

From Beside the Sound of Sleat

Rody Gorman



otherwords
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I spent two months on a writing residency awarded by Foras na Gaeilge as part of the European project Focail Eile/Other Words in Maribor, Slovenia from 28th March 2018.

As part of my residency I maintained a blog

<http://otherwordsliterature.eu/eng/blog/>

consisting, as proposed in my application, of a posting every day of a tercet with perfect rhyme/visual rhyme in Scottish Gaelic and with a sometimes polysemantic English translation, with accompanying photographs by Dijana Bozic of Kibla and myself. While these poems – resembling in form and spirit, to greater or lesser degrees, that of haiku and senryu - all relate to the landscape of Sleat in the Isle of Skye where I live, quite a few of them have been influenced by the environment of Maribor and elsewhere in Slovenia and this has been represented by a sort of equivalence of text and image.

The piece no. 28 (out of around 100), for instance,

sa Choille Bhig, nach iad a tha dàna
's iad a' sealltainn orm gun char asta,
na h-eilidean bàna

*in the woods at Coille Bheag, they're so brazen, showlooking at me
without moving, the white hinds*

was written after visiting the woods between Mestmi Park and Piramida Hill and also relates to a sculpture in a public park in Zgornia Kungota.

Similarly, the piece (no. 20)

a' bhratag a bh' ann seal an-dè
air Drochaid Lòn Crè
an-diugh na dealan-dè

*the caterpillar that was there yesterday on the bridge at Drochaid Lòn
Crè today a butterfly*

was written on the steps to Kalvariija Hill and the piece (no. 21)

aig alltan-tàimh
ri taobh Loch an Doireannaich,
boladh mùin air mo làimh

beside a dried-up wee burn beside Loch an Doireannaich, the smell of piss on my hand

was inspired by a visit to Kamnica.

An unposted piece was suggested by a thunderstorm of extraordinary ferocity in Maribor at the start of May: *boillsgeach, sealanach, / gu h-àrd mun Bhealach Bhàn sa chamhanaich, / tàirneanach is dealanach.*

In the village of Dresibner near the Austrian border, where I went on a wine tour, is a celebrated road in the shape of a heart and this inspired a piece (unposted) about a hill in Sleat: *nach briseadh e do chridhe – / thall air Cnoc a' Chridhe / leis fhèin, blàth-buidhe.*

The mountain of Pohorje overlooking Maribor provided a local context for a piece (no. 25) about snow on the hill of Cnoc an Fhùdair.

och, an sneachda geal
air Cnoc an Fhùdair bhuan thall
nach robh ann ach seal

och, the brightwhite snow on the hill at Cnoc an Fhùdair away from me over there that was only there for a little while

Pohorje is a recurring image and the following pieces all derive from a visit there on 17 May:

an sneachd' a bh' ann là no dhà
air ais air Creag na Bà
air leaghadh air falbh mar-thà

the snow that was there a day or two ago on the hill at Creag na Bà has gone and melted already

air ais ann am Barabhaig an dèidh dà mhìos
agus de raineach ùr air fàs
is cha tèid agam air a cumail sìos

back in Baravaig after two months and all that new bracken that's grown and I can't keep it down

mo dhruim a' fàs tais
is mi nam stad is a' ghrian ris
aig Allt Rèidhe Ghlais

*my ridgeback growgetting humidsoft-tendermoist as I stand there in the
sun at the burn of Allt Rèidhe Ghlais*

Barabhaig na h-aon raon
is an sneachd' a bh' ann o chionn tacain
air leaghadh braon bho bhraon

*Baravaig like a machair and the snow that was there a while ago melted,
every drop*

seadh, an sneachda geal a bh' aig cia mheud troigh
air leathad Sgùrr nan Caorach an t-seachdain a chaidh,
seall an-diugh nach eil na bloigh

*aye, the brightwhite snow that was there at how many feet on the slope of
Sgùrr nan Caorach last week, showsee today not as much as a flake*

The piece (no. 49)

san tiùrr aig Òb Snaosaig, sgonn
gun charachadh is a' togail ceann
's a' falbh cho luath, madadh-donn

*in the seaweed at high water at Òb Snaosaig, a log not moving at all and
lifting up its head and disappearing so quickly, a brown otter*

was suggested by the sight of a log flowing down the Drava. *Sajkas* (river boats) and *flose* (timber rafts) were in use on the river until about 1947, plying as far as the Danube to Belgrade.

The piece (no. 53)

seadh, na rudan bìodach nach eil thu a' faicinn:
ann am Fèith na Fala, mi a' tuiteam sna caochain
's de chuileagan air feadh mo chraicinn

*aye, the tiny things you don't see: in Fèith na Fala, falling in
blindfundamentmolerills and all those flies all over my skin*

was suggested by encountering flies in woodland beside the Drava.

The Drava in flood after a storm was the source of the following piece:

nam shìneadh, a' tuiteam ann an neul
agus Allt na Bèiste bhuan thall
an impis cur a-mach air a bheul

*lying, falling in a cloud-daze and the burn of Allt na Bèiste over there
about to burst its banks*

There are other instances of this. Other influences are less obvious. The piece

aig Drochaid a' Mhuilinn eadar dà ràithe
ri taobh an uillt ri taobh na Linne
's na clachan fodham a' fàs nas blàithe

*at Mill Bridge eitherbothbetween two seasons beside the burn beside the
sound and the stones under me wastegetting warmer*

was inspired by an image from the story *An Encounter* by James Joyce from the collection *Dubliners* I bought a cheap copy of in a bookshop in Eurocentre, Maribor (thinking, no doubt, of Trieste near the Slovenian border).

I wrote the piece

aig an Taigh Bhàn, dìreach crann-leamhain
's fodha de luibhean: fiodh, odharan,
am breunan-brothach is cranntachan-an-deamhain

*at the old manse in Kilmore, white-empty, just straightup an English elm
and under it all those herbweeds: chickweed, hogweed, mayweed and
summer spurge*

after reading a description of Amherst College in Jay Parini's biography of Robert Frost, borrowed from Maribor University Library.

A small part of the Sleat sequence (not represented on the blog) will accompany images by Murray Robertson at the exhibition *Lost in Europe* in Open Space Gallery, Vienna, in October 2018.

I spent some time in Koper also.

The piece (unposted) *tha an saoghal a' dol bho rian / 's a' Chruard againn teth fhèin / ri linn side nan seachd grian* was inspired by the unseasonable heat of Koper at the end of April (the hottest, in fact, on record since records began unlike this time last year when it snowed). And the piece (no. 41)

clag na Cille Bige gun bheum
sa mhadainn earraich is gun seirm
ach fhathast – na h-ògain nan leum

the churchbell at Kilmore silent on a spring morning but still – the young lambs over there frolicking

by the sound of a church bell in the town.

The unposted piece *feasgar san Òrd – abair sealladh / chan fhaic mi fiù 's Blàbheinn thall dìreach /is a' ghrian a' laighe gam dhalladh* was written looking out at a sunset over the Adriatic. And the piece

eathar Iain is Choinnich air chruaidh ri port
an dèidh aon cheala-deug fhathast
shìos air Loch Eiseort

Iain and Kenny's boat stormbound after more than a fortnight still down on Loch Eishort

was suggested by the sight of all the container ships moored on the Adriatic on Mayday.

I spent most of the residency in Maribor itself, however, and the scale of psychogeography that I undertook there was similar to what I have been doing and recording in Sleat and Dublin with elements of familiarity and exile in all three locations.

The residency had the beneficial effect of expanding my creative processes by externalising and recontextualising a specifically local (and language-specific) sequence through contact with another type of minority language and some of its users, including writers and people working in other art forms.

Rody Gorman
June 2018

From Beside the Sound of Sleat

bloighean den t-sneachd' ùr is na h-uain
air Cnoc Uaine nan laighe sa mhadainn
agus faoileagan air bhàrr a' chuain

little bits of fresh new snow and the lambs lying on the hill at Knock in the morning and gulls like white wavecrests on the top of the ocean bay

Allt Tarsainn bhuam ri torghan
agus fo mo chasan air an Fhaoilinn,
cadalan-tràghad anns a' mhorghan

the burn at Allt Tarsainn purling away and under my feet on the shore at Faoilinn a sea-urchin in the pebbly shingle

a' fàs aig Taigh Mòr nan Gilean
far an robh 'm bodach na linn,
leis fhèin, lus nan trì bilean

growing at the empty Big House in Gillen where the old boy was in his day, all alone, a common valerian

och nach robh thu agam, a luaidh,
shìos an sin air bruach an Uillt Ruaidh
seach bhuam an Oir Chluaidh

och dear if only I had you down there then on the clump bank of the Red Burn and not wanting away from me in Clydeside

air an Fhaoilinn Dihaoine na Ceusta
ri siubhal an lòn mar a h-uile mac latha,
spàg-ri-tòin is tunnag-ghleusta

on the shore at Faoilinn on Good Friday, deathjourneylooking for sustenance like every day, a little grebe and a velvet scoter

na fèidh gu h-ìseal a' falbh nan greigh
sìos bhon ghaoith far Cruachan na Fèithe Seilich
is an talamh fodham fhathast fon deigh

*the wild-deer down there going away off as a cleg-herd down wind from the
summit of Cruachan na Fèithe Seilich and the ground beneath me still under ice*

far an rachamaid gus na smeuran a spionadh
tiotan aig deireadh an t-samhraidh,
chì mi bhuam an Fhaoilinn a' lìonadh

*from where we used to go picking brambles for a while at the end of summer I
see over there the tide coming in on the shore at Faoilinn*

caora na cairbh
ann an Cùl nan Cnoc anns an fhraoch
agus mu mo chasan de chac-tairbh

*the carcass of a sheep on the hill at Cùl nan Cnoc in the middle of nowhere in
the furetheather and around my feet all those bullpats*

na fir air an cois tràth ri rùsgadh
ann am Bealach Garbh Didòmhnaich
is a' chlann-bheag a' sìneadh ri dùsgadh

*the men legup earlyprayermealtime for the shearing in Bealach Garbh on
Sunday and the wee ones starting to wake up*

fear a' buain 's na chois cù a' rùrach
air a' chùl-chinn anns an fhionnairidh
's ag èirigh far na mòna de smùrach

*a man at the peats and footbeside him a dog rumaging on the common grazing
in the evening and rising out of the moorpeat all that drizzledross*

aig an Taigh Bhàn, dìreach crann-learnhain
's fodha de luibhean: fiodh is odharan,
am breunan-brothach is cranntachan-an-deamhain

*at the old manse in Kilmore, white-empty, just straightup an English elm and
under it all those herbweeds: chickweed and hogweed, mayweed and
summer spurge*

an dà shealladh aig an àth
thairis air Allt Tarsainn sa chamhanaich –
an t-seileach agus a sgàth

*a double vision at the ford across the burn of Allt Tarsainn in the dawndusk –
a willow and its dreadshadow*

an dèidh 'n uisg' a thàinig na dheòir,
air bruach Allt Tarsainn san Iuchar,
seileach agus fionnan-feòir

*after the rain that came like tears, on the clumpbank of the burn of Allt Tarsainn
in July, a willow and a grasshopper*

sa Choille Bhig, nach iad a tha dàna
's iad a' sealltainn orm gun char asta,
na h-eilidean bàna

*in the woods at Coille Bheag, they're so brazen, showlooking at me without
moving, the white hinds*

a' ghaoth ri sèideadh fo m' ìne
's mi nam shìneadh leam fhìn aig Rubha Shlèite
mar a bha mi nam linn le Sìne

*the wind blowing under my fingernails as I lie stretched out on my own at the
Point of Sleat like I did in my day with Sheena*

gun charachadh air bàrr na cathrach
a chuir mi a-mach anns a' ghàrradh là samhraidh,
tarbh-nathrach, dà tharbh-nathrach

*not moving at all on top of the chair I put out in the garden on a summer's day,
a dragonfly, two dragonflies*

thàinig mi air dà shlighe là
sa choille mu choinneimh Chreag na Bà
's chaidh mi timcheall 's ghabh mi na dhà

*I came on two ways once in the woods opposite Creag na Bà and went round
and took the two*

nach i fhìn am bàrd!
fairichidh mi bho Bheinn a' Bhràghad
an uiseag-thapaidh gu h-àrd

*isn't that the very bard! I feelhear from the hill at Beinn a' Bhràghad the
skylark on loudhigh*

chì mo bho Phort na Làire
far an do dh'fhalbh i fhìn, mo nàire,
gu tìr-mòr bhuam ri briseadh na fàire

*I see from the shore at Port na Làire where herself left for the mainland
wanting away from me in the dawn breaking on the horizon*

seachad air a' chuimhneachan-chogaidh
sa Chille Bhig ris a' chamhanaich,
dìreach corra-ghritheach is cuthag-bhogaidh

*past the war memorial in Kilbeg in the dawndusk just straight up a heron and a
water-wagtail*

ann an Cùl nan Cnoc leam fhìn a' seinn
's nuair a leigeas mi sreothairt asam no srann,
gun *Deiseil!* aig duine no *Dia leinn!*

*in the middle of nowhere on the hill at Cùl nan Cnoc on my own singing and
when I sneeze or yawn, nobody saying Bless you! or God bless and save us!*

far am biodh Mòrag
a' buain sheòbhrach anns a' Choille Bhig,
romham, leatha fhèin, feòrag

*where Morag used to pick primroses in the wood at Coille Bheag, in front of
me, on its own, a squirrel*

ann an Cùl na h-Àirigh sa ghrèin a dhallas
far an robh mi leatha fhèin turas
às mo lèine *hì rì ri ò* 's nam fhallas

*at the shieling in Cùl na h-Airigh in the blinding sun where I was with herself
one journeytime stripped and sweating*

nach e chuir gu trom a-raoir
thall bhuam air Cnoc an Fhùdair
far an do thriall mi le Mac an t-Saoir

*it snowed heavily last night over there from me on the hill at Cnoc an Fhùdair
where I deathwent with MacIntyre*

nach iad a tha gasta –
dà chorra-ghrith each air a' Chlachaig aig meadhan-latha
gun charachadh asta

lovely – two herons on the shore at Clachaig at midday not moving at all

ri càil an là, de ghealagan-lòin
shìos air an Lèanaig tacan
agus a-rithist ri tràth-nòin

*at hungerdesirelifestrength day-break all those bright reed buntings down on
the levelmeadow for a moment and back again at noon earlyprayermealtime*

agus a-rithist madainn Diluain
anns an t-sneachd' ùr nach buan
air Cnoc Uaine, de dh'uain

*and again on Monday morning in the freshnew snow that doesn't last on the hill
at Knock, all those lambs*

nam stad –
fàileadh roid
aig Loch Doire nan Gad

I stop – the airsmell of bog-myrtle at Loch Doire nan Gad

a' ghealach a' fàs abaich
os cionn a' Mhonaidh Mheadhanaich
is ceilear aig an uiseig-chabaich

*the moon waxing above the moor at Monadh Meadhanach and a crested lark
hiderwarbling*

och, a charaid mhiadhaich –
air a' Chlachaig a' togail na h-imrich,
dà ghèadh-fhiadhaich

*och, my esteemed relationfriend – on the shore at Clachaig taking off, two wild
geese*

a' chlann bheag a' snàmh
anns an Tiùrr madainn Didòmhnaich
is fad' às, dìosgan ràmh

*little clanchildren swimming in the Dornoe on Sunday morning and far off, the
creaking of oars*

an aire! mu mo spàgan
a' siubhal air a' Chruard anns a' mhadainn,
dà mhàgan

*mind! roundabout my clumsy feet deathseekmoving in the morning, two wee
frogs*

san fheasgar, fhathast a' dol –
e fhèin leis fhèin thall
ann am Barabhaig air a' mhol

*in the evening, still going – himself on his own with himself over there in
Baravaig on the flockshingle*

ann an Cnoc Uaine là samhraidh,
bròg-na-cuthaige, sòbhrag is creamh
nach bi ann là geamhraidh

*on the hill in Knock on a summer's day, bluebells, primroses and wild garlic
that won't be there on a winter's day*

aig Òb Snaosaig fo mo chois plaosg
is air an taobh thall riasg
is ag èirigh gu h-àrd às naosg

*on the shore at Òb Snaosaig under my legfoot a shell and on the other side a
bog-cottongrassmossmarshmoor and rising loudhigh out of it a snipe*

gun fhuaim is gun deò
na mo shìneadh liom fhìn aig Dùn Flò
feasgar ìseal cho làn ceò

*not a sound and not a breath of wind, stretched out low on my own at Dùn Flò
in the late afternoon so tidefull of milkmist*

leth mar leth,
dithis eala-bhàn air Linne na Dunaidh
bhuainn là teth

*side by side, two white swans on the pool at Linne na Dunaidh over there from
us on a hot day*

aig Òb Chamas Chros, mo mhilleadh,
gun an tè bhàn a bh' ann rim thaobh
's an làn a' tilleadh

*at Camuscross Bay, without the one who was there beside me and the fulltide
turning*

is far an do ghabh sinn ceum
san àm a dh'aom aig an Allt Cham
's na h-uain 's na bric nan leum

*and where we took a lamestep in the bentpast at the burn of Allt Cam and the
lambs and the poxtrout jumping*

mart ri bacan
ann am Barabhaig anns a' mhadainn
a' sealltainn a-nall orm tacan

*a cow tied to a stake in Baravaig in the morning showlooking over at me for a
while*

a' bhratag a bh' ann seal an-dè
air Drochaid Lòn Crè
an-diugh na dealan-dè

*the caterpillar that was there yesterday on the bridge at Drochaid Lòn Crè
today a butterfly*

aig alltan-tàimh
ri taobh Loch an Doireannaich,
boladh mùin air mo làimh

*beside a dried-up wee burn beside Loch an Doireannaich, the smell of piss on
my hand*

ann an Gleann Meadhanach, nathair
a' gluasad air mo chuairt leam fhìn feasgar
seachad air a' mhac-gun-athair

*in Gleann Meadhanach, a snake moving on my trip on my own in the evening
asideoverpast the duckweed*

aon dà trì ceithir
tairbh-nathrach a' dol seachad air Lod Mòr
là garbh cho luath ri beithir

*one two three four dragon-flies going overpast the pond at Lod Mòr on a wild
day as earlyfast as a skatebeastlightningthunder-boltgust*

sealladh – air Drochaid Lòn Crè, burras,
nach bi ann ach dreis,
thèid mi 'n urras

*a sight – on the bridge at Drochaid Lòn Crè, a butterfly, that won't be there for
long, I'm willing to bet*

och, an sneachda geal
air Cnoc an Fhùdair bhuam thall
nach bi ann ach seal

och, the brightwhite snow on the hill at Cnoc an Fhùdair away from me over there that will only be there for a little while

an raineach a' dol eug
as t-fhoghar ann am Barabhaig
a bha làn o chionn ceala-deug

the bracken dying off in the autumn in Baravaig that was tidefull a fortnight ago

och, carson a bhios mi daonnan a' caoidh
nan làithean ud aig Loch an Iasgaich
le MacAonghais is MacAoidh?

och, why am I forever harping on about those days at Loch an Iasgaich with MacInnes and Mackay?

de chuileagan mun linne-dealta
air Creag na Bà ri càil an latha
's na curracagan a' laighe nan ealta

all those flies around the dewpond on the hill at Creag na Bà at hungerdesirelifestrength day-break and the sheafshockbroombubblelapwings lielanding in a flock

cuileag-Chèitein fhathast na h-ainnir
a' falbh gu siùbhlach feasgar
thar Loch Nighean Fhionnlaigh na lannir

a mayfly still a nymph fleetflightflitting in the evening across Loch Nighean Fhionnlaigh all glintradiant

och, na bruthaichean casa
a' tighinn dhachaigh dhomh bho Chnoc Buaile 'n Easa
a bha uair fada na b' fhasa

*och, all those head-long rapid footsteep hillsides coing back home from the hill
at Cnoc Buaile 'n Easa which once was a lot easier*

air ais air an Àilean
far an deach mi uair le MacAilein
a chuir sinn bhon uair sin fon fhàilean

*back in the meadow in Àilean where I went one hour time with MacAllan that
we've buried under the sod since*

aig Buaile 'n Easa
far an trialladh iad nan latha,
ceò-teasa

*at the waterfall on the hill at Buaile 'n Easa where they used to
deathway flock go to the summer shieling in their day, a milky heat-mist*

a' slaodadh sa mhòintich ghlumaich
's ghruamaich gu fadalach
seachad air Càrnan an Rumaich

*slow dragging on the cloud gloomy moor slow late out of the way along past the
wee cairn at Càrnan an Rumaich*

thall dhomh far an tadhlainn
leis an tè a bh' ann
's nach eil ann anns an Fhadhlainn

*over there where I used to go with herself who was there and isn't on the beach
at Fadhlainn*

san achadh thall, each stodach,
agus e fhèin cho rèidh
leis fhèin air Gnoban nam Bodach

*in the field over by a restive horse, and himself at his ease on his own on the
hillock at Gnoban nam Bodach*

agus an dèidh nan uile,
air m' ais ri beul na h-oidhche
ri taobh Lòn na Cuile

and after everything, back in the evening beside the fly pond of Lòn na Cuile

an t-uisg' a' fàs nas mìne
an dèidh dhomh bhith sealltainn ùine
air Sgeir Shìne

*the tearsrain becoming finer after I've been watching for a while from the rock
at Sgeir Shìne*

mas e ur toil e!
tha mi feuchainn ri fois a ghabhail ùine
aig Abhainn an Taigh-sgoile

*if you don't mind! I'm just trying to get a bit of rest for a moment at the
Schoolhouse River*

chì mi Muile 's Tiridhe
's Idhe 's na h-eileanan uile
bhuan bho Chnoc a' Chridhe

*I can see Mull and Tiree and Iona and all the islands from the hill of Cnoc a'
Chridhe*

cràdh a' cur air mo loch-bhlèin
a' tilleadh ann an Linne nan Ceann le grèin
ach fhathast fhèin

a pain in my groin coming back at Linne nan Ceann in the sun but even so

nam stad aig Linne nan Ceann,
aiteal obann
agus greann

*stoodstopped at the pool at Linne nan Ceann, a quicksudden
lightjunipercolourbreeze and a striking gloomblastriple on the surface of the
water making my hair stand on end*

shuas air cùl Ghleann a' Chruidh
far an robh nan latha na bodaich,
na neòil a' gluasad uidh air uidh

*up at the back of Gleann a' Chruidh where the oldhalf-bottlesealcodboys were
in their day the swoonhueclouds moving little by little*

lon-dubh air a leòn aig lòn
ann an Leitir Chaillich là ciùin
gun charachadh ann, mo bhròn

*an injured blackbird at a provisionsmarshmeadowpool at Leitir Chaillich on a
mildcalm day without a movement at all*

Loch na Dàlach na suail
's Anna Dhubh bhuam a' tighinn a-nall
's a' cur foidhpe Rubha Guail

*Loch na Dàlach in a squall and the Anna Dhubh coming over and weathering
the point at Rubha Guail*

nach e fhèin a tha cliste -
dealan-dè rìoghail dìreach ùine
bhuam aig an Drochaid Bhriste

*isn't he supple swift! a monarch butterfly a monarch just a wee while distance
from me at the broken bridge*

saoil nach e sin an Soitheach Mòr
a chì mi bhuam a' siubhal feasgar
thall ud seachad air an Sgòr?

*is that not the Great Imigrant Ship I see over there deathseekgoing in the
evening over there past the peaksteepskerry at the Sgòr?*

an solas òrach
fad aon tiota dìreach
bhuam air an Eilean Sgòrach

*the golden light golden for just one moment over there on the islet of Eilean
Sgòrach*

aig Drochaid a' Mhuilinn eadar deireadh is tùs ràithe
ri taobh an uillt ri taobh na Linne
's na clachan fodham a' fàs nas blàithe

*at Mill Bridge eitherbothbetween the end and the beginning of a season beside
the burn beside the sound and the stones under me wastegetting warmer*

Didòmhaich aig Loch an Iasgaich
anns a' mhios mhairbh, tàmh
is feadag aig an uiseig-riasgaich

*on a Sunday at Loch an Iasgaich in the dead month of February, restsilence and
a Februaryploverwhistle from the mountain Februarywhistlelover*

a' ghrian a' dol fodha
bho Inbhir Amhlabhaig aig deireadh an latha –
sgarbh a' tumadh far bodha

*the sun going down from Inveraulavaig at the end of the day – a shag dives off
a skerry*

balach anns an t-solas thall air *quad*
a' tighinn eadar mi 's Beinn a' Bhràghad
is a' dol a' sealladh anns a' bhad

*a young bloke in the light over there on a quad coming between me and Beinn
a' Bhràghad and disappearing just like that*

gu grad, bideag tabhail
a' nochdadh air cùl mo mhuineil
aig Cnoc an t-Sabhail

*quicksuddenly, a scrap-pinch of a cleg nakedappears on the back of my neck on
the hill at Cnoc an t-Sabhail*

a' tighinn air ais ann am Morsaig as t-earrach,
a' nochdadh romham san fhionnairidh
gun fhiosta, pocan-bearrach

*coming back in Morsaig in the spring, nakedviewappearing in the lilacevening
suddenly, a puffball*

sa ghrèin air creig, nathair is earc
mar gum b' ann air cuirm-chnuic
os cionn Rubha Chàrn nan Cearc

*in the sun on a rock, a snake and a lizzard like on a hill-picnic above the
headland of Rubha Chàrn nan Cearc*

san Dàmhair, na h-eòin a' tarraing
is mi air mo chuairt ann am Barabhaig
is cràdh agam nam dhruim is arraing

*in October, the birds leaving as I go back around Baravaig and I get a pain and
a stitch in my ridgeback*

nam stad a' dèanamh mo mhùin
's a' sealltainn a-mach air a' Chuan Sgìth sa mhadainn –
och, càite 'n deach thu bhuam, a rùin?

*stopped for a piss and showlooking out onto the Minch in the morning, och, my
dear, where have you gone to?*

fad finn foinneach an fheasgair a' fàrsan
san Fhaoilinn 's a' tilleadh an uair sin,
a' cànrann agus a' càrsan

*the whole afternoon rambling on the shore and coming back that hourtime
then,whinging and wheezing*

aon uair eile,breacadh-rionnaich
os cionn Loch an Iasgaich
anns an iarmailt ghlionnaich

once again, a mackerel sky above Loch an Iasgaich in the hazy heavens

a' tilleadh, air mo shiaradh
bho Rubha Shlèite 's air mo bheulaibh,
an t-sligh' a' fiaradh is a' fiaradh

*reflectreturning, castwestdecayexhausted from the Point of Sleat and the way
mouthahead of me varysheartwistbending and varysheartwistbending*

am fàrdach agam trumach air thearrach
agus mi fhìn mar a bha riamh
a' chiad là den earrach
(après Issa)

my hovelhome all topsy turvy and myself as ever the first day of spring

Loch Eiseort cho ciùin ri clàr
is ann am baile Mhorsaig là foghair,
aon duilleag a' tuiteam ri làr

*Loch Eishort so calmquiet and in the village of Morsaig on an autumn day a
single leaf falls to the ground*

clag na Cille Mòire gun bheum
sa mhadainn earraich is gun seirm
ach fhathast – na h-ògain thall nan leum

*the churchbell at Kilmore silent on a spring morning but still – the young lambs
over there frolicking*

eathar Iain is Choinnich air chruaidh ri port
an dèidh aon cheala-deug fhathast
shìos air Loch Eiseort

*Iain and Kenny's boat stormbound after more than a fortnight still down on
Loch Eishort*

eadar an tuil 's an tràigh
ann an dà dhiog aig Camas Darach,
uisge 's grian an àigh

*eitherbothbetween the floodtide and the recedingstrand in two seconds at
Camas Darach, rainwater and glorious sea-groundlandsun*

beithe-gheal a' crapadh
as t-fhoghar ann an Gleann Meadhanach
is na duilleagan gan sgapadh

*the silver birch crushcrickcrinkleshrinking in autumn in Gleann Meadhanach
and the leaves squanderscattering*

ann an Cùl nan Cnoc Diluain
mar a bha ‘s o chionn seachdain,
am bodach air ais a’ buain

*in the middle of nowhere on the hill at Cùl nan Cnoc on Monday like last week,
the oldhalf-bottlesealcodboy back at the peats*

an t-uisg’ a’ tilleadh air Beinn Feòir na thaom –
och, the fios, a charaid chòir agam,
cha robh e mar seo san àm a dh’aom?

*the pissearsrainwater reflectreturning on the hill at Beinn Feòir in a bilgefit-
torrent – och, surely, my old friend, it wasn’t like this in the old days?*

air beulaibh Taigh Ciobair a’ Chnuic, de threalaich
agus air a chùlaibh,
solas ùr na gealaich

*in front of the old Keeper’s House on the hill, all those useless old odds and
sods and behind it the light of the new moon*

boillsgeach, sealanach,
gu h-àrd mun Bhealach Bhàn sa chamhanaich,
tàirneanach is dealanach

*flashfleeting highloud at the Bealach Bàn in the dawndusk, thunder and
lightning*

gnè air choreigin de dh’eun-creiche
fad’ às air Sgùrr na h-Iolaire
‘s shìos bhuan closach gun seiche

*some sort of raptor or other far off on Sgùrr na h-Iolaire and down there a
carcass without a hide*

san achadh thall ud, an tarbh
a' glacadh m' aire seach an smeòrach
a' dol seachad air a' Cheann Gharbh

*in the field over by, the bull getting my attention and not the song thrush going
past Ceann Garbh*

shìos bhuam aig a' Chnoc Uaine,
fèath-geal air lom na Linne
's fàileadh ùr na cluaine

*down there at Knock, a perfect brightwhite calm on the bare surface of the
Sound of Sleat and the freshnew airmell of the green burial-ground-
deceitmeadow*

seileach a' cromadh
ann an Allt na Bèiste 's ri thaobh
fàileadh na cluain' air a lomadh

*a willow bend-drooping into the burn of Allt na Bèiste and beside it the airmell
of the baremown green burial-ground-deceitmeadow*

san tiùrr aig Òb Snaosaig, sgonn
gun charachadh is a' togail ceann
is a' falbh cho luath, madadh-donn

*in the seaweed at high water at Òb Snaosaig, a log not moving at all and lifting
up its head and disappearing just like that, a brown otter*

an sàs dhomh tiotan taobh ri fèith
taobh ri Cruachan na Fèithe Seilich,
thall bhuam, seilleanan air an sgèith

*caught up for a moment beside a channel in the bog at Cruachan na Fèithe
Seilich, over there, bees on the wing*

gun a bhith a'sealltainn air dad,
an crodh gun charachadh thall ud
ri taobh Loch Doire nan Gad

*not looking at anything, the cattle not moving over there beside Loch Doire
nan Gad*

seadh, na rudan biodach nach eil thu a' faicinn:
ann am Fèith na Fala, mi a' tuiteam sna caochain
's de chuileagan air feadh mo chraicinn

*aye, the tiny things you don't see: in Fèith na Fala, falling in
blindfundamentmolerills and all those flies all over my skin*

chì mi shìos bhuan riochd beathaich
nam sheasamh air Beinn Dubh a' Bhealaich
is m' iomhaigh fhèin san t-slaman-cheathaich

*I can see down there the spectreshape of a beast standing on Beinn Dubh a'
Bhealaich and my own ghostimage in the dry stratus cloud mist*

a' gabhail mar lòn mo cheapairean-taobhaidh
nam shuidhe mun rainich aig an Allt Ruadh -
fuich! saobhaidh!

*sitting there with my pieces by the bracken at the burn of Allt Ruadh - yugh!
a fox's den!*

air bruach Allt na Bèiste, craobh-chritheach
is air an taobh thall gun charachadh,
leatha fhèin, corra-ghritheach

*on the banks of the burn of Allt na Bèiste, an aspen and on the far side not
moving at all, on its own, a heron*

craobh-chrith each air chrith
air bruach Allt na Bèiste sa chamhanaich
is corra-ghrith each gun char sam bith

*an aspen trembling on the banks of the burn of Allt na Bèiste in the dusk dawn
and a heron not moving at all*

nam shineadh, a' tuiteam ann an neul
agus Allt na Bèiste bhuam thall
an impis cur a-mach air a bheul

*lying, falling in a cloud-daze and the burn of Allt na Bèiste over there about to
burst its banks*

air mullach Sgùrr nan Caorach
far an deach sinn aon samhradh,
mi fhìn is an Leòdach is an Saorach

*on the summit of Sgùrr nan caorach where we went one summer, myself and
MacLeod and MacIntyre*

cho sgiobalta – sgoth Niseach
anns a' chiùranaich
a' dol seachad air a' Ghoirtean Dhriseach

so neatfast – a skiff in the drizzle going past Goirtean Driseach

och, a dhuine ghaolaich –
far an robh Taigh Eòghainn uair na sheasamh,
cluarain agus càrn-aolaich

och, man, where Ewen's house stood, thistles and a dunghill

an sneachd' a bh' ann là no dhà
air ais air Creag na Bà
air leaghadh air falbh mar-thà

*the snow that was there a day or two ago on the hill at Creag na Bà has gone
and melted already*

air ais ann am Barabhaig an dèidh dà mhios
is m' aire air an rainich ùir air fàs
is cha tèid agam air a cumail sìos

*back in Baravaig after two months and my mind on the new bracken that's
grown and I can't keep it down*

mo dhruim a' fàs tais
is mi nam stad is a' ghrian ris
aig Allt Rèidhe Ghlais

*my ridgeback growgetting humidsoft-tendermoist as I stand there in the sun at
the burn of Allt Rèidhe Ghlais*

Barabhaig na h-aon raon
is an sneachd' a bh' ann o chionn tacain
air leaghadh braon bho bhraon

*Baravaig like a machair and the snow that was there a while ago melted,
every drop*

seadh, an sneachda geal a bh' aig cia mheud troigh
air leathad Sgùrr nan Caorach an t-seachdain a chaidh,
seall an-diugh nach eil na bloigh

*aye, the brightwhite snow that was there at how many feet on the slope of Sgùrr
nan Caorach last week, showsee today not as much as a flake*

agus mu dheireadh thall 's a-bhos
air ais mar a bha 's bho thùs
a-rithist ann an Camas Chros

finally back as in the beginning again in Camuscross

nam stad air an t-Sithean Mhòr, cho sàmhach,
fad' às langanaich
is làmhach

*stopping on the hill at Sìthean Mòr, so quiet, far off a stag bellowing and a
gunshot*

anns an Àirigh Fhraoich a' triall
far an deach mo Dhonnchadh là dhan robh saoghal
is Dòmhnall is Aonghas is Niall

*taking a hike to the shieling where Duncan went once and Donald and Angus
an Neil*

och nach sleamhainn an rathad air a reothadh
feasgar iséal ann an Camas Darach
is shìos bhuan de dh'fheamainn a' breothadh

*och, the frozen road is so slippery going in late in the afternoon to Camas Darach
and down there all that rotting seaweed*

fairichidh mi nuallan eallaich
aig Tobht' Iain Bhodaich
agus cuileag-theallaich

I can feel hear burdencattle lamentlowing at Old John's ruin and a cricket

a' stad aig an Allt Cham a ghabhail m' analach
is thall bhuam corra-ghritheach
far an taine 'n tanalach

*stopping at the burn of Allt Cam to catch my breath and over there a heron
where the shoals are shallowest*