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- 2 The people of the maritime communities of Western Brittany and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland share much in terms of culture and industry. However, the two communities also face a number of pressing problems in Post-Brexit Europe: the distinctive ways of living and working that have been developed over hundreds of years, the traditional skills, and the vernacular languages with their irreplaceable oral histories are all severely endangered. They are in urgent need of a new vision which will enable them to flourish now and in the future.
- 3 In this thematic issue, we focus on Scotland as a seaward-orientated culture and examine the ways contemporary artists work towards a new aesthetics of the sea. The academic papers and creative artworks that you are about to read and watch demonstrate the strategies developed by artists to re-view, reclaim, de-idealize and de-romanticise their coastal landscapes and maritime cultural heritage. The representation of Scottish waters can be a means of re-empowering local communities and re-imagining a sense of maritime identity.
- 4 Because we know the sea as much through the humanities as through science, we believe that the creative arts are uniquely able to add a phenomenological dimension to scientific knowledge. With this in mind, we invited contributions that address the representation of maritime heritage (including traditional fishing techniques) as a means of reviving regional cultures and reconfiguring the relationship between regional, national and international identities. We believe that this collaboration can act as a prototype for a programme of initiatives which will demonstrate ways that the blue humanities can contribute to the sustainability of these coastal communities. The essentialist iconography with its elevation of the 'traditional' community has become increasingly problematic in an era in which the post-traditional, epochalist community

has become the norm: this project addresses the essentialist/epochalist dilemma in an original way. The relationship with the sea has nourished distinctive oral vernacular cultures in these regions and one of the key aims of this initiative has been to investigate ways to link the traditional strengths of these cultures with innovative genre-disruptive forms and new digital technologies.