

Micro-Fiction

The Song

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About the Artist-Researcher

Sadie Beaton is a listener, activist and Dalhousie PhD candidate carrying many generations of colonial entanglement in unceded Mi'kmaq territory. Drawing on her own settler histories, her research engages with embodied archival practices, Indigenous politics of water, and collaborative storytelling to trouble the pioneer lies that stifle settler imaginations about what kinds of relations and futures are possible here

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The Song

Tha mi sgìth 's mi leam fhìn,

Buain na rainich, buain na rainich,¹

A song Grampy would hum as he wandered the old farm. Repairing a blown-down fence. Fiddling with the John Deere.

Tha mi sgìth 's mi leam fhìn,

Buain na rainich daonnan.

Ray shakes his head. He should head back to the truck. Find Rachel. Get sorted. But he's drawn by the distant lament, these bittersweet notes calling him. They are familiar from his childhood. Like a buttered biscuit.

'S tric a bha mi fhìn 's mo leannan,

Anns a' ghleannan cheòthar

He clambers through pits and mounds, obscured by lush ferns. He knows this uneven landscape, formed by the sidewise root balls of ancient windblown hemlocks and yellow birch, rotted into place in the wet dark of this vital place.² Contours that Ray recognizes as a marker of old-growth forest. As a biodiversity hotspot.

¹ Learn what it means and how to sing it: [Bòrd na Gàidhlig](#), [MG ALBA](#), [BBC ALBA](#), [Bòrd na Ceiltis](#) (Alba) & [Sabhal Mòr Ostaig](#). (2019). *Little by little*. LearnGaelic. <https://learngaelic.scot/littlebylittle/songs/sgith/>

² Such mounds resemble burial mounds and are a feature of old growth Wabanaki Forest. Source: Patriquin, D. (no date). Wabanaki forest love affair. Sandy Lake & Environs (Bedford, Nova Scotia). *Wordpress*. <https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/forests/acadian-forest-love-affair/>

'G èisteachd còisir bhinn an doire,
Seinn sa choille dhòmhail

It's an old fairy song.³ The soft lilt of each word is a balm, despite- or maybe because of- their inscrutability. Grampy had his reasons not to pass the Gaelic on, but the reasons troubled him too.

Anns an t-sìthean, o, gur sgìth mi,
'S tric mo chridh ga leònadh,
Nuair bhios càch a' seinn nan luinneag,
Cha dèan mis' ach crònan.

He stops by the swollen brook, sopped up in the moss. Singing along in wet loafers, first quietly, Ray finds himself understanding each word. In this moment, the song is a place. Not a misty far-off glen across the sea but somehow both here and there, inside and out, the connective tissue a harmonic yearning that cracks across space and time.

Tha mi sgìth `s mi leam fhìn
A' deanamh feansa dha na moighich
Tha mi sgìth `s mi leam fhìn
A' deanamh feansa dhroighnich⁴

Ray's sonorous voice carries across the forest, surprising the sparrows and shrews almost as much as himself. He is split open, at once part of the sweet chorus and still, alone in the bracken.

Tha mi sgìth 's mi leam fhìn,
Buain na rainich, buain na rainich,
Tha mi sgìth 's mi leam fhìn,
Buain na rainich daonnan.



³ Such songs can lure mortals into the fairy realm. Belief in fairies helped protect Scottish Highlands from the ravages of the witch trials that so affected the lowlands. See: Randall, K. (2018). *The absence of witch-hunting in the Gaidhealtachd: Cultural resilience and belief in early modern Scotland* [Masters Thesis, California State University Dominguez Hills]. Scholarworks, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12680/xg94h624>

⁴ This line specifically refers to the cyclical practice of fence repair that occurs with damage over time resulting from weather or other human or animal forces. A similar expression that bemoans the continual rebuilding of wind-blown fences, to protect gardens from rabbits in Cape Breton has also been noted. See: Buan Na Rainich/Cutting Ferns. (2010). An Rubha: The highland village Gaelic folklife magazine, 12(1), p. 27, <https://highlandvillage.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/2025-10/anrubha7.pdf>