

Guth Thormoid

The “Island Voice” of Norman Maclean

The University of Arizona Celtic Linguistics Group

Gordon Wells

14th October 2022



Plan

- Introduction to Norman Maclean
- Introduction to Island Voices
- Norman and Island Voices
- Focus on Saoghal Thormoid
- Other applications



Tha beagan ùine air a dhol seachad a-nis on a chaochail Tormod MacGill-Eain (31/08/17) aig aois 80 bliadhna. Agus chaidh tòrr a sgrìobhadh ma dheidhinn mar-thà, ann am pàipearan naidheachd is eile, far an deach a mholadh gu mòr:

[The Times](#) (Peter Ross)

[The Herald](#) (Phil Davison)

[The West Highland Free Press](#) (Angus Peter Campbell)

[Bella Caledonia](#) (Jamie Chambers)

[The Scotsman](#) (John MacLeod)

Tormod MacGill-Eain

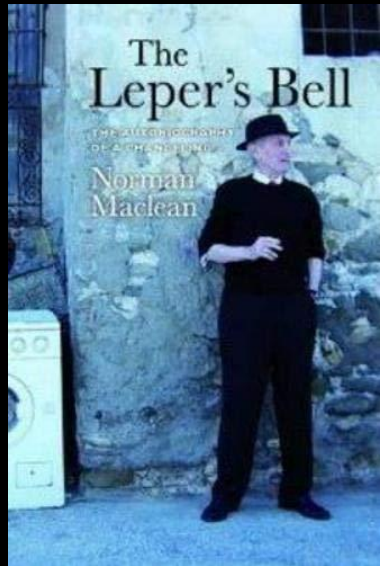
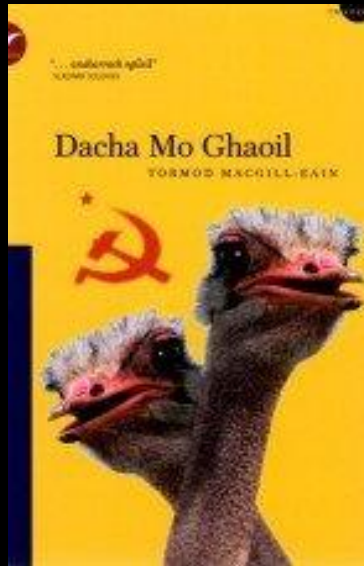
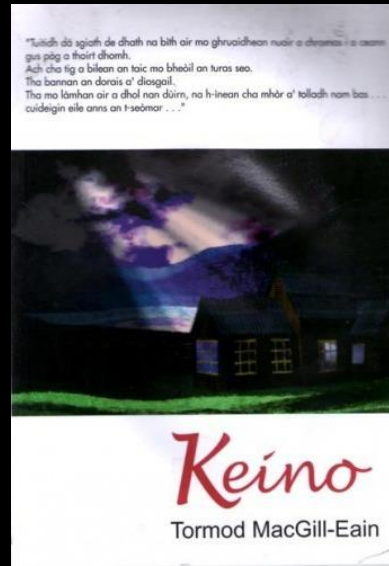
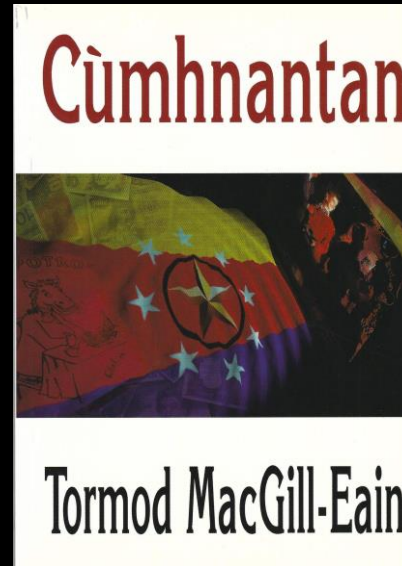
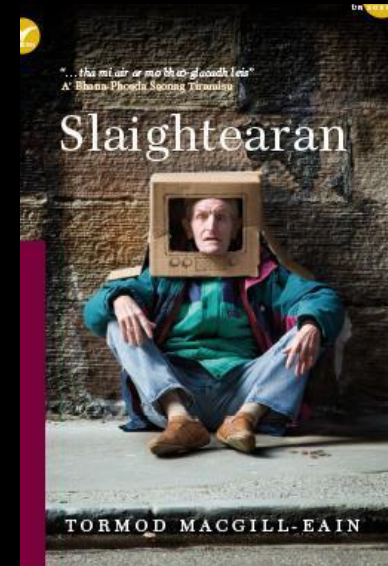
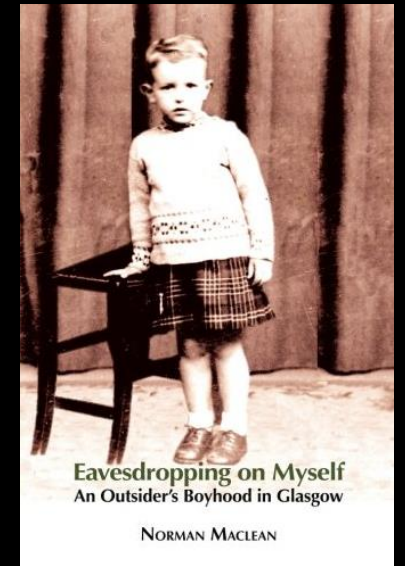
Norman Maclean

Tormod MacGill-Eain

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Norman Hector Mackinnon Maclean^[1] (**Scottish Gaelic**: **Tormod MacGill-Eain**; 26 December 1936 – 31 August 2017) was a Scottish Gaelic comedian, novelist, poet, musician and broadcaster. He is the only person to have won both Bardic Crown and Gold Medal at the same **Royal National Mòd**. His struggles with **alcoholism** are documented in his autobiography, *The Leper's Bell: Autobiography of a Changeling*.

Books



Guthan nan Eilean

Island Voices

Island Voices – Guthan nan Eilean

Slices of Life and Work in the 21st Century Hebrides – for language learners, and anyone else!

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Bonnie Prince Charlie Great War Gaelic Journeys Storytellers Norman Maclean Magaidh Smith Stòras Beò Other Tongues
Talking Points

Type text to search here...

About

This website hosts pages of links to video and other materials in the Guthan nan Eilean/Island Voices Series, and carries news about the project. It is also a means of communicating ideas and suggestions from local and remote users, who may be teachers or learners of English or Gaelic, or other languages. Comments are invited on any of the posts, and will be moderated before publication.

Over 150 videos in English and Gaelic can be accessed by clicking on any of the "Series One", "Series Two" or "Extras" tabs at the top of the page. These pages also give links to full transcripts for each clip, formatted as "Clilstore" units (thereby also granting one-click online dictionary access), as well as to catalogues for each collection which list topic, level, and language content of the films. The "Playlists" tab gives access to "feature-length" compilations.

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- Gaelic walks with CEUT
- Taisce Bheo: Aodán Ó Cearbhaill
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Why *Island* Voices?



For Scotland as a whole, the proportion of the population aged 3 and over able to speak Gaelic was 1.1 per cent (58,000 people). The council areas with the highest proportions able to speak Gaelic were Na h-Eileanan Siar (52 per cent), Highland (5 per cent) and Argyll & Bute (4 per cent).

<http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/censusresults/release2a/StatsBulletin2A.pdf>

Gaelic speakers as a percentage of Scottish population



■ Non-Gaelic speaking ■ Gaelic speaking ■ ■

Gaelic speakers as a percentage of Argyll and Bute population



■ Non-Gaelic speaking ■ Gaelic speaking ■ ■

Gaelic speakers as a percentage of Highland population



■ Non-Gaelic speakers ■ Gaelic speakers ■ ■

Gaelic speakers as a percentage of Outer Hebrides population

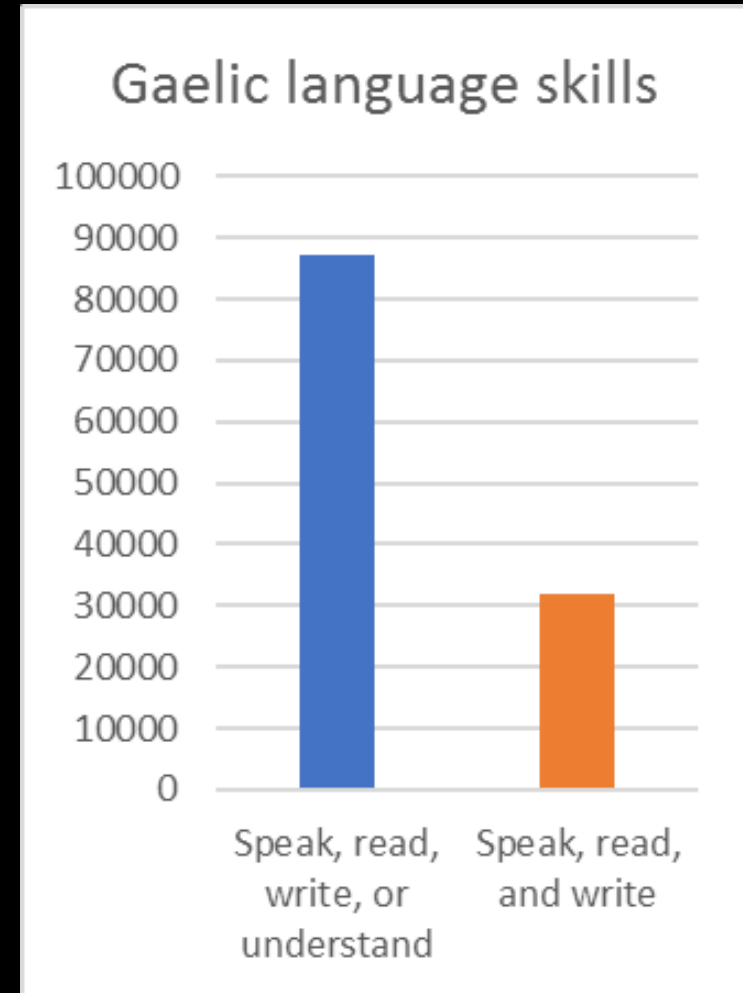


■ Non-Gaelic speakers ■ Gaelic speakers ■ ■

Why Island *Voices*?

In 2011, the proportion of the population aged 3 and over in Scotland who could speak, read, write OR understand Gaelic was 1.7 per cent (87,000). Within this group, the number of people who could speak, read AND write Gaelic in 2011 was 32,000, 0.6 per cent of the population aged 3 and over.

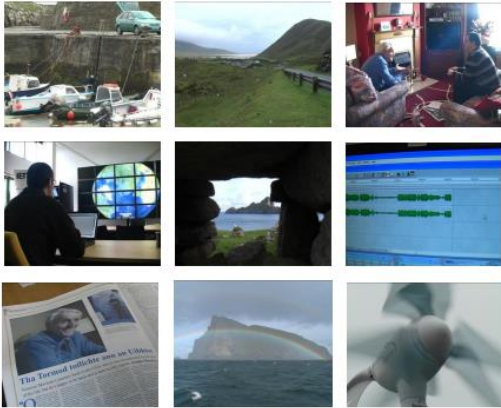
<http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/censusresults/release2a/StatsBulletin2A.pdf>



Island Voices

Enterprise

Slices of contemporary Hebridean Life and Work
46 English and Gaelic videos presented for language learners



Seatrek to St Kilda – Greenspace Research – Galson Estate Trust
Seallam Genealogy Centre – Tobar an Dualchais Digitisation Unit
Am Pàipear Community Newspaper – Writer Norman Maclean

Short online films with transcripts and translations,
suitable for intermediate and post-intermediate learners,
totalling 3 hours 50 minutes of listening material between the two languages



Storytellers

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This page brings together many of the storytelling recordings of various kinds made at the instigation of Island Voices activist Mary Morrison. The storytellers themselves range in age from the not so young to the very young indeed. In the links columns you can click on the "Youtube" link to go directly to the recording, or on the "Wordpress" link to read an Island Voices blogpost about it. A "Clilstore" link will take you to a wordlinked transcript.

Title	Language	Content	Links
Àiridh na h-aon oidhche	Gàidhlig	Master raconteur Norman Maclean tells the spine-tingling Gaelic tale of Àiridh na h-Aon Oidhche, a local landmark out near Rueval in Benbecula, and reveals how it got its name...	YouTube Clilstore WordPress
Blàr Chàirinis	Gàidhlig	Norman Maclean tells the story in Gaelic of the Battle of Carinish in 1601 and brings it right up to date with references to current singers who still mine this rich cultural heritage.	YouTube Clilstore WordPress

Norman Maclean

[Edit](#)

1. Saoghal Thormoid



On consecutive days in the last week of April 2016 Gordon Wells recorded a series of Gaelic conversations with famed writer and entertainer Norman Maclean, in which Norman spoke reflectively of his memories and impressions of Gaelic life in Glasgow and the Hebrides from the middle of the Twentieth Century up to the present day. The five videos range between 35 and 55 minutes in length. Word for word transcriptions are also available on Clilstore, enabling instant one-click vocabulary checking for Gaelic learners.

2. Sgeulachdan Thormoid



This collection of six Gaelic stories (plus an introduction) was created by Norman Maclean – Tormod MacGill-Eain. The recordings were made during visits to his house by Gordon Wells in October 2015. In the "links" column you can click on "Youtube" to go directly to the recording of the appropriate story. A "Clilstore" link will take you to a wordlinked transcript. You can click on any word to take you directly to an online dictionary to find its meaning.

Norman Maclean: Òran do Sgoilearan Chàirinis

02/10/2014

[Go to comments](#) [Leave a comment](#) [Edit](#)



Norman Maclean's grandfather (also Norman – Tormod Ailein) was lost at sea in the First World War, when Norman's mother was still young.

In another contribution to the "An fheadhainn tha laighe sàmhach" project, Mary Morrison arranged for Norman to visit Sgoil Chàirinis, where his mother was a pupil, to recite this specially composed Gaelic song, and help the children learn to sing it.

In the video clip below Norman gives a crystal clear rendition of the words.

Am Pàipear Community Newspaper

Clilstore Unit 671

Interview: Editor Archie Mackay
Clilstore Unit 672

Interview: Writer Norman Maclean (Creativity and Values)
Clilstore Unit 673

To Camera: Writer Norman Maclean (Book Launch)

Clilstore Unit 674

Am Pàipear

Clilstore Unit 771

Agallamh: Eairdsidh MacAoidh
Clilstore Unit 772

Agallamh: Tormod MacGill-Eain (Tighinn Dhachaigh)
Clilstore Unit 773

Dhan Chamara: Tormod MacGill-Eain (Am Pàipear)

Clilstore Unit 774

Monday

Ancestry



“Every Gael knows who he is.” Norman talks about his genealogy, on both sides of the family, and how these family networks played an important part in his early upbringing in Glasgow, Lochaber, and Benbecula. He has clear memories of his paternal grandfather teaching him songs, a man who himself won a prize for Gaelic singing at the Falkirk Tryst of 1878. His maternal grandmother, meanwhile, migrated to Glasgow from North Uist and never learned to speak English, functioning socially just within the Gaelic-speaking community of Glasgow of that time. Norman reflects on how community relations were experienced from different perspectives in his childhood.

Quote 1:

Tha fhios aig a h-uile Gàidheal cò e. M'athair, 's e Niall Mòr, mac Iain Eòghainn Ruaidh à Cillmoluaig, Tìriodh. Maclean, a h-uile dàrna fear ann an Tìriodh 's e Maclean a th'orra. Ach sin mise air taobh m'athar. An gille aig Niall Mòr, mac Iain Eòghainn Ruaidh. Air taobh mo mhàthar, mo mhàthair Peigi Bheag, nighean Anna Bige. Nis 's e Anna Bheag a bha seo mo sheanmhair, 's i nighean Aonghais 'ic Iain Mhòir à Hàcleit.

Every Gael knows who he is. My father, he's Big Niall, son of Iain Eòghainn Ruaidh from Kilmaluaig, Tiree. Maclean, every second person on Tiree is a Maclean. But that's me on my father's side. Son of Big Niall, son of Iain Eòghainn Ruaidh. On my mother's side, Wee Peggy, daughter of Wee Ann. Now, my granny Wee Ann, she's the daughter of Angus, son of Big Iain from Hacklett.

Quote 2:

... Ach, 's e cailleach smart a bh' innte. But, thuirt mo mhàthair, an uair ud ann an Glaschu, cha ruigeadh i leas Beurla a bhith aice. Bha uiread de Ghàidheil timcheall oirre, agus bhiodh i – daoine a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn Muslim isolation is gnothaichean – cha do rinn i oidhirp sam bith Beurla ionnsachadh. Bha nighean aice a sgrìobhadh litrichean dhi – seo mo mhàthair. Chan e gur e Nobel prize-winner a bha nam mhàthair, ach, you know, bha comas sgrìobhaidh aice. Bhiodh ise a' sgrìobhadh. Bha na gillean, Tormod is Seumas is Cailean – rachadh iadsan dha na bùithtean dhi airson biadh, agus, recreation mar a chanas iad, well rachadh i a thaigh a' Bharraich air Paisley Road...

... But she was a smart old woman. But, my mother said, at that time in Glasgow she didn't need English. There were so many Gaels around her, and she would – people talking about Muslim isolation and things – she made no effort to learn English. She had a daughter who would write letters for her – this is my mother. Not that my mother was a Nobel prize-winner, you know, but she could write. She would write. The boys, Tormod and Seumas and Cailean – they would go to the shops for her for food, and, recreation as they say, well she would go to the Barrach's house on Paisley Road...

Tuesday

Education



After offering some further thoughts on the dominant Catholic-Protestant divide in the Glasgow of his youth, Norman goes on to trace his educational journey, with customary vivid detail and illustrative anecdote, through primary schools in Lochaber, Benbecula and Glasgow, and on to Bellahouston Academy and Glasgow University. He discusses the constraints on, and the opportunities for, varied language choices he and others made in these contexts, within and outwith home and school environments, reflecting also on the Gàidheal-Gall relationship in Glasgow, and some of the wider educational choices he made at that time.

Quote 3:

Ach nach eil e neònach mar a bha m' inntinn ag obair nuair a bha mi beag. Nuair a bha mi còmhla ri muinntir Ghlaschu, còmhla ris a' chloinn, cha robh ann ach dà roghainn san t-saoghal. Cha robh ann ach dà threubh – Pròstanaich is Caitligich. Agus cha robh iad a' tighinn ri chèile uair sam bith. Nis, nach eil e neònach, leis a' chloinn aig an robh pàrantan às Uibhist a Deas, 's à Èirisgeigh 's à Barraigh, Caitligich, cha robh dad sam bith, cha robh cnap-starra sam bith eadar an dà threubh, ach le muinntir Ghlaschu bha e cho soilleir, bha e dìreach ann an dubh 's an geal. Agus, nach eil e neònach, tha am beum a tha seo eatorra nam cheann fhathast.

But isn't it strange how my mind worked when I was small. When I was with Glasgow folk, with the children, there were only two choices in the world. There were only two tribes – Protestant and Catholic. And they never came together. Now, isn't it strange, with the children with parents from South Uist, Eriskay, Barra, Catholics, there was nothing, no obstacle between the two tribes, but with Glasgow folk it was so clear, it was just in black and white. And, isn't it strange, this gap between them is in my head still.

Wednesday

Communities



Diciadain
Coimhearsnachdan

Norman describes and reflects upon changes he has witnessed in Gaelic community life over the years, both in Glasgow and in the Hebrides, highlighting some paradoxes and tensions. In former times geographical horizons may have been much closer in comparison with the global awareness and contacts modern connectivity enables, yet the latter may not lead to a sense of greater connectedness. He discusses how, while the Gaelic community in Glasgow may have tended to envisage itself, in his eyes, in a higher or somewhat exclusive position in relation to other Glaswegians, there was nonetheless a strongly felt imperative to acquire their language. Conversely, while young Gaels might be envied by their peers in some ways, they did not feel their language was respected by non-speakers, with apparent racial imprecations sometimes experienced. Lastly, in discussing how broadly the term “Gàidhealach” might be applied, he depicts in more detail the links and fissures, as he saw them, between Glasgow communities of Irish and Scottish Island/Highland extraction.

Quote 4:

... Ann an Glaschu, cha robh ach pàirt dham bheatha Gàidhealach. An còrr, a' chuid bu mhotha, 's ann am measg muinntir Ghlaschu a bha mi, agus bha mi, mar gum biodh, ga leantail-sa a-muigh air na sràidean. Ach nuair a thiginn a-staigh, 's e muinntir Ghàidhealach a bha a' tighinn a chèilidh oirnn, agus bhithinn ag èisteachd riutha-san... Ach tha atharrachadh mòr air tighinn air an dà chuid... Tha a h-uile duine sgapte bho chèile, agus tha iad, tha iad a' faighinn eòlas air a' chèile tro na h-innealan... Chan eil iad faisg air a' chèile ann. Agus tha an aon rud ann an Glaschu agus tha sna Ceallan shìos. Chan eil daoine – tha iad mar gum biodh air leth bho chèile, ann an Glaschu agus air a' Ghàidhealtachd.

... In Glasgow, only part of my life was Gaelic. For the rest, the larger part, I was among Glasgow folk, and I followed them on the streets, as it were. But when I came inside, it was Gaelic folk who visited us, and I listened to them... But both have changed a lot. Everybody is distanced from each other, and they get to know each other through the devices... They're not close to each other at all. And it's the same thing in Glasgow as it is down in Kallin (Grimsay). People aren't – they're, as it were, isolated from each other, in Glasgow and in the Gàidhealtachd.

Thursday

Creativity



Norman is invited to discuss his personal creativity as a teacher, writer, poet, musician, and comedian. He reflects on the varied influences of others, from backstreet singers to Billy Connolly, and discusses figures and trends in various art forms, and offers his opinions. He also recites a recently composed example of his own poetry, and other verses that have impressed him. In discussing how his bilingual background contributed to shaping his material, he also reflects on how commentators' propensity to place performers in pigeonholing categories could result in narrow or distorting descriptions of his work, for example as a "Gaelic comedian".

Quote 5:

*Bheir mi luadh thar chàich
Do bhailtean brèagha mo dhaoine:
Am Baile Sear is Bail' Mhic Phàil
Loch Euphort is An Caolas.
Innsidh mis' an-dràst',
Rim bheò cha dèan mi caochladh,
'S cha teirig dhaibh mo ghràdh,
Ged tha an teaghlach sgaoilte.*

I will praise above the rest
The handsome townships of my people:
Am Baile Sear and Bail' MhicPhàil
Loch Euphort and An Caolas.
I declare it now,
While I live I will not change,
And my love for them won't fade,
Though the family is scattered.

Friday

Gaelic



On the last day, Norman is invited to turn his thoughts specifically to Gaelic and its place in people's hearts and minds, and to Gaelic development efforts. Acknowledging the challenges the language faces in today's world, he reflects on the complex interplay and relationships between Gaelic and English, and on various ways in which bilingualism can be viewed. In emphasising its benefits he counsels against the dangers of a monolingual "English ghetto", colourfully invoking his own observations on the nomination campaign for the American presidential election. In contemplating bi-directional bilingualism he discusses the challenges of, and offers his own advice on, the learning of Gaelic and, in particular, the place of literacy. Finally, he relates the language issue back to the culture from which it springs, sharing personal thoughts on how his sense of belonging reinforces his sense of identity, and emphasising his own willingness and commitment to pass on his knowledge to others.

Quote 6:

Thoradh, well, chan eil agad ach coimhead air mac Mhàiri Chaluim, 's e am bumalair sna Stàitean Aonaichte, Dòmhnall Trump... ach nuair a bhios tu a' coimhead air na daoine, aithnichidh tu... gu bheil iad, chan e dìreach gu bheil iad aineolach, ach gu bheil iad air leth, agus 's e is coireach – chan eil aca ach aon chànan. Tha sin gam fàgail, mar gum biodh, ann an ghetto Beurla... So, tha cunnart ann a bhith a' dèiligeadh le aon chànan a-mhàin. Tha e gad fhàgail – tha thu nas buailtiche a bhith fiadhaich agus a bhith air do dhalladh air an dealbh as fharsaing. Ma tha cànan eile agad tha an saoghal a' sìor leudachadh a-muigh, agus faodaidh tu roghainn a dhèanamh, faodaidh tu deagh thaghadh a dhèanamh.

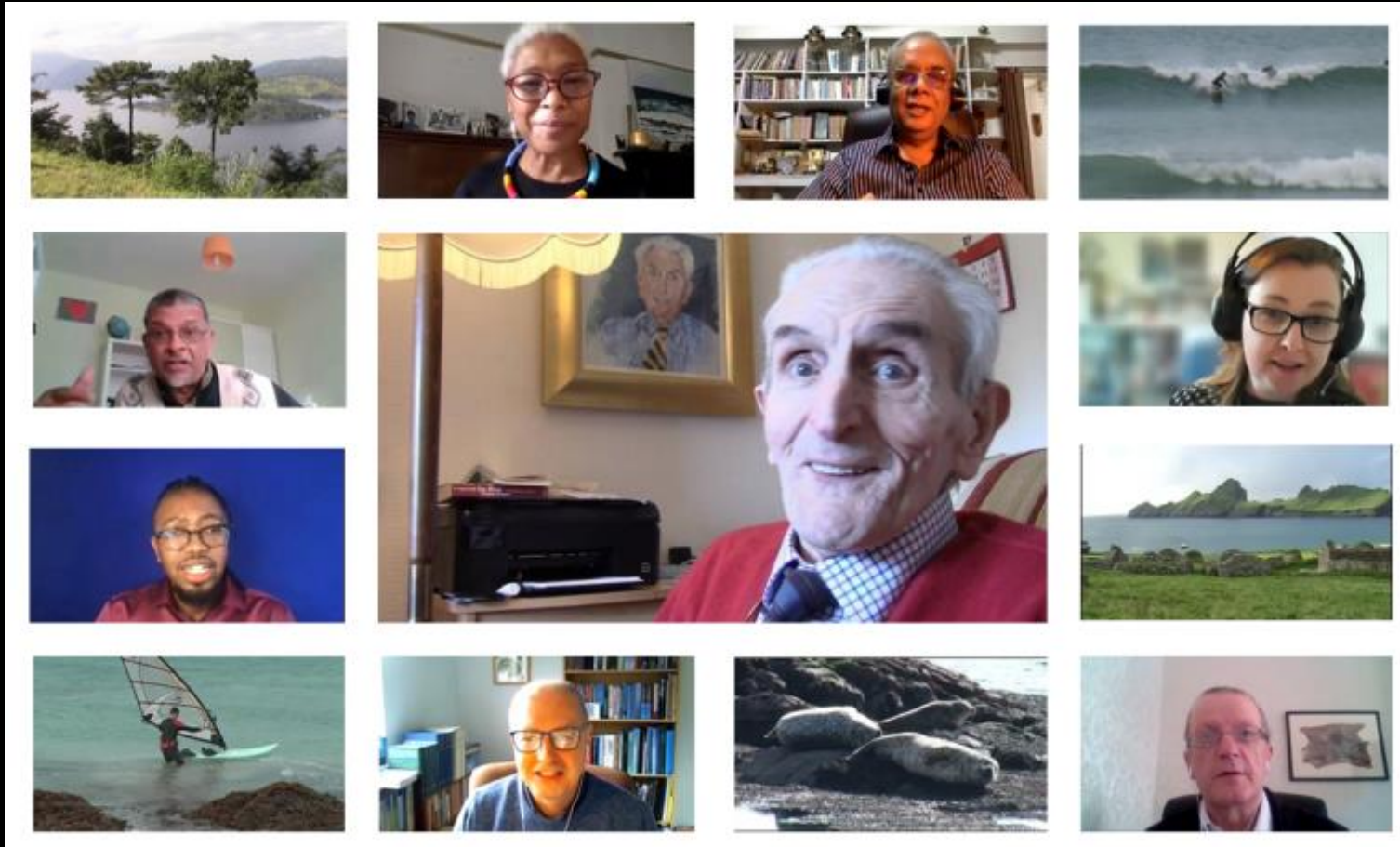
Because, well, you only have to look at the son of Calum's Mary, that's the blockhead in the US, Donald Trump... but when you look at the people [his supporters] you'll see... not just that they're ignorant, but that they're isolated and the reason is – they only have one language. That leaves them, as it were, in an English ghetto... So, there's a danger in operating in only one language. It leaves you – you're more liable to anger and to be blind to the wider picture. If you have other languages, the world is always broadening out, and you can make choices, you can make good choices.

Quote 7:

So, ma tha cuideigin a-muigh an sin, ma tha cuideigin a ch' am film agad mu dheireadh thall, bhithinn gu math deònach na faclan agus na fuinn a chur thuige, thoradh fhuair mise an asgaidh iad, agus duine sam bith aig a bheil ùidh asta, gheibh iadsan an asgaidh iad cuideachd.

So, if there's anyone out there, if anyone sees your film eventually, I'd be very willing to pass the words and the tunes onto them, because I got them for nothing, and anyone who's interested in them, they'll get them for nothing too.

“Talking Points”



Language
Endangerment:
Gaelic
Trajectory?

Language
Hierarchies:
English
Ascendancy?

Language Contact: Bilingual Balance?

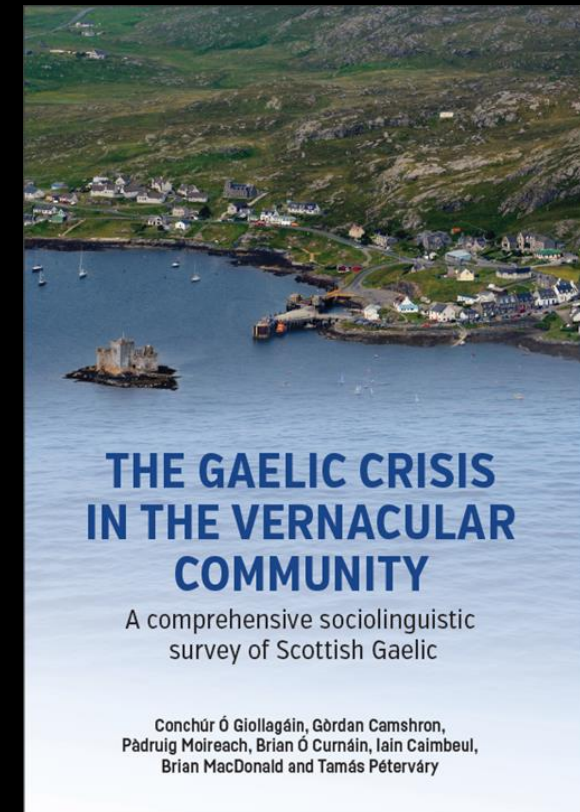
Sample Extract

“He was a very astute observer of the human condition. And I think that’s why his opinion of what happened to the Gaelic world is very important...

... His astuteness in observing the transformations that have happened to the Gaelic world during his lifetime is very compelling.”

Professor Conchúr Ó Giollagáin

1. Implications of postwar societal change and modernisation
2. Social densities of Gaelic speakers
3. Minority youth socialisation processes in language contact
4. Implications of the social subordination of the minority culture
5. Differentiating language competence and vernacular communicative ease



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Login

Agallamh: Tormod MacGill-Eain



Tormod MacGill-Eain: Tighinn Dhac...



Ars esan, "Tha **taigh** againn dhut."

"Càite?" arsa mise.

"Shuas mu dheas. Shuas ann an Dalabrog a tha an taigh."

"Oh no, bother, no, I don't think so. The only Rangers supporter in South – no, I don't fancy that. Get me, get me into Columba Place, or some place I know."

"Oh, taighean beaga seasgair, blàth..."

Ars mise, "Am bi e blàth sa gheamhradh?"

Cilstore

Eairdisidh MacAoidh

Dhan Chamara

Am Pàipear

Word

taigh

From

Gàidhlig (gd)

To

English (en)

↔

Dictionary

Am Faclair Beag meanbh

Search

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Am Faclair Beag

Cainnt nan daoine, leis na daoine, airson na daoine

Naidheachdan

Log a-steach

Dèan lorg airson

taigh

Lorg!

🔍 Cobhair

English

📱 Mobile

☒ Roghainnean an luig

☒ Clas an fhacail

☒ Àrainnean (beta)
☐ Gun ainmean-àite
☐ Le ainmean-àite

Toraidhean an Fhaclair Bhig

taigh /tj/

fir. gin. -e; iol. -ean

house

★★★★

Taigh nan Cumantan /tj nən/

kuməNdən/

The House of Commons

★★★★

Taigh nam Morairean /tj nə mɔrɪərən/

The House of

★★★★

Toraidhean Dwelly

taigh

-e, -ean, sm House.

'S e ainm aoibhneach taigh na feile, its joyful name is the house of ...

★★★★

còrr

stòr

-òir, sm Store, ammunition. 2

Treasure. 3 Hoard. 4

Quantity of goods. 5

Magazine. 6 Store-

★★★★

Short url: https://cilstore.eu/cs/773

Applications – subtitling & ASR:



Other applications?



“This video has been freshly subtitled in English here for the *Talking Points with Norman Maclean* series of Mediating Multilingualism discussions - specifically for Session 3 on [Language Contact: Bilingual Balance?](#)

Notably, from a linguistic point of view, the clip features frequent code mixing and/or switching. The subtitled translations from Gaelic into English are in plain script, while English sections (or single words) are in italics. (The occasional use of Gaelic place or personal names in an English sentence is not distinctively marked.)

Aside from these points of linguistic interest, we can count ourselves very lucky to have been able to record Norman for posterity, not only - as here - soon after he returned to Uist, but again and again after he settled. He was extremely generous with his time, and became a prolific contributor to *Island Voices*, particularly towards the end of his life, offering copious comic relief as well as serious insight into his life and times.”

Mòran taing!

<https://guthan.wordpress.com/about/>
<https://www.youtube.com/IslandVoicesVideos>
<https://www.facebook.com/GuthanVoices>
<https://twitter.com/GuthanVoices>

UHI Language
Sciences
Institute

SOILLSE

 **SABHAL
MÒR OSTAIG**
Ionad Nàiseanta Cànan is Càltar na Gàidhlig