

Poems from the Plockton Residency

The Sorley MacLean Trust, as part of Highland 2007, established a project that would appropriately celebrate the poet's life. A series of concerts took place throughout the Highlands where new musical compositions by Kenneth Thomson, Mary Ann Kennedy, Marie-Louise Napier, Eilidh MacKenzie, Donald Shaw, Blair Douglas, Allan Henderson, Allan Macdonald and John Spillane with Louis de Paor were premiered.

Music and Gaelic residencies were also established at Plockton High School and the adjacent Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music. Composer James Ross and poet Maoilios Caimbeul worked closely with students to create new music and poetry also premiered at the concerts. Poems from *Dàin do Eimhir* were set to music and the students also set their own songs to music. Their poems and songs were in response to their close reading of some of the poems in *Dàin do Eimhir*.

The human face is a strong motif in Sorley's celebrated sequence and students were encouraged to write poems on the theme of the face. Most of the following poems and translations were published in the Summer 2007 issue of the literary magazine *Northwords Now*.

Aodann Athar

Feusag mar bhruis,
cha mhòr liath
ach le beagan dubh
bho làithean na b' òige
fhathast ri fhaicinn.

Gruag a chinn –
chuireadh e bruis troimhpe a h-uile
madainn,
fiù 's an cearcall mòr
far nach robh càil a' fàs.

Nuair a bhruidhneadh e,
bha e mar nach b' urrainn dha
an gàire a thoirt dheth aodann
fada gu leòr
airson na facail a thighinn a-mach.

Sùilean –
dath a' Chuain Tuath annta;
na bàis nad bhroinn bhon chuan mhòr sin.
Às dèidh greis bhiodh iad
dealrach le toileachas is coibhneas:

ach na bàis sin fhathast nam broinn.

Father's Face

A brush of a beard,
almost grey
but with a little black
from younger days
still to be seen.

The hair of his head –
he would put a brush through it every
morning,
even the big circle
where nothing grew.

When he spoke,
it was as if he couldn't
keep the smile from his face
long enough
to let the words come out.

Eyes –
the colour of the North Sea in them;
the deaths inside you from that great sea.
After a while they would
shine with happiness and kindness:

But these deaths still within them.

Naomi Ballantyne, S5

Aodann òg

Tha craiceann d' aodainn
cho mìn 's cho òg,
làn spionnaidh is dath.

Nach math tha cuimhn' a'm
nuair a bha do ghnùis gun smal;
do ghàire cho àlainn,
ach an uair sin chithinn an cràdh
air cùl do shùilean domhainn, bàidheil.

An fhearg a' gearradh tro chloich na sùla
dorcha, dìomhair,
a' losgadh asad an toileachas 's an gaol;
ach ghlè thu do chli
's tha brìgh d' anama air deàrrsadh
tro na sùilean domhainn gorm.

Ach a-nis 's am pian air lasachadh,
càit a bheil an tuar brèagha blàth?

'S dòcha gun robh an t-àmhghar cus
son an gràs 's an gaol a thoirt air ais
a bha nad aodann clis.

Coralea MacKay S6

Thusa

'S tu nad shuidhe mum choinneimh,
d' aodann air a bhlàthachadh
le èibhleagan ìosal an teine,
chì mi thu mar gum biodh gu tur às ùr.

Mar a shiùbhlas do shùil orm,
tha do chraiceann bog, 's an rudhadh sin
nad ghruaidh
gam thàladh, mar choinneil
air an oidhche as duirche.

Mar a bhruidhneas tu gu caoin,
tha faclan fìorghlan a' tighinn buat,
d' aodann mìn agus fo smachd,
sèimh agus suaimhneach.

Tha thu nad shuidhe an seo
saor o fhoill.
Chì mi so-ghointeachd, chan fhaic eagal;

The young Face

The skin of your face
so smooth and young,
full of life and colour.

I remember your face was perfect,
the beautiful smile,
but then I could see the pain
deep in your graceful eyes.

The anger piercing your pupils,
dark, mysterious,
burning away the happiness and love,
but you stayed strong
and the power in your soul
shone through these deep blue eyes.

But now, the pain decreased,
where is the complexion, lovely and
warm?

Maybe the pain was too strong
to recover the gracefulness and love
of your face.

You

As you sit in front of me,
your face warmed
by the embers of the fire,
I see you as if for the first time.

As you look at me,
your skin is soft and the flush in your
cheek
attracts me, like a candle
in the darkest night.

As you speak gently,
the words are pure;
your face refined and controlled,
calm and serene.

You sit here
Free from guile.
I see vulnerability, not fear,

thu cho onarach, gràdhach
ris a' chiad latha a thàinig thu thugam.

Janet MacRae, S6

Gun Tìotal

Do shùilean dorcha donn,
domhainn, èiginneach
ag iarraidh cuideigin a dh'èisteach –
ach cò idir a nì sin?

D' fhiamh-ghàire soilleir, làn fàilte:
chì mi i sna reultan
ann an speur na h-oidhche –
ach chan eil thu an sin.

Aodainn an t-saoghail,
ionann iad uile ach diofraicht':
bidh d' aodann an-còmhnaidh
air beulaibh m' inntinn.

Rachel Lincoln S6

Eun Creiche

Tha e ag itealaich tron adhar
gun chùram air an t-saoghal,
a' coimhead thairis nan cnocan,
a' feitheamh airson a chobhartaich;
na sgiathan mòra a' sguabadh sìos is suas
gu maiseach,
a shùilean suidhichte air luchraig gun
chòmhnadh.

Gu deas gluaisidh e airson a chreiche,
na sùilean dian gun stad ga coimhead,
is teàrnaidh e gu sàmhach luath;
na spàgan cumhachdach deiseil
gus grèim fhaighinn air a' chuirm.

Gu seòlta dàibhidh e sìos,
a sgiathan mar ghaotharan mòr,
's gabhaidh e a chobhartaich le a spuirean
gabhaidh.

Nuair a gheibh e a chuirm,
tha e air sgèith deiseil airson an ath thruaghan.

as honest, loving
as you were the first day you came to me.

Untitled

Your dark brown eyes,
deeply earnest,
wanting someone to listen –
but who, o who will do that?

Your bright smile, welcoming:
I see it in the stars
in the night sky –
but you are not there.

All the faces of the world,
the same but different:
your face will always
be before my mind.

Bird of Prey

He flies through the air
without a care in the world,
viewing the hills, waiting for his prey;
his wings swoop up and down gracefully,
his eyes fix on a helpless mouse.

Swiftly he moves towards the catch,
watching it constantly with eagle eyes.
He descends quickly but quietly,
his powerful claws ready to grab the feast.

A sly dive down,
wings spread out like a large fan,
he grabs his prey with his perilous talons.

Once he has got his feast,
he flies off ready for his next victim.

Fenella MacRae S5

War is a powerful theme in *Dàin do Eimhir*. Students wrote songs in the waulking song tradition.

Caoidh na Bantraich

Sèist

Hi hù ho ro eile
'S mi tha aonranach air chall,
'S na deòir gam fhàgail cho dall
Hi hù ho ro eile.

1.
Tha mi airtnealach fann –
'S gann gum fosgail mi mo shùilean.

2.
Tha mi feargach, falamh, sgìth
Agus cho tinn nach bi dùil ris.

3.
Carson bha cogadh ann co-dhiù?
Bha thu ro fhiùghail son dhol null ann.

4.
B' fheàrr leam gum b' urrainn dhomh do shireadh
Ach cha bhi deireadh air m' ionndrainn.

The Widow's Lament

Chorus

Hi hù ho ro èile
I am lonely and lost,
The tears blind me
Hi hù ho ro eile.

1.
I am weary and faint –
I can hardly open my eyes.

2.
I am angry, empty, tired
And so sick that I can't expect
him.

3.
Why was there a war anyway?
He was too worthy to have been
there.

4.
I wish I could look out for you
But there will be no end to my
longing.

Rachel Lincoln, Eve Pincock, Janet MacRae All S6

Tha thu 'g ràdh riumsa, thasgaidh

{A waulking song type reply to *Dàin do Eimhir IV*}

Sèist

Tha thu 'g ràdh riumsa, thasgaidh,
cha bhiodh masladh searbh nad phòig-s',
tha thu 'g ràdh rium, a thasgaidh.

1.
Cò ris a tha dùil agad bhuamsa?
Tha e ro chruaidh orm innse.

2.
'S ann a tha thu dol ro dhàn orm –
tha thu cràdh mo chrìdh gu cinnteach.

You are saying to me, darling

Chorus

You are saying to me, darling,
disgrace would not be bitter in your kiss,
you are saying to me darling.

1.
What do you expect from me?
It's very difficult to say.

2.
You are far too daring for me –
my heart is sore for sure because of you.

3.
Chan eil mi 'g ràdh nach eil stà ann –
a h-uile grain tha tighinn gu ìre:

3.
I don't say it's of no consequence –
all the loathsome events taking place:

4.
cha toir ar gaol-ne buaidh an dòigh orr'
's chan urrainn dòmhs' an deanamh bìodach.

4.
our love will not affect them in any way
and I can't make them insignificant.

5.
Dhèanadh ar gaol gach nì nas soirbhe,
ach so-leònt' e mar rèim nan tìr sin.

5.
Our love would make things easier,
but it is vulnerable like the way of these
nations.

6.
Ach pian ort fhèin, cha bhiodh mo mhiann
air
nan tigeadh crìoch ar gaoil gun iarraidh:

6.
But I wouldn't wish pain for you
if our love would end unsought:

7.
'S ann bhiodh crìoch gaoil nas miosa
nan cogadh sgriosail tha air d' inntinn.

7.
The end of love would be worse
than the destructive war on your mind.

Susanne Houston, Coralea MacKay, Emma MacInnes, Lauren Weir

'S mise, 's mise tha brònach

Sorrowful am I

'S mise, 's mise tha brònach
'S mo mhac òg 's gun e ann:
O a thì 's nach till e tuilleadh.

Sorrowful am I
With my young son gone:
Sadly, he will not return.

1.
Tha mo chridhe briste, brùite;
Gun dùil ris, 's mi air m' fhàgail.

1.
My heart is broken and bruised;
I am left, with no expectation of his
return.

2.
Carson a thug iad mo mhac bhuan? –
Cha robh an t-àm ann dha bàs' chadh.

2.
Why did they take my son from me? –
It wasn't his time to die.

3.
Cò idir, idir a mharbh e?
Nam faighinn làmh air, bheirinn cràdh dha.

3.
Who was it at all that killed him?
If I could get him, I would hurt him.

4.
Tha a' chlann agam gun athair,
'S na cridheachan aca le àmhghar.

4.
My children are without a father,
And their hearts are distressed.

5.

5.

Feargach, brònach, gad iarraidh dhachaigh, Angry, sad, wanting you home,
'S gun fhios dè thachras a-màireach. Not knowing what will happen
tomorrow.

Naomi Ballantyne, Anna Black, Laura MacKenzie, Fenella MacRae