Rosal for public display. This display allows free access to all parts of the village, although a set of routes is indicated by a series of walkways and display panels. Unfortunately, the information panels discourage observation, misinform the reader (particularly in calling six metre wide ridge-and-furrow, 'lazy beds') and concentrate in at least three of the panels on stories of bleeding animals to mix the blood with oatmeal so that people could eat in times of hunger (perhaps this is the assumed level of intelligence of the visitor, namely, 'if it is at all possible, mention something gory'). The panels make little effort to explain or display the excavation findings and generally impose all the common wisdom of the Highland Clearances on this one village. Little specific information about the site is given and the information panels tell a story which cannot be contradicted (Mackay 1993: 48).

Although there is much to unpack in each of these statements, there is only space to do so here in the most cursory fashion. Grimble's evocation, for instance, of a landscape "eradicated" of all remnants of the cleared settlements is particularly pertinent to his argument which sees the ultimate defeat of the Gaels as the removal not of their physical presence nor of their language, but of their memory. His declamation is profound, but his evidential use of Rosal is tendentious. Earlier I suggested that the whole story of the Clearances is broadcast in every ruin, Mackay is not satisfied with such a state of affairs. For him, as an archaeologist, each site must speak of its particularity. In fact, the interpretive plaques are more reflexive than he suggests; in the corner of one is the following admission: "We have regrettably little factual information about Rosal; in part the foregoing is supposition but could well apply to this village and other contemporary settlements."

Forest Enterprise, the agency responsible for managing Forestry Commission property, is at present evaluating a revised interpretive strategy for Rosal. The current proposal, prepared by an independent heritage management consultancy, includes plaques and solar-powered sound stores to dramatise "the story of Rosal" from the point of view of two villagers, a male and a female tenant (an attempt to introduce a feminine voice into the Clearance story, the *history* is notoriously masculine). Responding to Forest Enterprise's brief, treatment of the Clearances is decidedly understated and seems to avoid contention. The consultants recommend the following 'key topics':

- 1 *Why is Rosal important?* - key points of Rosal's history and Forest Enterprise ownership;
- 2 *Who lived at Rosal?* - the nature of the community;
- 3 *What were homes like at Rosal?* - domestic and other buildings;
- 4 *How long had people lived at Rosal?* - the souterrain, continuity of settlement;
- 5 *How did they grow food at Rosal?* - food production and self-sufficiency;
- 6 *What animals did they keep at Rosal?* - cattle, goats, sheep, ponies, poultry;
- 7 *How big was Rosal township?* - population, groups of buildings, boundary;
- 8 *How did they keep warm at Rosal?* - fuel, principally peat, also clothing;
- 9 *What did they eat in winter at Rosal?* - food preparation and storage;
- 10 *How did they spend the dark hours at Rosal?* - entertainment, crafts, customs;
- 11 *What happened to Rosal?* - the clearance to the coast;
- 12 *Why remember Rosal?* - the aftermath and the present situation.

(Touchstone Heritage Management Consultants 1997: 4)

While the most impassioned comment on the Clearance of Rosal is left to the words of Macleod on a final panel—"...the devastators proceeded with the greatest

celerity, demolishing all before them”...“the cries of the victims, the confusion, the despair...”—a more resigned attitude is ‘voiced’ by the fictional female character, Seònaid/Janet, on the penultimate plaque:

THE SOUND OF THE SOUTHERN MEN

FUAIM AN DEASAICHAN

If you listen carefully, you can still hear the children laughing.
They have heard little of the torching of the houses up the *srath*.
They know little about the *caora mòr*, the great sheep that are
marching northward. They cannot know what life on the harsh
taobh mara, the sea shore, will be like. They do not fear a
future they cannot see.

But I fear the men with their harsh voices and rude ways. They are
not of us. They care nothing for the *Gàidhealtachd*, our ways, our
people, our language and *ar beathan*, our lives.

Let the children laugh and let them keep our little sheep out of the
eòrna, the barley. Let them lie awake in the long light of *sàmhradh*,
summer, and let them enjoy the last days of Rosal, for I know we
shall have to leave before another summer is past.

(Touchstone Heritage Management Consultants 1997: 16)

Emphasising Rosal as a “living, working, playing community” (2) rather than as a symbol of social conflict, we could also ask what ‘key topics’ have been left out of this interpretive strategy. Moira Baptie, the Forest District Manager, advises me that the proposal had not yet been approved and that “Consultation with the local community and other knowledgeable sources still has to take place” (pers. comm.).

Regardless of its content, such unashamedly ‘dramatic’ storytelling in the Clearance landscape tends to dominate a site and drive out more personal, less predetermined senses of place. When I visited Rosal, I found it impossible to resist following the route of the (existing) trail. Whereas at other sites my orientation had been to the shapes of the hills on the horizon, or to a loch or river, at Rosal I felt disorientated when I lost sight of the marker posts and interpretive cairns: should I go this way or that way to the next ‘feature’? Neither did I have a particular inclination to read the texts on the plaques, I felt an affinity with Shanks discussing how he collected *but never read* the guidebooks to castles he visited as a child.

Sites are interpreted for me, much more now, but in spite of the didactic reliance on words (all the interpretive signs for me to digest scattered around the site), the

experience of heritage is about encounter and images. Not the objects and sites themselves so much as what they say of us, of national or local identity, what they symbolize and evoke. These are not primarily cognitive experiences where facts and knowledge about the past are acquired from the official learned guide book. They are affective (1992: 106).

Mackay argues for the non-interpretation of sites, believing people should be able to experience the landscape “at first hand through direct contact” rather than mediated by what someone else has written. “At the basic level of presentation,” he suggests, “we need do no more than tell people that there are things in that area and encourage them to look for and find more of the same (or different)” (1993: 48).

In the case of Rosal, however, I believe interpretation is justified by virtue of that fact that it is one site in a complex of memorial texts. Fairhurst was careful to note that Rosal was not an isolated, self-sufficient community, but shared moorland grazing and even shielings with neighbouring townships. One such township was that of Truderscaig. Like Rosal, Truderscaig was saved from tree planting and is now another island of grass and ruins in the Naver Forest. It is the destination of a 13 mile Forestry Commission cycle path. Fairhurst describes Truderscaig as lying “far out in a lonely part of the moor,” seemingly “untouched since it was evacuated in 1814” (1969: 160-62); this sense of remoteness has now largely been lost. In contrast with Rosal however, Truderscaig has consciously been left uninterpreted.

The decision to interpret only one of the clearance townships at Naver is a local decision. The rationale behind it is that once the public have visited Rosal they will be able to interpret the other villages for themselves, which will give them the feeling of discovering something new rather than being led round it. The other factor to take into consideration is the cost of interpreting every site and maintaining the interpretation (Moira Baptie pers. comm.).

Most would agree that the Forestry Commission should be applauded for rescuing settlements such as Rosal and Truderscaig from the plough. Ceanna-na-coille, on the opposite bank of the Naver, is an example of a township that was not saved from afforestation. It provides a sobering reminder of what might have happened to Rosal and Truderscaig. Today one has to fight one’s way through the branches of the densely planted conifers to even glimpse the moss-covered, tumble down stones that were once walls. Cleared in 1814, Ceanna-na-coille is arguably no less significant than Rosal and was the location of an earlier chapel, or ‘meeting house’, than that at Achadh an Eas. The Ordnance Survey

site report of 1978 states the following:

At least a dozen building footings are visible ranging from 6.0 by 4.0m to 32.0 by 5.0m. Also evident are a ruinous head dyke, broken traces of field walls and banks, and a number of enclosures; some of the last, in their upstanding condition, reflect renovation or later construction. There is a corn-drying kiln at NC 6812 4065. The meeting-house cannot be identified (HRC site code: HNC 64 SE 021).

Interpreted and uninterpreted, lost in a forest or promoted as a tourist attraction, occasionally simply forgotten, there is something to be celebrated in the variety of these settlement remains. Rosal, Truderscaig, Achadh an Eas, Ceann-na-coille, Grummore and Grumbeg, the complex of cleared settlements that make up the landscape of Upper Strathnaver, illustrates on a massive scale Young's assertion that, by bringing their different formal qualities to bear on the memory of the Clearances, each memorial text "generates a different meaning in memory" (1993: xii). There is perhaps a lesson to be learnt here. That one needs both interpreted—'closed'—sites of memory *and* uninterpreted—'open'—sites of memory where one may still seek out and find a more intimate sense of place. The paradox is that in 'opening up' a site to a wider public, one 'closes' it to alternative interpretation. In popularising the less well-known places—as the Highland Council recommend for Grummore and Grumbeg in their proposed "Gloomy Memories" trail—one also reduces them in some way. For sites which, as places of "encounter, memory, access and vision" (Bender *et al* n.d.: 2), may be regarded as sacred, the intrusion of interpretive plaques, signposts and car parks may justifiably be considered a desecration.

I have suggested that unintentional monuments, such as those represented by the cleared settlements of Strathnaver, may also become intentional monuments. Riegl suggests that these monuments are defined by their purposeful design: the commemorative meaning assigned to them by their makers is still active. Whilst no monument is singular in meaning—Riegl's classifications we have dubbed 'ideal types'—they may feel to be so. This is because a dominant, or normative, definition exists. Koonz describes how this 'fixity of meaning' attaches to the sites of the Nazi concentration camps in Germany and Poland: "memory feels monolithic, unambiguous, and terrible" (1994: 259). By interpreting a site—by narrating a landscape—we return to the vivid simplicities discussed in the last section. In this way a site becomes 'closed' or 'monolithic', its meaning being defined by those who in effect 're-make' it. An "open emblem" may be thus appropriated and used to tell a particular story as if it was the only story.

The authoritative version claims that stability exists in narration...It tells the story

as objective truth, tries to stabilise meaning, and uses poetic and inspirational rhetoric (Bruner & Gorfain 1988: 67).

Whether it is an ‘authority’ that claims that stability exists in narration, as Bruner and Gorfain suggest, or whether it is a characteristic of narrative that seems to lend authority (and therefore stability) to a particular account is, of course, an important issue, but one which can only be resolved in terms of our particular conception of the structures of power: focused or diffuse.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

Three final examples—a museum and two settlement sites—serve to further illustrate the complexity of the memorial texts of the Sutherland Clearances. Strathnaver Museum is situated in what was the Parish Church of St. Columba, Farr, itself one of the “focal points” of the Clearances. It was here in 1883, for instance, that Angus Mackay gave his testimony to the Napier Commission (see previous section). Having become derelict, the church was eventually re-opened as a museum in 1976. The “mission” of the museum, outlined in its constitution, is to “maintain and preserve for future generations a collection of the knowledge and material remains of the past way of life of the area and to ensure that this knowledge and its associated artifacts are available to the general public in the form of exhibitions or by any other means which the Trustees of the Museum find suitable” (Rudie 1994: 1). Unofficially it was established to tell the story of the Clearances at a time when few people outside the areas concerned had heard of them (Rudie pers. comm.). Grimble was one of the founding trustees of the museum, and like his *The Trial of Patrick Sellar* the displays have a veneer of plurality, but one which does not conceal the familiar (dominant) Clearance narrative. The walls of the museum are decorated with posters made by local school-children, one’s eye is drawn particularly to a picture of Chisholm’s house in flames, his mother-in-law (Sellar’s “old witch”) recumbent outside (see photograph opposite page 13). As well as recently reprinting Macleod’s *Gloomy Memories*, the museum produce a series of informative ‘fact sheets’ on different themes linked to the Clearances.

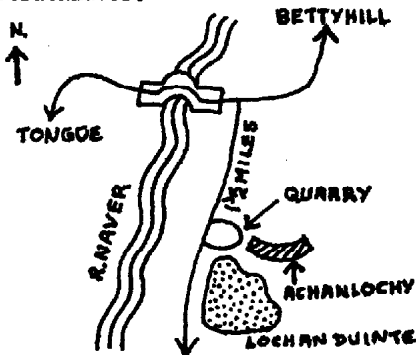
Achinloch, a clearance settlement in Lower Strathnaver, can almost be seen as an extension of Strathnaver Museum. The museum have on display a scale model of the site as it might have appeared before the Clearances. The museum’s fact sheet on the site is reproduced in full on the next page:

Strathnaver Museum, Bettyhill

FACTSHEET 1.

ACHANLOCHY : SKELPICK

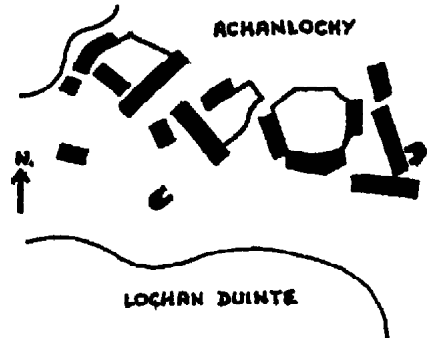
Site. Turn left at the road sign on the East end of the Naver bridge and continue along the road for about one and a half miles until you come to a disused quarry on your left. Park your car in the quarry and Achanlochy is on the hill above. Achanlochy (meaning the small field by the loch) is situated on the North side of Lochan Buinte and was one of about 50 pre clearance settlements in Strathnaver.



Land. The arable land would have been cultivated in the run rig system and had some enclosed pasture along with the hill ground for fuel and summer grazing. The area was badly affected by the river overflowing and was very marshy and badly drained as is still evident today. The land comprised of 15 acres arable, 28 acres of enclosed pasture and a 67 acre share in open hill ground.

General History. The village had 9 families living in it in 1806 when Captain John Henderson surveyed it for his book, 'General View of The Agriculture of The County of Sutherland', published in 1812. Benjamin Meredith, estate surveyor, mapped it in 1810 to fix an appropriate rental, which, at Martinus, 1811, was £18. 7s. 10d. At that time there were 8 tenants.

Clearances. Francis Suther, who succeeded Patrick Sellar as factor in 1816, removed 1200 people from the Parish of Farr, but, in 1816, made the mistake of allowing the clearing party to use fire and was rebuked by James Loch. Achanlochy, now reduced to seven families, was given notice to quit at Whitsun, 1818 and was finally cleared in the 3rd great clearance of Strathnaver in 1819 by Francis Suther. They were among 225 families who were dispossessed at this time and the village ceased to exist. The land was then rented to John Paterson of Sandside, Reay as part of a sheepwalk and now forms part of Bettyhill common grazings.



Names of Families.

1. William Mackay (8 in family) went to Strathy Point.
2. John Mackay (senior : 2 in family) died prior to evictions.
3. Adam Mackay (6 in family) went to South Country.
4. Angus Mackay (senior : 5 in family) went to Strathy.
5. George Ross (8 in family) went to Strathy Mains.
6. Angus Mackay (junior : 5 in family) went to Armadale new lots.
7. John Mackay (junior : 8 in family) went to Strathy Point.
8. Widow Mackay (7 in family) went to Aultiphurst.

The experience of Achinlochy itself, however, is summarised in Lowenthal's statement that "the marked antiquity becomes an exhibit contrived for our attention" (1995: 265). It is devoid of any real sense of place. In the case of Achinlochy, we can agree with Lowenthal and say that the "paraphernalia of display" tends not only to orchestrate, but also to "dominate the view" (273). This is especially true of the recently installed name-plaque/cairn which could be described as a monument to a monument. Indeed, even though Achinlochy is a settlement site, it seems more like an intentional monument insofar as it has been *remade* to commemorate a specific set of events. Because of the obtrusive interpretive strategy employed, Achinlochy seems "monologic" in character.

Unlike Achinlochy, Badbae, near Ousdale, Caithness, remains inherently "dialogic" *despite* the paraphernalia of its display. It is a complex in itself, juxtaposing intentional and unintentional monuments and a somewhat dubious interpretation. Perched on poor, steep land on the top of sheer cliffs, Badbae was a coastal township built by families evicted during the Clearances. Because of its spectacular location and the fact that it is well-signposted on the main A9 road, it is frequently visited by local people and tourists alike. Whenever the name Badbae is mentioned one hears the story of how children and animals had to be tethered to posts in the ground to stop them from rolling down the hill and falling off the cliffs! Although the village is spread out along the cliff top, the visitor's experience is focused on a large 'intentional' monument at its centre. This was erected in 1911 by New Zealander David Sutherland, from the stones of the cottage where his orphaned father had been brought up, to commemorate the residents who had lived at Badbae at the time. Unfortunately Sutherland was not able to supervise the inscription of its four plaques and when he returned to see the finished monument he was shocked to find many errors in the lists of names: some had been omitted, others had been inserted who had never lived there (Roydhouse 1977).

Thus the unintentional monument of the ruined cottage is appropriated and made into an intentional monument in the most literal of ways. But here is an intentional monument which unintentionally commemorates the wrong people! Yet even if one has no knowledge of the inaccuracies of names on the plaques, there is an interesting contradiction in the nature of what is commemorated in the site. Whereas the interpretive boards emphasise the hardship and unpleasantness of life at Badbae, the monument itself is a celebration of its community. A member of the Caithness Field Club found further fault with the interpretive plaques and copied me a letter he had sent to Historic Scotland recommending an alternative text.

The present notice at the Badbae site...states that the initial occupants were from Sutherland. They actually came from Langwell Estate in Caithness. The notice implies that the settlement dates from 1840. It was actually started 47 years earlier! The phrase “many of them emigrating to New Zealand” is probably incorrect, only Alexander Sutherland with his new Brora wife appears to have gone from Badbae. These errors should be corrected.

However, at Badbae, the sense of place is still strong. Having glanced at the interpretive boards and gazed for a while at the names—any names—on the monument’s plaques, it is to the surviving ruins of the settlement that one wanders. The demands that these memorial texts make of us are each of a different quality. The monument and interpretive boards are designed for our attention, they ‘shout’ to us, asserting that they have something to tell us. The ruins, however, are indifferent. They are simply there and are even reluctant to give up their secrets. They make no claims. It is we who must approach them, and not without a certain reverence. Unaware or perhaps simply uncaring of the complications and contentions that exist at the site, a local lady summed up the aura of Badbae when she wrote to me,

This week I visited ‘Badbae’ (do so regularly), it is a site where people were sent to live because of the clearances. From there the majority went to New Zealand. There is a monument with the names of the people recorded on it. Such a bleak, rocky, steep site. One cannot imagine any one trying to scrape a living—yet I counted 10 houses in a small area. I should say ruins. For some reason this area draws me to it.

Perhaps it is better to leave the narrative intact rather than to cast aspersions in the name of ‘truth’, replacing “vivid simplicities”—certainties—with “academic ifs and buts,” a good story with a rather poor one.

...the fact that they may have a different version of history to ours does not make their version any less correct. Until we understand the nature of their version, how that past is a part of their present, we cannot dump our professional histories on their doorstep. There are many truths and there are many histories (Mackay 1990: 197).

In this section I have attempted to demonstrate, using a variety of memorial texts, how stories are told in, by and about place. Landscapes and narratives are inextricably embedded within each other. Places recall stories, stories recall places. But more than this they *create* and *recreate* each other. Beresford, in one of his classic studies of the deserted villages of England, describes his almost ritual peregrination between landscapes and archives, “the intellectual journey

is always triangular: from field to archives, from archives to libraries and from libraries to the field” (1957: 19), this is necessary because place only becomes meaningful through its emplotment within a narrative. Whether we first hear of a place on our grandmother’s knee—as part of an oral tradition—or through delving into the records of the Royal Commission of Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland, for instance, we first come to know a place—and I mean come to *recognise* it as a place—by virtue of such narratives.

When I visited Grummore, Grumbeg, Rosal, and so on in Strathnaver, I did so because I had previously read of them or been told about them. By visiting them I sought something ‘concrete’ to attach the narrative: to make it ‘real’. The opposite was true of other sites, the Crofts of Benachielt, for example. For these, the journey began in the landscape and the destination I sought was the narrative in which to ‘place’ them and with which to *make* sense of them. Such narratives need not necessarily be ‘cultural’—we may invent our own stories and give place a purely personal meaning—but, more often than not, especially in adulthood, our personal stories are derived from a culturally constituted matrix of alternatives.

Places may be said to have biographies. Rosal was once a settlement, now it is a monument. It might become something else. By visiting a place we become part of its biography and the place becomes part of ours. Young suggests that by visiting a monument we become part of its memorial “performance” (1993: xii), but the experience is as crucial to our own ‘performance’ of ourselves, our self-creation, our identity.

PART THREE: IDENTITIES

CONCLUSIONS

Paraphrasing Young, we can state that it is not enough to ask whether the Highland landscape remembers the Clearances, nor even how it might remember them. We should also ask to what ends does it remember—or rather to what ends do we remember through it (1993: 15).

Young asserts that “memorials provide the sites where groups of people gather to create a common past for themselves, places where they tell the constitutive narratives, their ‘shared’ stories of the past” (6). One could cite many of examples of this process in Sutherland. For instance, every year the Clan Gunn gathers at the old church in Kildonan where their chiefs were once buried to hold a service of commemoration, by doing so clan members, otherwise dispersed, reaffirm their mutual connection to each other and to their ancestral homeland. Another intriguing example came to light when an informant showed me an old photograph of a public meeting held in 1914 at Caën, one of the cleared settlements in the Strath of Kildonan, marking the centenary of the evictions. I wondered whether the event might be repeated in 2014. ‘Guided heritage walks’ conducted during folk festivals and the like provide another occasion for the sharing of such landscape narratives: Ann Mackay’s walk around Rosal during the 1997 Highland Archaeology Week is a good example. “Without a shared memory identity fades and unity dissolves” (Havel quoted in Koonz 1994: 269).

If the Highland Clearances can be regarded as ‘mythic’ in structure, we may go further and suggest that they actually function as an ‘origin myth’ for contemporary Highland identity. They represent one of the key defining episodes of Highland history: “in terms of national consciousness,” Mackay writes (1993: 51), “the [Clearance] period is fundamental to our nation’s sense of identity.” Mackay also reminds us that “our nation” is not only the *Gaidhealtachd*, the ‘Gaelic’ Highlands, but the whole of Scotland, where ‘Highland culture’ comes to define, for many, ‘Scottish culture’.

But what is it to ‘identify’ with place? In his paper on Apache narrative (1988), Basso describes how stories told ‘in’ place do not only create a sense of identity, but also shape that identity in *practice*. Apache landscape-narratives are moral tales and are instructive and corrective in nature. It is through the telling of these tales that the individual is socialised in specifically Apache terms. “Wisdom sits in places,” Basso writes (1996); such wisdom lies waiting *in the landscape* ready to ‘strike’ errant individuals, bringing to mind the ‘truth’ they

have neglected or forgotten, setting them back on the right course.

The landscape also acts to substantiate the constitutive stories that define a people. Bruner and Gorfain describe how the ambiguous and shifting meaning of the Israeli Masada myth seems to become unambiguous and fixed *in the encounter with* the massive mountain fortress where the events occurred. “To attach such a mutable story to such an immutable site,” they write, “makes use of a device to fix meaning, to lend stability to authority and interpretation” (1988: 72). Similarly, Salmond reports that Maori children would be taught of their ancestors in the places where they had dwelt. The place and its name become “a guarantee for the truth-value of the account,” and allow the child to confidently assert, “I know it is true because I have seen that very rock” (1992: 84).

Tilley sums it up when he writes,

People routinely draw on their stocks of knowledge of the landscape and the locales in which they act to give meaning, assurance and significance to their lives. The place acts dialectically so as to create the people who are of that place. These qualities of locales and landscapes give rise to a feeling of belonging and rootedness and a familiarity, which is not born just out of knowledge, but of *concern* that provides ontological security” (1994: 27).

“To know who you are, you have to have a place to come from” (McCullers in Basso 1996: 83). “The sureness of ‘I was’ is a necessary component of the sureness of ‘I am’” (Lowenthal 1995: 41). It appears then that our narratives of past times and past places are crucial to our orientation in current times and current places. But lest this begin to seem a self-evident truth, we should remember that it is not the only imaginable view. We may find it easy to agree with the columnist in *The Scots Magazine* when he rejects Cowan’s assertion that the “debilitating” remains of the Clearances should be removed. Cowan’s remark seems insensitive to such symbolic landscapes, so fundamental—as we have seen—to certain varieties of Scottish identity, but perhaps his comment was not so flippant.

Replying to a question about the significance of the loss of such symbolic landscapes, one of my respondents wrote, “If you wish to destroy a nation, first destroy its history.” But how healthy is a present which often seems preoccupied with its past? As one commentator put it, “The clearances have done even greater damage to the Highlands as a memory than they did as a historical fact” (Shaw Grant quoted in Gibson 1996b: 40). Indeed, as the arson attack on the shooting lodge bears witness, there can be no doubt that the popular image of the Clearances—painted by the schoolchildren on the walls of the museum, reproduced in the wax-work displays of the tourist attraction, written into histories

and novels—breeds an unhealthy antagonism. Is this what it is to belong?

There is another view of past times and past places which sees history as “the most dangerous product the chemistry of the intellect has concocted...”

It produces dreams and drunkenness. It fills people with false memories, exaggerates their reactions, exacerbates old grievances, and encourages either a delirium of grandeur or a delusion of persecution. It makes whole nations bitter, arrogant, insufferable, and vainglorious (Valéry quoted in Lowenthal 1995: 365).

The notions of identity, rootedness and belonging are, after all, relative terms, exclusive as well as *inclusive*. They are means through which people set themselves apart from those who do not share a common identity, who have other roots, who do not belong. If we also assert that these notions are fundamental to our ability to live in and make sense of the present, we surely define for ourselves a bleak prospect.

We confront one another armoured in identities whose likenesses we ignore or disown and whose differences we distort or invent to emphasize our own superior worth. Lauding our own legacies and excluding or discrediting those of others, we commit ourselves to endemic rivalry and conflict” (Lowenthal 1994: 41).

This is true—perhaps truer—of minorities as well as majorities. Samuel and Thompson describe such constructs as “strategies for survival” (1990: 19), and suggest that “it is often persecution and common grievance which define belonging” (*ibid.*).

Increasingly it seems to ‘go without saying’ that our various heritages, and the places of memory which embody and narrate them, should be protected from decay and presented for popular consumption. But perhaps we should question the inevitability of this conclusion. Are we right to place such enormous value on these controversial relics of the past? Would it not be better to reject a heritage which also distinguishes, separates and discriminates? Perhaps Cowan had a point when he suggested the Highlands would be better off without its monuments to the Clearances. Not because the Clearances should be somehow denied, their memory suppressed—as if they had never happened—but in a more radical sense, in that they might become irrelevant in an idea of the future where the assertion of distinct identity becomes unnecessary.

It is ironic, if not particularly surprising, that in the current age of perceived homogenisation, there is a growing desire for cultures (especially minority cultures) to assert such distinction. Gibson writes that Highland culture and language is

experiencing a “remarkable revival” (1996a: 2). This is felt not only in the Highlands—in the growing number of heritage centres and museums, the resurgence of folk festivals, the revival of the Gaelic language—but throughout the diaspora, aided by mass media and modern communication systems.

“In Scotland here, the revival in Gaelic and the huge expansion of what was a rooted tradition in music, song, dance, and so on; the bringing back of step dancing from Cape Breton to here, strengthening the Canadian-Scottish links. The information highways that there are now that make it possible for people to know these things, they’re all making it all much more likely that people are asking about their roots...” (Gibson pers. comm.).

To what ends have we remembered? There is, of course, no *end*, there is only process. What we remember, how we remember, why we remember, these are all governed by an ever-evolving present. “Memory,” as Young says, “is never shaped in a vacuum,” its motives “are never pure” (1993: 2). Though it may often seem so, this is not some vague, self-regulating process, but the result of a myriad discrete decisions, consciously made. For example, in preserving the monuments of the Highland Clearances, conservation bodies actively shape the memory of the events they recall. Preserving the ruins of cleared settlements is as much an act of intervention as any bid to remove them. One attempts to force forgetfulness, the other remembrance.

Riegl appeals to a sense of the *natural* decay of memory. Like memory, the monument is seen as having a finite life span and no attempt must be made either to hasten its demise or prolong its survival:

Every artifact is...perceived as a natural entity whose development should not be disturbed, but should be allowed to live itself out with no more interference than necessary to prevent its premature demise...What must be strictly avoided is interference with the actions of nature’s laws, be it the suppression of nature by man or the premature destruction of human creations by nature... preservation should not aim at stasis but ought to permit monuments to submit to incessant and steady decay (1982: 32).

We should perhaps not be so afraid to forget.

The memories and monuments of the Highland Clearances are important, but their importance may be overstated so that they become something of a ‘cultural preoccupation’. The dominant narrative of the Clearances—just one configuration of the myth—ultimately serves not to bind but to separate. It does so because, like all narratives, it recalls *selectively*. It does not remember, for

instance, that the process of rural dispossession has been a calamity that has faced many peoples at many times; nor does it remember that those dispossessed may later become the dispossessors. Thus, when considering the Highland Clearances, we should be careful to remember not the uniqueness of those appalling events, but rather their affinity with analogous situations, for example, with the violences of rural transformation in Tudor England. And neither should we forget that many of those who were exiled from the Highlands during the Clearances were also among those who, in the name of civilisation, modernisation and capital, were not averse to exiling other peoples from their ancestral lands in the colonies, sometimes in circumstances of the utmost brutality (see, for example, Richards 1985: 269-70).

This neither absolves the guilty, nor condemns the innocent, but simply questions the usefulness of identities founded on such absolute terms. The vivid simplicities are not enough.

In this respect the landscape-narratives still have a vitally important role to play. For, despite all, they remain sites of contention. They are foci of debate, defiantly resisting monologic interpretation, exposing the paradoxes and ambiguities of the narrative, revealing its constructed nature and the dissonance of remembrance. Such place-stories may undermine our confident assertions about who we are—culturally, nationally, individually—forcing reflexivity and, above all, encouraging tolerance.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are due to a great many individuals and institutions for the kindness and assistance they have extended to me during the preparation of this dissertation. Of the individuals, especial thanks must go to Nan and George Bethune for the warmth of their hospitality, to Dairmid Gunn who, among many favours, distributed the questionnaire at the 1997 Clan Gunn gathering, also to Alex Morrison, George Watson, Rob Gibson, Geoff Leet, Pat and Eliot Rudie, the late Jane Durham, and all at Dunbeath Preservation Trust. Particular thanks also go to those informants, interviewees and questionnaire respondents who took me into their confidence. I hope I have not misused their trust.

Representing those institutions concerned with aspects of Highland heritage and archaeology, I am especially grateful to Richard Hingley and Nick Brigland of Historic Scotland, Dorothy Low and Henri Shepherd of the Highland Council's Archaeology Service, Moira Baptie and Donald MacNeil of Forest Enterprise, Lisa Farrelly and Trudi Mann of the North Highland Archive, Alan Kilpatrick of the RCAHMS, Robin Turner of the National Trust for Scotland, John Atkinson of GUARD, and James Symonds of ARCUS—all of whom kindly sent me copies of relevant articles, project proposals and unpublished papers.

I was fortunate enough to receive an award from the Department of Anthropology, University College London which helped towards research costs. I am grateful for this support. I am also very grateful to Chris Tilley and Barbara Bender whose courses I have found inspiring and whose assistance, as supervisors of this dissertation, has been especially helpful.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTED AT THE 1997 INTERNATIONAL GATHERING OF THE CLAN GUNN

LANDSCAPE & MEMORY OF THE HIGHLAND CLEARANCES

150-200 years after the notorious events, feelings still run deep about the Highland Clearances. I am conducting research in connection with my studies in anthropology at University College London, investigating why the memory of the evictions should be so pervasive. In particular I am looking at the notion of homelands and asking what role the landscape itself plays in keeping the memory of the Clearances alive. The focus of the study is in Sutherland and Caithness.

ABOUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This is not a conventional questionnaire in that it seeks to provoke thought and comment, to sample attitudes rather than to gather purely statistical data. The questions are intended merely as guides. Please feel free to raise other issues pertinent to the study. Please respond as fully as possible using the back of the questionnaire or attachments if necessary. Be assured that all questionnaires will be treated with the utmost confidence and used only by myself in connection with this research project. I am keen to get a cross-section of respondents including local people and visitors alike.

PART 1: ABOUT YOURSELF

NAME:.....

PLACE & COUNTRY OF ORDINARY RESIDENCE:.....

.....

FULL POSTAL ADDRESS

(please supply this if you would like to enter into further communication regarding the project):

.....

.....

AGE:

PLACE & COUNTRY OF BIRTH:.....

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR 'CULTURAL IDENTITY'?

(examples: Clan, Highlander, Scottish, British, American, Other please specify)

.....

IS THIS THE SAME AS YOUR NATIONALITY?

(if not, state nationality)

.....

PART 2: ANCESTRAL CONNECTIONS

WHAT, IF ANY, IS YOUR CONNECTION WITH SUTHERLAND/CAITHNESS?

IF YOU ARE A VISITOR, IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR REASON YOU HAVE COME?
HAVE YOU VISITED BEFORE? HOW OFTEN?

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR FAMILY HISTORY?

(please give resumé of details if known, especially your particular family connections with Sutherland/Caithness. If your ancestors emigrated, for instance, do you know when and to where?)

HOW DID YOU ACQUIRE THIS KNOWLEDGE?

(examples: passed down verbally from parents, from grandparents, genealogical research, etc.)

IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU TO KNOW WHERE YOUR 'ROOTS' ARE? WHY?

PART 3: THE CLEARANCES

WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF THE HIGHLAND CLEARANCES?

HOW DID YOU ACQUIRE THIS KNOWLEDGE?

(examples: passed down from parents, from grandparents, history books, etc.)

DO YOU FEEL MOST VISITORS TO THE HIGHLANDS ARE AWARE OF THE CLEARANCES? HOW ARE THEY MADE AWARE?

WERE YOUR ANCESTORS DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE CLEARANCES?

(if known, give details of pre- and post-Clearance settlements)

IF SO, HAVE YOU VISITED THE SITES OF THEIR SETTLEMENTS?

WHAT DID THE EXPERIENCE MEAN FOR YOU?

PART 4: CONTESTED LANDSCAPES

IS IT IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE THE RUINS OF PRE-CLEARANCE SETTLEMENTS?

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WOULD BE LOST IF SUCH PLACES WERE DESTROYED BY ALTERNATIVE LAND USES?

WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU CONSIDER A THREAT TO SUCH PLACES? IF SO, HOW?

CROFTING, AFFORESTATION, WIND-FARMING, TOURISM, OTHER (please specify)

HOW APPROPRIATE IS THE PICTURESQUE REPRESENTATION OF A HIGHLAND WILDERNESS? DO YOU RESENT ITS USE IN TOURIST ADVERTISING? CAN YOU THINK OF ALTERNATIVE IMAGES?

PART 5: LANDSCAPE & MEMORY

PLEASE SUMMARISE YOUR THOUGHTS REGARDING THE INTERPLAY OF TIME, PLACE & MEMORY. WHAT DOES THE HIGHLAND LANDSCAPE EVOKE FOR YOU?

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire. If you would like further details of the research project please do not hesitate to contact me.

Paul Basu
164 World's End Lane, Chelsfield Park, Orpington, Kent BR6 6AS

Tel +44 (0)181 993 7441

APPENDIX B

REFERENCES FOR IMAGES & TEXTS

Unless otherwise stated all photographs were taken and printed by myself.

(OPP.) PAGE	DESCRIPTION/REFERENCE
(Front cover)	Image: Crofts of Benachielt looking SW to Morven and the Scarabens.
3	Image: settlement structure remains, Truderscaig (graphic from photograph).
11	Image: front cover of current Penguin edition of John Prebble's <i>The Highland Clearances</i> (1969), showing detail of 'The Last of the Clan' by Thomas Faed (Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum). Text: from Prebble's foreword (1969: 8).
13	Image: school-children's painting of the burning of William Chisholm's house, Badinloskin. Strathnaver Museum, Farr.
19	Image: postcard, 'wax-work' reconstruction of the Clearances at Timespan Visitor Centre, Helmsdale. Photograph by Craig Mackay.
20	Image: Donald Macleod Memorial, Red Brae, looking SE across Naver River to Naver Forest and Beinn Rosail. Text: from the monument's plaque.
23	Montage: Telling tales out of school. Images: children from Thurso High School visit Dunbeath Strath and Heritage Centre. Top: Dorothy Low, Highland Council Archaeologist, helps the children explore the broch; centre: at the harbour, George Watson and the children examine a statue commemorating the character Kenn from Neil Gunn's novel <i>Highland River</i> which is set in the strath; bottom: children complete their work sheets with the aid of the Heritage Centre's display. Texts: from Thurso High School work sheet (Thurso High School 1997: 6, 3, 8).
24	Image: the site of Wester Badanloch looking W across Loch Badanloch. Text: Frank Fraser Darling (quoted in Gibson 1996a: 2).
27	Image: waterfall on the Mallart River near Achadh an Eas. Text: (Omand 1982: 286).
29	Image: Duke of Sutherland statue, Beinn a' Bhragaidh, Golspie. Text: (V. Turner 1996: 100).
30	Image: front cover of Rob Gibson's <i>Toppling the Duke</i> (1996b).
32	Montage: Signposting a people's past. Images: top: road sign for Achinlochty on A836 where it crosses the River Naver; centre left: road sign for Badbae on A9; centre right: Forestry Commission cycle route marker for Truderscaig; bottom: Forestry Commission sign for Rosal on B871 near Syre.
33	Images: top: ruined croft houses at Gartymore; bottom: plaque from the Gartymore memorial cairn. Text: from 'The House of Exile' by Arthur Ball (1994: 82).

- 33-34 Montage: Our homes are eaten out by time.
 Images: left-hand page: architectural features of the ruined Crofts of Benachielt; right-hand page: ruins of Broubster Village.
 Text: from Edwin Muir's 'The Town Betrayed' (in Dunn 1992: 21).
- 34 Image: long-house remains, Dailmallart.
- 37 Images: Grumbeg.
 Text: from Edwin Muir's 'The Town Betrayed' (in Dunn 1992: 21).
- 41-42 Montage: Why is Rosal important?
 Images: various views of Rosal: interpretive strategy, evidence for prehistoric activity, visitor responses to place, etc.
 Title: (Touchstone Heritage Management Consultants 1997: 4).
- 43 Image: trail direction marker, Rosal.
- 44 Image: settlement structure remains, Truderscaig.
 Text: from Aonghas Macneacail's 'gleann fadamach/glen remote' (in Dunn 1992: 315-16).
- 45 Image: Ceann-na-coille.
- 46 Images: Strathnaver Museum, Farr. Top: signpost and exterior from road; bottom: poster giving two different views of the Clearances.
- 48 Images: interpretive strategy, Achinlochy.
- 49 Montage: Badbae: anatomy of a monument.
 Images: various views of Badbae: road sign, parking, interpretive strategy, visitors inspecting the monument, ruined crofts, etc.
- 51 Image: Caën Gathering, August 5, 1914. Photographer unknown.
- 56 Image: settlement structure remains, Learable.
 Text: from 'Void: air aite falamh' by Francis Thompson (1975: 18).

APPENDIX C

GAZETTEER OF PLACES MENTIONED IN THE DISSERTATION

SITE	NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE
<u>SUTHERLAND</u>	
Achadh an Eas (Achness)	NC 668 371
Achinloch (Achanloch).....	NC 716 585
Badinloskin	not located
Beinn a' Bhragaidh (Ben Bhraggie)	NC 815 009
Bettyhill	NC 704 619
Caën	ND 014 177
Ceann-na-coille	NC 680 408
Dailmallart	NC 672 376
Farr, Strathnaver Museum	NC 715 623
Gartymore	ND 010 145
Golspie	NC 831 000
Grumbeg	NC 633 385
Grummore.....	NC 607 367
Helmsdale	ND 027 154
Kildonan	NC 909 208
Learable	NC 896 235
Red Brae	NC 684 423
Rosal (Rossal)	NC 688 417
Truderscaig	NC 705 342
Wester Badanloch.....	NC 786 345
<u>CAITHNESS</u>	
Badbae.....	ND 088 201
Benachielt, Crofts of	ND 187 381
Broubster Village	ND 037 596
Dunbeath	ND 165 295
Latheron	ND 197 335
Leathad Breac	ND 108 337

APPENDIX D

AGENDA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

TALES OF THE OLD COUNTRY

Analysis of the relationship between people dispersed throughout the 'Highland Diaspora' and their perceived homelands. Holiday-pilgrimages in search of ancestral homes. Recreation of old homelands in the colonies. Note, for example, how settlers in Winnipeg, Canada named their settlement Kildonan after their old home in Sutherland, they built an almost identical church to that they had left behind. The various clan societies are especially active in Canada, New Zealand, the United States and Australia.

EMIGRATION & COLONIALISATION

Historical research into attitudes of Highland emigrants to native populations of the colonies they settled. The appropriation of the ancestral lands of others.

COMPARATIVE STUDY AREAS

Comparison of Highland Clearances with other examples of rural dispossession, for instance in England, Wales and Ireland. Analysis of political circumstances of evictions and the relationship between the visibility of their remains and the survival (or revival) of their memory.

SINGLE SITE ANALYSES

In depth analysis of single sites: thorough investigation into their history and archaeology, their representation in archival records, gazetteers, maps, tourist brochures, visitor surveys, etc. Debate with conservation, management and interpretation bodies. Phenomenological encounter with the landscape itself, topographical context, etc. Comparison between sites in different regions.

LITERATURE AND LANDSCAPE

Analysis of the literature of the Highland Clearances. Representation of the Clearances and their landscape in novels such as Gunn's *Butcher's Broom*, Crichton Smith's *Consider the Lilies*, MacColla's *And the Cock Crew*, and in poetry for instance.

GENDERING THE CLEARANCES

The *history* of the Clearances has most often been written from the male perspective. Examination of the portrayal of women in the Clearance narrative. Where are the voices of the women affected by the Clearances? How do masculine and feminine attitudes towards the Clearances differ today?