

THE QUIET TRADITION

ALISON KINNAIRD & CHRISTINE PRIMROSE

ORAN DO MHAC LEOID DHUN BHEAGAIN

A Song to MacLeod of Dunvegan

The wheel (of fortune) has come full circle, warmth has suddenly turned cold. But I once saw here a bountiful castle, well stocked with drinking-cups that have now gone dry, a song-haunted place abounding in good Things, given without stint or question. That day has gone from us, and the buildings are chill and desolate.

At a time of rising early, in a household incapable of gloom or low spirits, the roar of the drones could be heard, and their partner astir from sleep. When it (their partner) had taken its fill, it would not fail to proclaim all it had got, aided by a caressing, active finger, dancing, deft and nimble.

When it (the bagpipe) was relieved and laid to rest in its own quarters, I could readily relate how beguiling was the sound of harp-strings, impressing all with their sweetness, under the play of two hands. Ah mel how fluent was the quick measure played close to my ear by swiftly moving fingers.

Take a message from me, as a matter of urgency, to young Roderick, and make known to him some of the dangers that threaten him even though he is chief of MacLeod. Let him constantly look back to the John who died and is no more: renown in rich measure was his, and he would never leave Dunvegan without music.

(Taken with permission from "The Blind Harper" ed. William Matheson, pub. Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, Edinburgh 1970)

O'N CHUIR MO LEANNAN CULAIBH RIUM

Since My Darling Turned From Me

Since my darling turned his back on me, he will not come with me to the dance.

He will not come with me, he will not go with me, he will not come with me to the dance.

DO CHROCHADH A THOILL THU

You Deserved To Be Hanged

You deserved, you deserved to be hanged!
You deserved to be hanged, Mary!
You deserved, you deserved to be hanged!
You did something your mother never did!

You drank the milk that was in the dish,
You broke the churn and the gravy plate:
And in spite of what the floor sucked up
There were pools in the potato corner.

Uigeadar, agadar, othoill, othoill,
You drank the milk last night, Mary.

*(Translation, with permission, taken from
Folksongs & Folklore of South Uist; Margaret
Fay Shaw, R.K.P. London 1955. Copyright)*

ORAN DO MHAC LEOID DHUN BHEAGAIN

A Song to MacLeod of Dunvegan

Chaidh a' chuibhle mun cuairt,
ghrad thionndaich gu fuachd am blaths:
gum faca mi uair
Dun ratha nan cuach 'n seo thraigh.
far 'm biodh tathaich nan duan,
iomadh mathas gun chruas, gun chas:
dh'fhalbh an latha sin uainn,
's tha na taighean gu fuairaidh fas.

An am eirigh gu moch
ann an teaghlach gun sproc, gun ghruaim.
chluinnte gleadhraich nan dos,
is an ceil' air a cois o'n t-suain:
an trath ghabhadh i lan,
is i chuireadh os aird na fhuair
le meoir chionalta ghnìomhach
dhrithleannach dhionach luath.

An trath chuireadh 'na tamh i
le furtachd 'na fardaich fein,
dhomh-sa b'fhuasd' a radh
gum bu chuireideach gair nan teud,
le h-iomairt dha-lamh
cur am binnis do chach an ceill:
righ, bu shiubhlach ri m' chluais
An luthadh le luasgan mheur.

Thoir teachdaireachd uam
le deatam gu Ruaidhri og,
agus innis da fein
cuid d'a chunnart giodh e Mac Leoid:
biodh e 'g amharc 'na dheidh
air an lain a dh'eug 's nach beo:
gum bu shaidhbhir a chliu,
is chan fhagadh e 'n Dun gun cheol.

O'N CHUIR MO LEANNAN CULAIBH RIUM

Since My Darling Turned From Me

O'n chuir mo leannan culaibh rium
Cha teid e leam a dhannsa

Repeat

Cha teid e leam chan fhalbh e leam
Cha teid e leam a dhannsa

Repeat

DO CHROCHADH A THOILL THU

You Deserved To Be Hanged

Do chrochadh a thoill thu, thoill thu,
Do chrochadh a thoill thu, Mhairi:
Do chrochadh a thoill thu, thoill thu,
Rinn thu rud nach d'rinn do mhathair!

Dh'ol thu 'm bainne bha a's a' mhiosair,
Bhrìst thu 'm miodar 's a' mhias sabha:
'S a dh'aindheoin 's na shuigh an t-urlar,
Bha loin an cuil a' bhuntata.

Uigeadar, agadar, othoill, othoill,
Uigeadar, agadar, othoill, othoill,
Uigeadar, agadar, othoill, othoill,
Dh'ol thu 'm bainne raor, a Mhairi.

THA MI FO CHURAM

I Am Full Of Care

Concerned I am a dhiu ro eileadh
Concerned I am and very sorrowful
My desire being the fair-breasted one
Concerned I am a dhiu ro eileadh

Downcast am I and long since about my love
of the shepherd and he not knowing of it.

If I come into money which will enable me to get away
I shall follow Norman and never part with him.

My love is the shepherd close to the deer-forest
and my heart telling me that it will little avail me.

How silly I was to think of marriage
without stock or possessions, without gold or English.

My quest is the young man of Macleod lineage
For all my folly, great is my affection for you.

My quest is the nobleman with his shoulder plaid
who passed above yonder on Festive Monday.

CAILLEACH AN DUDAIN

The Old Woman Of The Mill Dust

Old woman of the Mill Dust, keep your rear to me
Up and down, keep your rear to me.
Old woman of the Mill Dust, keep your back,
Up and down, keep your rear to me.

O 'S TOIL 'S GU RO THOIL LEAM

O I Like, I Do Like

O, I like, I do like
O, I like you, girl
O, I like, I do like

Take my greeting to Dunvegan
Of the chanters and the pipes

These other greeting across
From me to the merchants of Leith

To the boys in Harris
And to the piper, Alasdair

To Milady's page
Although his were the words that convicted me

I like the curly-haired woman
Although I didn't get her for my own

I like her of the yellow hair
Who climbs the hill

*(Taken by permission from "Orain Luaidh" published
By the Harris Tweed Association)*

THA MI FO CHURAM

I Am Full Of Care

Tha mi fo churam a dhiu ro eileadh.
Tha mi fo churam 's fo mhoran tursa,
's mo cheist air cuirteir a' bhrollaich ghle-ghil
Tha mi fo churam a dhiu ro eileadh.

Tha mi fo ghruaimean, 's gur fhad o'n uair sin
ma ghaol a' bhuachail, 's cha chual e fhein e.

Ma gheibh mi airgid a bheir air falbh mi,
gu lean mi Tarmod 's cha dealaichinn fhein ris.

Mo cheist an ciobair tha'n cois na frithe
's mo chridhe 'g innse nach dean e feum dhomh.

Nach mi bha gorach an duil ri posadh
gun stoc gun storas, gun or gun Bheurla.

Mo cheist an t-oigfhear dha'n fhine Leodach.
Le meud mo ghoraich gur mor mo speis dhut.

Mo cheist a t-uasal le bhreacan guailleadh
chaidh seachad suas air Di-Luain na Feilleadh.

CAILLEACH AN DUDAIN

The Old Woman Of The Mill Dust

Cailleach an dudain, dudain, dudain
Cailleach an dudain, cum do dheireadh rium
Cailleach an dudain, dudain, dudain
Sios e, suas e, cum do dheireadh rium.

Cailleach an dudain, calleach an dudain
Cailleach an dudain, cum do dheireadh rium
Cailleach an dudain, cum do chul
Sios e, suas e, cum do dheireadh rium.

O 'S TOIL 'S GU RO THOIL LEAM

O I Like, I Do Like

O 's toil 's gu ro thoil leam
O 's toil leam thu, nionag
O 's toil 's gu ro thoil leam

Thoir mo shoiridh Dhun-Bheagain
Nam feadan 's nam pioban

'N t-soiridh eile so fairis
Bhuam gu ceannaichean Lite

Gu gillean na Hearadh
Is gu Alasdair Piobair

Gu peidse na baintighearn
Ged 's e chainnt rinn mo dhiteadh

'S toil leam bean a' chuil dualaich
Ged nach d'fhuair mi dhomh fhin i

'S toil leam bean a' chuil bhuidhe
A ni 'm bruthach a dhireadh.

BEAN MHIC A' MHAOIR

The Wife of the Bailiff's Son

Eilidh Challain o ho ri ri ri
It was not ignorance
O ho hi ri ri
That took me to the shore
It was not, it was not,
But my pleasure
It was the brown seaweed
That lulled me
That led me to a rock
Which will not ebb.

O woman yonder
At the foot of the strand
Do you not pity
A woman drowning!
No pity, not pity!
Little is your grief for me
Stretch out your foot
Give me your hand
So I may try to
Swim a stroke!
Or a corner of your plaid
If you would rather.

Hurry Home
Hug O
Tell it early
Hug O
Hide it, hide it
O hi ri o ro
From my mother
Hug O

Till rises
The sun tomorrow
My woe this night
My three babes!
One a year old,
And another little one
Of an age to be cradled.

MO GHAOL OIGFHEAR

My Dear Young Man

My young love of the brown locks, my only chosen one,
I would desire to kiss you in the evening though others would speak of us
My young love of the brown locks, my only chosen one.

It is that I am cheerful
Since the noble man came
with ribbons around me
and they will keep my hair in place
My young love of the brown locks, my only chosen one.

I will not sport with the lads
though once I would flirt (with them)
since the Campbell is seeking me
I will not go near them again
My young love of the brown locks, my only chosen one.

Donald Gillies of the curly hair
There was a time when you were contesting me
But since the Islay Lord came
I will cease the flattery of (my) tongue
My young love of the brown locks, my only chosen one
I would desire to kiss you in the evening though others would speak of us
My young love of the brown locks, my only chosen one.

But down with those eavesdroppers
and the liars who are no better
I would travel many a distance
listening to your speech
My young love of the brown locks, my only chosen one.

They made it a topic of gossip
that my slender waist was expanding
I will bear that lightly
as we have nothing to be guilty about
My young love of the brown locks, my only chosen one.

BEAN MHIC A' MHAOIR

The Wife of the Bailiff's Son

Eilidh Chailein o ho hi ri ri
Cha b'en ainfhios,
O ho, hi ri ri
Thug dh'an traigh mi,
Cha b'e, cha b'e,
Ach an t-ailgheas,
'S e 'n duiliosg donn
'Rinn mo thaladh,
Thug gu sgeir mi
Nach dean traghadh.

'S a' bhean ud thall
'N cois na traghad,
Nach truagh leat fhein
Bean 'ga bathadh!
Cha truagh! Cha truagh!
'S beag do chas diom!
Sin do chas bhua.
Thoir do lamh dhomh
Feuch an dean mi
Buille shnamhadh!
No sgod dhe d'bhreacain
Ma's 's aill leat!

Theirig dhachaidh,
Hug O!
Innis trath e,
Hug O!
Ceil e, ceil e,
O hi ri o ro,
Air mo mhathair,
Hug O!

Gus an eirich
Grian am maireach,
Mo thruaigh an nochd,
Mo thriuir phaisdean!
Fear dhiu bliadhna,
Fear a dha dhiu,
'S fear beag eile
Dh'aois a thaladh.

MO GHAOL OIGFHEAR

My Dear Young Man

Mo ghaol oigfhear a' chuil duinn
dh'an d'thug mi mo loinn cho mor,
Dhuraiginn dhut pog 'san anmoch
ged bhiodh cach 'ga sheanachas oirnn
Mo ghaol oigfhear a' chuil duinn
dh'an d'thug mi mo loinn cho mor.

Gur e mise that gu h-uallach
O'n a thainig an duin' uasal
Le mo ribeanan mu'n cuairt dhomh
Is cumaidh iad mo ghruag air doigh
Mo ghaol oigfhear a' chuil duinn
dh'an d'thug mi mo loinn cho mor

Cha dean mi sugradh ri gillean
Ged bha uair a dheanainn mire
O'n tha 'n Caimbeulach 'gam shireadh
Cha teid mi tuilleadh 'nan coir
Mo ghaol oigfhear a' chuil duinn
dh'an d'thug mi mo loinn cho mor

Dhomhnuill dhualaich Mhic Ghilliosa
Bha thu uair a bha thu stri rium
Ach o'n thainig an Tighearn' lleach
Sguiridh mi 'gad bhriodal beoil
Mo ghaol oigfhear a' chuil duinn
dh'an d'thug mi mo loinn cho mor
Dhuraiginn dhut pog 'san anmoch
Ged bhiodh cach 'ga sheanachas oirnn
Mo ghaol oigfhear a' chuil duinn
dh'an d'thug mi mo loinn cho mor

Ach beul sios air luchd na farchluais
'S luchd nam breug chan iad as fhasa
'S mi gu siubhleadh fad air astair
Dh'eisdeachd aigeallaidh do bheoil
Mo ghaol oigfhear a' chuil duinn
dh'an d'thug mi mo loinn cho mor

Gun do thog iad orm mar sgeula
Gu robh mo chriosan ag eirigh
Giulainidh mise siod aotrom
O nach dean e eucoir oirnn
Mo ghaol oigfhear a' chuil duinn
dh'an d'thug mi mo loinn cho mor

But if I was so brave
as to write a letter
word would reach you in Islay
that it was not the truth about us
My young love of the brown locks, my only chosen one
I would desire to kiss you in the evening though others would speak of us
My young love of the brown locks, my only chosen one.

THA THIDE AGAM EIRIGH

It Is Time For Me To Rise

It is time for me to rise, to look for my shoes,
to look for my staff so that it may take me a
little part of the way, as I go to visit the girl
who was in the cattle-fold alone.

When I came to the homestead the house was not
as it ought to be: my smooth bright, brown-haired
girl lying in the chamber, lying beneath the window
Where I could not hear her talk; lying on a board
in her shroud, still and cold.

Thou who didst shape the worlds, keep me from going
mad, keep me from losing my reason - and let me not
endure more.

*(Translations used with permission from "Gaelic Songs
from the Western Isles", School of Scottish Studies,
Edinburgh)*

AN SMEORACH

The Song-Thrush

John son of little Mary
Come home, come home
What for, what for?
To your dinner, to your dinner
Hard rye bread, oat bread and why with it, why with it.
Be quick, be quick!

THA NA H-UAIN AIR AN TULAICH

The Lambs Are On The Hillocks

The lambs are on the hillock sporting in the heather
Where rowan grows with blossom on each flower
Where rowan grows with blossom on each flower
And ships a-sailing the seas.

The bridegroom and his party on their way to church
He riding ahead stately in bearing
And I following him sorrowful and silent
And my love to be wed to another.

At the church door looking at the procession
My prayer and earnest wish is that I preserve my reason
My fondness for you I would not deny nor my ever present love
Although you are now wed to another.

O dig the grave where I shall find rest
And put flowers upon it for Spring to cause to bloom
And lay me 'neath the green sward where I'll lie forever
Nothing but death will cause me to forget him.

Ach nam bithinn-sa cho fionalt
'S gun deanainn litir a sgrìobhadh
Rachadh fios thugad a dh'ille
Nach e 'n fhirinn thog iad oirnn
Mo ghaol oigfhear a' chuill duinn
dh'an d'thug mi mo loinn cho mor
Dhuraiginn dhut pog 'san anmoch
ged bhiodh cach 'ga sheanchas oirnn
Mo ghaol oigfhear a' chuill duinn
dh'an d'thug mi mo loinn cho mor.

THA THIDE AGAM EIRIGH

It Is Time For Me To Rise

'S tha thide agam eirigh ach a leir dhomh mo
bhrogan
'S gos a leir dhomh mo bhata 's gun toir e
tacan a' roid mi

'S mi dol a shealltuinn air a' ghruagaich a
bha's a' bhuaile 'na h-onar

Ach nuair raine mi 'm baile cha robh 'n taigh
man bu chorr dha

Bha mo ghruagach dhonn mhin-gheal 's i 'na
sineadh 's an t-seomar

'S i 'na sineadh fo'n uinneig far nach
cluinninn-s' a comhradh

'S i na sineadh air deile 's i 'na leine
fuar reoite

Thi a chruthaich na saoghail, gleidh mi gun
dhol gorach

Gleidh rium-sa mo chiall 's na leig a dh'
iarraidh an corr mi.

AN SMEORACH

The Song-Thrush

Iain 'ic 'ille Mhuire bhig
Thig dhachaidh, thig dhachaidh
Ciod chuige, ciod chuige?
Gu d'dhinneir, gu d'dhinneir
De 'n dinneir, De 'n dinneir
Aran cruaidh cuir', aran coirc' agus miug leis, miug leis.
Bi clis, Bi clis!

THA NA UAIN AIR AN TULAICH

The Lambs Are On The Hillocks

Tha na h-uain air an tulaich a' mire 'san fhraoich
Far 'eil caorann a' fas agus blath air gach flur
Far 'eil caorann a' fas agus blath air gach flur
'S an loingear a' seoladh nan cuantan.

Fear na bainnse 'sa chuideachd dhan eaglais a' falbh
Esan marcachd air thoiseach 's a chruth mar a dhealbh
Agus mise 'ga leantainn gu trom airtnealach balbh
Is mo ghradh dol a phosadh te eile.

Aig dorus na h-eaglais' a' coimhead an triall
B'e m'urnaidh 's mo ghuidhe gun gleidhinn mo chiall
Mo ghradh dhut chan aichinn na 'n gaol a bh'ann riamh
Ged a tha thu nis posd' aig te eile.

O cladhaich an uaidh far am faigh mise tamh
'S cur na fluran oirr' thairis 's bheir an t-Earrach orr fas
Is sin mi fo'n ghlasaich far an laigh mi gu brath
Cha chur ni ach am bas e as m'aire.