

## **‘A MOMENT OF HISTORY’: IAIN MAC A’ GHOBHAINN AGUS ‘DÀIN DO EIMHIR’ SHOMHAIRLE MHCIGILL-EAIN**

Nochd *Poems to Eimhir*, tionndaidhean bàrdail Beurla le Iain Mac a’ Ghobhainn air taghadh de na ‘Dàin do Eimhir’, ann an 1971, na copaidhean cruaidh foillsichte le Gollancz agus na leth-bhreacan boga le Northern House, agus dealbh àmhgharach le Robert Colquhoun (1914–1962) air a’ chòmhdach<sup>1</sup> a bha a’ cur an cuimhne an ‘Guernica’ aig Picasso. Rinn Northern House clò-bhualadh eile den leabhar ann an 1973 agus 1979, agus fichead bliadhna as dèidh sin, le taic Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis, dh’fhoillsich Acair na ‘Poems’ as ùr, fon tiotal lom *Eimhir*, le prìomh dhàin MhicGill-Eain man coinneamh.<sup>2</sup> An àite an deilbh chòmhdach aig Colquhoun, bha an leabhar beag eireachdail air a sgeadachadh le sia de na dealbhan aig Uilleam Crosbie (1915–1999) à *Dàin do Eimhir agus Dàin Eile* ann an 1943, agus a bharrachd air ro-ràdh Mhic a’ Ghobhainn fhèin bha ro-ràdh ùr bho cheann-suidhe a’ Chomuinn, an t-Ollamh Dòmhnall Meek. Bheachdaich Meek gu robh an leabhar a’ comharrachadh ‘an inspirational, unrepeatable moment’ ann an eachdraidh litreachail na dùthcha, ‘a convergence of the poetic skills of two of Scotland’s best-known twentieth-century poets, both of them Gaelic-speaking islanders’ (Meek 1999: 10, 7). Bha tiamhaidheachd an lùib a’ ghreadhnachais, leis gun robh an dithis bhàrd air caochladh anns na beagan bhliadhnachan ron fhoillseachadh (*ibid.*: 7).

Bha dàimh pearsanta aig an Ollamh Meek don leabhar, agus e air taidhp-sgrìobhainnean de na ‘Poems to Eimhir’ fhaicinn ann an 1967 ’s e na sgoilear aig Mac a’ Ghobhainn ann an Àrd-sgoil an Òbain: ‘I can still see vividly the almost transparent sheets of copy-paper which had endured the remorseless onslaught of Iain’s typewriter, as it blasted its way through blue carbon’ (*ibid.*). Ged nach do dh’innis ro-ràdh a’ bhàird cuin a rinneadh na dàin, bha e soilleir nach robh iad buileach ùr ann an 1971: ‘All those that I have translated I did during one period when I seemed to have a grasp of an idiom for the translation and it would be difficult for me to recapture exactly that idiom now’ (MacLean 1971: 11). Bha deagh chuid de na dàin air

nochdadh an clò mar-thà: ceithir ann an 1968 anns a' chruinneachadh *Scottish Poetry 3* còmhla ri an dàin thùsail Ghàidhlig (Bruce *et al.* 1968: 74–81), agus sia deug eile sa Mhàirt 1969 anns an iris *Lines Review* (March 1969: 25–35); dà bhliadhna as dèidh sin, goirid mus tàinig *Poems* a-mach, nochd seachd de na dàin le ro-ràdh mìneachaidh bho Mhac a' Ghobhainn anns an iris Shasannaich *Stand*.

Ach 's ann aon dusan bliadhna ro thaisbeanadh *Poems to Eimhir* a rinn Mac a' Ghobhainn na tionndaidhean aige. Ann an 1958, bha e air aiste fhoillseachadh ann an *Saltire Review* agus *An Gaidheal*<sup>3</sup> air bàrdachd MhicGill-Eain (stèidhte air leabhar 1943) anns an robh e a' co-dhùnadh:

Where are we to place Sorley MacLean? One must briefly answer: 'On the heights'. If a major poet is one who, while assimilating a tradition, invigorates it with fresh themes and fresh forms; if he is one whose poetry leaves in that part of us (which we cannot simply call the mind) echoes and resonances; if he is one who has lived with the highest and retained his humility; and, finally, if he is one who, knowing himself, can reveal to us ourselves, then Sorley MacLean is a major poet. As long as we have any respect for poetry, poetry of this stature should be continually read (Smith 1958a: 40).

Dh'innseadh Mac a' Ghobhainn don bhàrd fhèin cho mòr is a bha a mheas air a bhàrdachd riamh o fhuair e leabhar 1943 mar dhuais aig Sgoil MhicNeacail:

Some discerning teacher gave me as a school prize a copy of 'Dain do Eimhir' and since the age of 17 I have been studying it on and off, a study which culminated in the article you mentioned.<sup>4</sup> [...] Yours is the kind of poetry I would like to write: strong lyrical poetry which has also tenderness and thought. Today I was reading the biography of Keynes in which he talks of "passionate precision": that is what I mean, the thought and the music.<sup>5</sup>

Sgriobh e gu MacGill-Eain an toiseach ann an 1959, a’ sireadh cead foillseachaidh airson eadar-theangachadh air aon lioraic. ‘I have always wanted to try my hand at translating one or two of your poems’ (LNA LS 29538, 1). Fhuair e freagairt anns an robh MacGill-Eain a’ toirt taing dha airson na h-aiste, agus sgriobh e a-rithist san Lùnastal:

I wonder if you would be interested in reading some time the translations I have made into verse of your ‘Dain do Eimhir’ i.e. excluding the Other Poems? I have translated all of them except four. [...]

As you know I have always had the highest possible regard for these poems and I suppose the reason I have translated them is that others who don’t know Gaelic might be able to see how good they are. I hope you don’t think it was presumptuous of me to do this or self-seeking in any way for I can think [sic] that I can say in all sincerity that it was only out of admiration for the quality of the poetry that I did this. [...]

Naturally I have a lot of polishing-up to do on them, but I’ve got the main lines worked out. I have tried as much as possible to stick to the original rhyme schemes and the order of the thought, but I must admit that I found many of them extremely complex, especially LII, ‘Dom dhùr-amharc bha thu nad reul’ [‘Tri Leòis’], which I admire immensely (LNA LS 29538, 5).

Mus do chuir e na tionndaidhean aige gu MacGill-Eain aig deireadh an Dàmhair, bha e air beachdan fhaighinn orra bho Iain MacAonghais – ‘a chap called McInnes who likes your work extremely and who is pretty strong in the Gaelic’ – agus bha Robin Lorimer (1918–1996), ‘s e na dheasaichear coitcheann aig an taigh-fhoillseachaidh Oliver & Boyd, a’ gabhail ùidh annta.<sup>6</sup> Chuimhnich MacAonghais gun tug e làn meal-a-naidheachd do Mhac a’ Ghobhainn ‘on having translated certain passages that seemed to me to defeat translation and on succeeding so brilliantly’ (MacInnes 2000: 38). Feumar cuimhneachadh nach robh eadar-theangachaidhean MhicGill-Eain fhèin rim faighinn fhathast airson cuid mhath de na dàin, leithid II (‘A Chiall ’s A Ghràidh’), XIV (‘Reic

Anama'), XVIII ('Ùrnaigh'), XXIII ('Cochur'), XLV ('An Sgian'), L ('Chan eil anns a' bhròn...'), LII ('Tri Leòis') no LVII ('An Tathaich').

Bha Mac a' Ghobhainn dealasach ann a bhith a' sireadh foillseachadh a dh'fhosgladh mìorbhail bàrdachd MhicGill-Eain do luchd na Beurla, ach cha robh an aon chabhag air MacGill-Eain. 'Herewith another despairing attempt to to see if you have finished with the translations', sgrìobh Mac a' Ghobhainn san Fhaoilleach 1960, agus Oliver & Boyd a' gabhail fadachd ris na dàin fhaicinn.<sup>7</sup> As dèidh dà oidhirp eile 's e a' call faighdinn gu buileach:

Dear Sorley, What's the situation now? Quite frankly, I have the feeling that you do not wish to have these published and are afraid to hurt my feelings (not because of any inadequacy in the translations but for other reasons, which I respect). Please, please, do not allow these translations to go forward if you think this way. I have told you before and I repeat that I shall understand.<sup>8</sup>

Ghabh e aithreachas da chuid mì-fhaighdinn nuair a fhuair e freagairt bho MhacGill-Eain mu dheireadh,<sup>9</sup> ach bha Mac a' Ghobhainn air aithneachadh nach robh faireachdainnean a' bhàird mu choinneamh nan Dàn do Eimhir saor o theagamhan no nàire air choireigin.<sup>10</sup>

I can assure you that as far as I'm concerned these poems don't read to me like self-pity. They are passionate and true and there is agony behind them, more true feeling than I have ever achieved in anything I have written (MacGill-Eain 2003: 13).

Ma tha e coltach nach robh MacGill-Eain tuilleadh is deònach na Dàin do Eimhir a chur a-mach ann an clò a-rithist ann an cumadh ruith-dhàn, chan e gun robh e a' cur cùl buileach leis an rèim sin de bheatha is de obair. Sgrìobh e seòrsa de postscriptum ann an 1965, 'Còig Bliadhna Fichead O Richmond' anns an do mheòraich e air a chàs ann an 1940; ged a tha e ag aithneachadh am 'bàrr trom a readh gu laomadh' a dh'èirich 'o ghòraiche na h-òinnsich meallta', tha am bàrd a' co-dhùnadh gur fhad a dh'ionnsaich e 'gur miosa na suarachas òinnsich / an samh a seòmar-gas na h-Eòrpa'; ma thilleas e

a-nise gu làrach a sheann bhòid gaoil, ‘cha toir e orm ach snodha-gàire / mas cuimhne liom idir mo chràdhlot’.<sup>11</sup>

Ann an 1967, sgrìobh Mac a’ Ghobhainn a-rithist, agus cothrom foillseachaidh ùr air togail ceann: ‘Do you remember the translations of your work I sent you, & you thought were quite good?’ Bha deagh sheans gum foillsicheadh Duncan Glen (1933–, a bu leis *Akros*) iad, ’s dòcha le ro-ràdh bho Ùistean MacDhiarmaid. ‘As you know I have always been an extravagant admirer of your “Dain do Eimhir”, and I think translations of your work would open you to an even wider readership than you have already’ (LS 29538, 15). Ach mun earrach dh’innseadh Glen don bhàrd Seòras Bruce (1909–2002) mu na duilgheadasan mòra a bha aca ann a bhith a’ lorg foillsichear. Bha Bruce aig an àm air sgioba deasachaidh a bha a’ cur le chèile cruinneachadh ùr de bhàrdachd Albannach airson Clò Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann, agus mhol e do Rùnaire EUP, Archie R. Turnbull (1923–2003), gun cuireadh an taigh-foillseachaidh na *Dàin do Eimhir* agus na *Poems* an clò le chèile.<sup>12</sup> Shir Turnbull aonta MhicGill-Eain, le cuideachadh o Mhac a’ Ghobhainn:

I know you are widely known already, but this might make you even more so (not that I think you care particularly about that. But I think it would be good for Gaelic literature for as many people as possible to know that a work of the stature of Dain do Eimhir has been written in it) (LS 29538, 16).

Dh’aontaich co-dheasaichean Bhruce àite a thoirt do chuid de na Dàin is na Poems ann an *Scottish Poetry 3* (LS 29502, 69), ach cha tàinig na planaichean airson an ruith-dhàin shlàin gu buil. Mar a bha Mac a’ Ghobhainn ga thuigsinn cha robh MacGill-Eain deònach gun nochdadh na Dàin ’s na Poems còmhla, leis nach robh còrichean foillseachaidh leabhar 1943 soilleir (LS 29538, 16), ach gheall Uilleam MacGill-Fhaolain (1915–1996), foillsichear an leabhair iomraitich, nach cuireadh e bacadh sam bith air ath-fhoillseachadh; bheachdaich e a bharrachd:

We were never very happy about the author’s prose versions, and had favoured infinitely more interesting, if less accurate,

renderings by the Rev. John McKechnie, late editor of the Dewar Manuscripts. From the few English translations I have seen published by Iain Crichton Smith it would help considerably to introduce this remarkable poet to the wide public he deserves.<sup>13</sup>

Ach 's e taighean foillseachaidh Sasannach, Gollancz agus Northern House, a thug na 'Poems' agus *Dàin do Eimhir* gu aire an t-saoghail mhòir mu dheireadh thall. Thòisich an iris *Stand*, a stèidhich am bàrd Jon Silkin (1930–1997),<sup>14</sup> a' foillseachadh obair Mhic a' Ghobhainn mu 1970,<sup>15</sup> cho-stèidhich Silkin 'Northern House Pamphlet Poets', an sreath fon deach an leabhar bog a chur a-mach mun Òg-mhìos 1971.<sup>16</sup> Bha cliù Mhic a' Ghobhainn air dhol am meud gu mòr tro na seasgadan, agus bha taigh foillseachaidh Victor Gollancz air an nobhail as ainmeile aige *Consider the Lilies* a chur a-mach ann an 1968, an nobhail ghoirid *The Last Summer* 's an cruinneachadh bàrdachd *From Bourgeois Land* ann an 1969, agus nobhail eile *My Last Duchess* ann an 1971 fhèin. Thugadh iris shlàn de *Lines Review* do sgrìobhadh ùr Mhic a' Ghobhainn ann an 1969.<sup>17</sup>

Bha aire cuideachd ga toirt as ùr do MhacGill-Eain. Choisrigedh àireamh de *Lines Review* do bhàrdachd ùr no neo-fhoillsichte aige ann an co-bhonn le *Gairm*, anns an robh trì de na *Dàin do Eimhir* 'mùchte' (XL, XLVI, XLVII) a' nochdadh airson a' chiad turas riamh.<sup>18</sup> Sgrìobhadh Robin Lorimer, a bha a-nise aig an Irish University Press, tràth ann an 1970:

It's gradually beginning to be felt that although so little of your poetry has hitherto been widely disseminated, you are at least as great a poet as Chris Grieve; and I do hope you will let me do what I can to make it still better known.<sup>19</sup>

Bha IUP gu bhith a' gabhail os làimh clò Uilleam MhicIll-Fhaolain, agus bha e san amharc aig Lorimer *Dàin do Eimhir agus Dàin Eile* fhoillseachadh as ùr ('a reprint, or better still a new edn').<sup>20</sup> San t-Sultainn 1970, thug Lorimer cuireadh do Dhòmhnall MacAmhlaigh cruinneachadh a dheasachadh de chòignear nua-bhàrd Gàidhlig ('Five Modern Gaelic Poets') airson a' chlà aige fhèin Southside<sup>21</sup>. As t-samhradh, le cuideachadh an Dr Stiùbhairt MhicGhriogair, bha

am foillsichear Gordon G. Wright air MacGill-Eain a thàladh a-steach do chruinneachadh trìuir bhàrd nàiseantach, Uilleam Nèill, Stiùbhart MacGriogair agus Deòrsa Caimbeul Hay, agus nochd còrr is lethcheud duilleag de a bhàrdachd (gun aon dàn do Eimhir ann) le eadar-theangachadh Beurla ann am *Four Points of a Saltire* aig deireadh na Dùbhlachd.<sup>22</sup>

Anns an Òg-mhìos 1971 bha Robin Lorimer fhathast a’ feuchainn ri cead MhicGill-Eain fhaighinn airson ath-fhoillseachadh leabhar 1943 le IUP, ach, mìos as a dhèidh, thàinig bàrd is deasaichear gu aonta làn-chruinneachadh da bhàrdachd a chur an clò (no co-dhiù mòr-thaghadh: ‘unless this collection contains most of the CUILINN, I don’t think it should be called your COLLECTED POEMS’).<sup>23</sup> Dh’fhoillsich Lorimer duilleag-leathann dhubh is òir de Dhàn XXXIV (‘An uair a labhras mi...’) san t-Sultain 1971, air a sgeadachadh le dealbhan bhon fhear-ealain Alasdair Hamilton,<sup>24</sup> ach chuir duilgheadasan eaconomach bacadh air an dà phròiseact mhòr,<sup>25</sup> agus cha tàinig an co-chruinneachadh iomraiteach *Nua-Bhàrdachd Ghàidhlig* a-mach gu 1976, agus *Reothairt is Contraigh: taghadh de dhàin 1932–1972* gu bliadhna as a dhèidh fo shuaicheantas Chanongate. A dh’aindeoin oidhirpean nan uile (Ruairidh MacThòmais, Gordon Wright agus Club Leabhar nam measg)<sup>26</sup> cha do nochd *Dàin do Eimhir* an clò riamh ri beò a’ bhàird fhèin. ‘The sequence is not really such a collective sequence as appears in the book, in fact it may be perhaps two or three sequences’, bha e air cumail a-mach ann an agallamh an 1970,<sup>27</sup> agus ’s ann an lùib ceithir earrannan fa leth a sgaoil e na seachd dàin do Eimhir air fhichead ann an cruinneachadh 1977.

Nuair a thàinig *Poems to Eimhir* a-mach san t-samhradh 1971, nochd lèirmheasan geur suspainteach le Ruairidh MacThòmais ann an *Scottish International* agus *Gairm*, agus an cois *Reothairt is Contraigh* bheachdaich Iain MacAonghais agus John Herdman air obair Mhic a’ Ghobhainn cuideachd.<sup>28</sup> Bu mhòr am beud am beachd MhicThòmais nach robh an dà fhichead dàn ’s a naoi bho leabhar 1943 rim faighinn, agus bha ‘failures of correspondence’ ann gun teagamh, ach bha a’ mhòrchuid mhòr de na dàin glè shoirbheachail, ’s iad

neither crippled by literalness nor substituting whole thoughts for those of the original, often bringing great ingenuity to bear, and producing many lines and phrases that are as memorable as those of the original Gaelic [...] (Thomson 1971: 35).

Mura robh Comanachd amh no nàiseantachd Ghàidhlig a' bhàird buileach cho follaiseach,

His humanity and compassion, his pain and his joy, and his strange dilemma, so much of the Thirties in one sense, and yet of all time, come through the refracting medium as light comes through cut crystal.<sup>29</sup>

Ann an *Gairm* (76: 384), chanadh e nach robh ‘duine beò an-diugh a dhèanadh [an t-eadar-theangachadh] cho math ’s a rinn Iain Mac a’ Ghobhainn’.

Mhol MacThòmais cho buadh-mhor is a bha cuid de na sreathan a chruthaich Mac a’ Ghobhainn, agus gu dearbh chan eil e doirbh eisimpleirean a lorg, eadar na sreathan fosglaidh: ‘Now that the ivory towers are down’ (XVIII) agus ‘Grief is scaled to zero’ (L), gu iomadh sreath eile leithid: ‘your kiss, electrical and proud’ (IV); ‘the gulf that cracks across the mind’ (XVIII, airson ‘lionsgaradh sa chàs seo’); ‘I did not force my love/ out of my splendid private grove’, ‘the choice that catches at our breath, / immortal dying or a living death’ (XVIII a-rithist); ‘that wood / where poems burn along each leaf’ (XIX, airson ‘coille àrd luchd nan òran’); ‘let me hammer the people’s wrongs / into the iron of my songs’ (XXXII); ‘I will weave the paradigm / of the pibroch’s music in my theme’ (XXXV); ‘in the face of solitude’s fierce stare’, ‘eternity’s savage howl’ (XLII); ‘a love that dances in its chains’ (XLV); ‘my arrogance and obedience / on one great music-ride’ (XLVIII); ‘this/ hurricane through which we pass’, ‘the hooked anchor’s grappling grip’, ‘the ocean of her ruin’ (LVII).<sup>30</sup>

Do na sgrùdairean, ge-tà, bha guth Mhic a’ Ghobhainn air uairean a’ mùchadh bhuidhean MhicGill-Eain. A rèir MhicThòmais bha leithid ‘the idiot Styx’, ‘solid diagram’ agus ‘the metaphor we fashioned’ a’ cur fada cus ri LVII (‘An Tathaich’). Thog John



Herdman air ìomhaigh dhrùidhteach nan dàn ’s iad a’ losgadh air duilleagan ann an XIX, rann 4, (air a luaidh gu h-àrd) – ìomhaigh a dh’èirich, ’s dòcha, bho ‘loisgeam gach meanglan craoibhe’ ann an dàn XXXII (‘Sgatham le faobhar-roinn...’), ach a tha cho dualach do ghuth Mhic a’ Ghobhainn – airson luach nan eadar-theangachaidhean lom aig MacGill-Eain fhèin a chur air adhart:

It is perfectly possible to imagine many sensibilities preferring [this] version [an taca ri ‘the high wood of the men of song’ aig MacGill-Eain]; certain, I think, that such a preference would indicate a radical lack of affinity with those qualities which make Sorley MacLean the kind of poet he is. [...] the image of poems burning along the leaves of the wood, striking though it is, in no way suggests that invocation of illustrious forerunners as a yardstick for personal aspiration which is so characteristic of the poet (Herdman 1977: 28).

Bheachdaich Herdman:

Smith’s versions, which I would not disparage, clearly make heroic efforts to find equivalents for at least some of the sensuous effects of the originals, and the results are often fine poems in their own right; but all too often the authentic Maclean tone is missing, and in its place we find a surface glitter, almost at times a slickness, which seems quite foreign (*ibid.*).

Bha beachdan Iain MhicAonghais a’ dol air an aon ràimh, san lèirmheas aige air *Reothairt is Contraigh*:

Although Crichton Smith’s translation is characteristically elegant, it could be argued that its very brilliance sometimes puts a porcelain sheen on the elemental rock of MacLean’s Gaelic; and for that reason readers who have no access to the original may prefer the stricter and less coruscating style adopted by the author. That does not diminish our debt to Iain Crichton Smith (MacInnes 1977).

Annas an lèirmheas air an leabhar *Eimhir* fhèin, dh'aithnich e call eile nach togadh duine aig nach robh deagh chluas Ghàidhlig, ann an ruitheam na bàrdachd, 'when the flow of the verse lacks the disturbing power of MacLean's less regular, innovative metrics' (MacInnes 2000).

Bheirear an aire gun robh e na chùis iomagain do Mhac a' Ghobhainn fhèin gum biodh na tionndaidhean aige a' cur coltas ro shliom air bàrdachd MhicGill-Eain: 'It is possible that these translations may often appear more "clever" than the originals and may lack the effect of spontaneity and passion.'<sup>31</sup> Ach dh'fhaodadh gur e an smachd 's chan e an dealas anns na dàin do Eimhir a bu dorra a ghlacadh. Bheachdaich Herdman gum b' e aon de na buadhan as motha bu dual do MhacGill-Eain 'a nobility highly impassioned, but controlled to a degree almost of coldness'. Nuair a chuireas Mac a' Ghobhainn crìoch air XLV ('An Sgian') le iomhaigh làidir chorporra: 'surely the intellectual knife / would have cut it from my flesh and bone', airson 'tha fhios gun gabhadh e gearradh / le eanchainn chruaidh gheur', tha e a' cur dùnadh drùidhteach air deasbairreachd an dàin gun teagamh, ach tha e air guth socair ro reusanta co-dhùnadh na Gàidhlig a chall. Mar an ceudna tha inntleachdas dùmhail annasach MhicGill-Eain ann an rann 9 ('gun robh i na màthair-meanmna / d' a màthair-eanchainn fhèin') air a iobairt, agus iomhaigheachd iongantach air a chur na àite a tha nas coltaiche ri bàrdachd Mhic a' Ghobhainn fhèin: 'became the genesis of the red / skies of the mind's imagination' (MacGill-Eain 1999: 88–9), eisimpleir a bha 's dòcha an inntinn MhicAonghais nuair a bheachdaich e: 'the extensions of an image in translation [at times] lead the mind away from the packed and concentrated energy of the original' (MacInnes 2000).

Rinn MacThòmais gearan gun robh Mac a' Ghobhainn air uairean a' toirt dhuinn 'mineachadh an àite eadar-theangachadh' (*Gairm* 76: 384). Cha ghabh eadar-theangachadh a dhèanamh as aonais eadar-mhineachadh, agus bidh a leisgeul fhèin aig gach eadar-theangair airson na chuireas e no i ann de mhineachadh san tionndadh. Ach ann an XLV (An Sgian') agus LVII ('An Tathaich') dh'fhaodadh a ràdh gu bheil Mac a' Ghobhainn a' toirt cus cuideachaidh don leughadair agus a' call pàirt de ghnè bàrdachd

MhicGill-Eain: am meòrachadh toinnte casta sin, ’s e air uairean cha mhòr do-thuigsinn agus a’ bagairt an leughadair a chur tro-chèile buileach, a tha a’ toirt teanntachd shònraichte don bhàrdachd.

Tha an sreath ‘(not false to love though to the rest untrue)’ ann an XIV (‘Reic Anama’) (MacGill-Eain 1999: 33) a-rithist a’ toirt dhuinn soillearachadh bho Mhac a’ Ghobhainn nach eil gun fheum don leughadair ach a tha a’ simpleachadh conaltradh MhicGill-Eain nas motha na bu chòir. Tha rudan ùra air an toirt a-steach tro bheachdachadh Mhic a’ Ghobhainn as geal a b’ fhiach, ge-tà: san treas rann de XIV, mar eisimpleir, tha ‘honesty and wit’ gan reic air sgàth gaol Eimhir – buadhan nach eil air an ainmeachadh idir sa Ghàidhlig, ach buadhan a chithear gun teagamh ann am bàrdachd MhicGill-Eain fhèin (agus dh’fhaodadh gu bheil Mac a’ Ghobhainn ag aithneachadh eirmseachd nam bàrd Sasannach Meatafiosagach san dol seachad cuideachd). No aig deireadh Dàn XVIII (‘Ùrnaigh’), tha an t-iomradh gun dùil air Criosta mar ‘a man who walked unarmed’ a’ toirt ceist an t-sìochantais a-steach do dh’imcheist an t-saighdeir agus Mac a’ Ghobhainn a’ tairgse aon adhbhar a bharrachd air mì-chreideamh MhicGill-Eain.

Togaidh Mac a’ Ghobhainn a chuid mhac-talla fhèin san t-sreath cuideachd. Tha ‘bitter’, mar eisimpleir, air a chluinntinn uair is uair (‘bitter birth / pain / roots / heart / shaft / slice’; faic III, IV, VIII, XVIII, XXII, LIV, LV) (MacGill-Eain 1999: 25, 27, 29, 39, 41, 53, 99, 101). Tha am facal ‘epigram’ ann an VIII (‘An Clogad Stàilinn’) agus XXIV (‘An Òinseach’) a’ togail ceangal briathrachais eatarra a chuireas ris a’ cheangal shuidheachaidh is smuaine a bha air cùl na Gàidhlig (am bàrd a’ cur an aghaidh beachd Eimhir air a’ bhòidhchead). Tha an iarmailt air a cleachdadh airson aigne a’ bhàird a shamhlachadh (II: ‘the chaos of my sky’; XVIII: ‘my secret sky’; XLV: ‘the red/ skies of the mind’s imagination’) (MacGill-Eain 1999: 23, 39, 89) ann an dòigh a bhuineas do Mhac a’ Ghobhainn ach a tha cuideachd a’ ceangal le samhlaidheachd MhicGill-Eain tron ruith-dhàn. Ann an XXI (‘What is my place to me...’) tha Mac a’ Ghobhainn a’ cur car gun dùil air smuain an dàin, ’s e a’ tionndadh iomradh air neo-bhithbhuantachd na bòichead san t-sreath dheireannach (‘ge tu m’ àilleachd fhalbhach’) gu beum ioranta air bàsmhorachd Eimhir (‘It’s of your dying that I write’)<sup>32</sup> a tha a’

ceangal an dàin le Dàn XIX ('I gave you eternity...') gu fosgarra, far nach robh ceangal na Gàidhlig ach air chùl ghnòthaichean.

Ach is cinnteach gu bheil call ann air uairean a tha a' lagachadh na bàrdachd. 'The crudity of MacLean's early Communist enthusiasm is disguised', bheachdaich MacThòmais (Thomson 1971: 35), 's e a-mach is dòcha air na dàin nach robh ann idir, mar LIII (le iomradh air an 'àr-a-mach mòr / a dh'fhòghnas do chor nan daoine') (MacGill-Eathain 1943: 43) no XXV (air cuspair Phrometheus). Ach bheirear fa-near cuideachd nach eil guth tuilleadh air an adhbhar bhuan ann an rann 4 de IV ('Gaoir na h-Eòrpa'): 'Can beauty.../ deceive the patient with its transient cures', agus an t-aithrisear air fhàgail na dhuine foighidneach (mura h-e na euslainteach!) seach na Shòisealach (MacGill-Eain 1999: 26–7); ann an dàn XXX ('Am Boilseabhach') chan eil sgeul air luchd na maoinne, ged a tha 'proletariat' a' gabhail àite na 'Poblachd' (MacGill-Eain 1999: 68–9).

Mhìnich Mac a' Ghobhainn cho doirbh is a bha e a bhith ag ath-chruthachadh ann am Beurla 'the assonantal effects which Gaelic seems naturally to fall into',<sup>33</sup> agus sgriobh e gu MacGill-eain: 'I have nowhere succeeded in capturing the music of your work'.<sup>34</sup> Ach, taobh a-muigh Dàn I, a tha trom le làn chomhardadh, (an aon dàn a tha a' fulang, is dòcha, bho ain-deònachd Mhic a' Ghobhainn ath-sgriobhadh a dhèanamh air a chuid bàrdachd) (Cambridge & Smith 1998: 54), tha measgachadh fìor sgilear de chomhardadh consain (leth-chomhardadh agus para-chomhardadh) agus de chomhardadh fuaimreig (comhardadh Gàidhealach) air a chleachdadh, gus blas de cheòlmhorachd nan dàn Gàidhlig a ghlèidheil. Shaoil MacThòmais, ge-tà, gu robh feumalachdan comhardaidh 'a' slugadh na prìomh bàrdachd, uair is uair', 's e a' toirt eisimpleir bho XXIII ('Cochur') far a bheil Eimhir air a h-àite a chall san orcastra airson a bhith na suidhe ri taobh a' bhàird (air sgàth comhardadh eadar 'mind' is 'hand' a rèir MhicThòmais, ach is dòcha nach ann ach air sgàth dith tuigse?). Tha eisimpleirean nas cronaile ann: tha 'queen' air a chleachdadh na abairt gaoil (airson comhardadh) ann an dàn XIV ('Reic Anama': 'Poet struggling under strain...') agus a-rithist ann an XXXV ('Come to me tranquil night...') (MacGill-Eain 1999: 33, 79), rud a tha a' mùchadh poblachdas a' bhàird agus ìorantas toibheumach dàn XXX ('Am

Boilseabhach’); agus ann an LVII, tha ‘the Venus of her sparkling wit’ (a’ togail comhardadh le ‘transmit’) a’ dèanamh seòrsa de Dhiorbhail Parker de dh’Eimhir agus a’ dol an aghaidh diomhaireachd is neart samhlachail a’ bhoireannaich sna dàin Ghàidhlig.

Dè mu na dàin do Eimhir nach do nochd idir ann an *Poems to Eimhir?* Ann an 1959, sgrìobh Mac a’ Ghobhainn gu robh e air a h-uile dàn do Eimhir bho leabhar 1943 a thionndadh gu Beurla, ach a-mhàin XIII (‘A’ Bhuaile Ghrèine’: ‘Dom shùilean-sa bu tu Deirdre...’) agus trì eile; bhiodh duilgheadas aige le XIII air sgàth ‘all the literary references’, agus bhiodh e feumach air soillearachadh bho MhacGill-Eain.<sup>35</sup> Cha b’ iongantach ged a bhiodh dàin XLIV (‘Ged chuirinn dhìom èideadh...’) agus LVIII (‘A nighean ’s tu beairteachadh...’) am measg nan trì eile nach do ghèill ri oidhirpean eadar-theangachaidh a’ bhàird, ach is gann a chreidear nach soirbhicheadh le Mac a’ Ghobhainn lioraic LI (‘Crìonnachd’) a chur gu Beurla bhuadhmhor fhèitheach, a bhiodh na fhrith-phuing san dàrna leth den ruith-dhàn air còmhradh XXII (‘An Roghainn’) anns a’ chiad leth. Tha e na iongnadh cuideachd nach do nochd tionndadh air dàn an t-saighdeir (LX, ‘Nuair chunna mi ’n cùl ruadh...’) a chuireadh crìoch èifeachdach chearcallach air an ruith-dhàn. Chaidh ochd dàin a ghearradh às an t-sreath ann an 1960, ge-tà, fo bhuaidh bheachdan MhicGill-Eain: ‘I think the ones you left out corresponded with my worst translations’, sgrìobh Mac a’ Ghobhainn, ‘so I think that from my side they might as well be out.’<sup>36</sup> Chan eil e coltach gum faighear a-mach gu bràth dè na tionndaidhean a chaidh a chur an dàrna taobh.<sup>37</sup>

Mar a chunnacas, tha e gu math coltach nach deach Dàn XIII a chur gu Beurla idir, agus bheachdaich MacThòmais gur e beàrn millteach a bha seo, leis cho cudromach is a tha an dàn ann a bhith a’ cur reul Eimhir ann an speuran Alb’-Èireannach ’s a’ neartachadh ‘blas na dùthcha’ san leabhar (Thomson 1971: 35; MacThòmais 1971: 379, 383). Tha LIX (‘Mhic Gille-Mhicheil, ’s tric mi smaointinn...’), le iomradh air Alasdair MacGille-Mhicheil agus *Carmina Gadelica*, mar an ceudna cudromach ann a bhith a’ stèidheachadh nan dàn am measg stòras dualchas nan Gàidheal, agus chan fheàrrde na ‘Poems’ a chall. Ach chithear lùghdachadh air gnè

Ghàidhealach na bàrdachd – ('mar [gu robh] eagal air Mac a' Ghobhainn na rudan as Gaidhealaiche fhàgail ann') (MacThòmais 1971: 379) – anns na h-eadar-theangachaidhean fhèin. Ann an IV ('Gaoir na h-Eòrpa') tha 'Long nan Daoine' a' call a thuar Ghàidhealach ('the first slave-ship'), agus chan eil guth tuilleadh air 'A' Ghairm Èifeachdach no 'n Dùrachd' ann an XVIII ('Ùrnaigh'), call ris na ghabh MacThòmais aithreachas, 's iad 'ro dhlùth ri cridhe na h-ùrnaigh gus a[m] fhàgail às' (MacGill-Eain 1999: 26–7, 40–41; MacThòmais 1971: 383). Chan eil am pìos ciùil 'Maol Donn' air ainmeachadh ann an XXIII ('Cochur': 'Deaf and restless the rage...') no ann an XXXV ('Come to me tranquil night...'), ach 's e call beag a tha sin, agus iomradh aig Mac a' Ghobhainn air 'pibroch' a dh'fhòghnadh don a' mhòrchuid da leughadairean. A rèir coltais, cha do thuig Mac a' Ghobhainn an toiseach gur e ceòl pioba a bha ann am Maol Donn is cha b' e rubha<sup>38</sup>, ach faodar a bhith cinnteach nach e dìth tuigse a thug air, ann an XXIII agus a-rithist LVII ('An Tàthaich': 'I'm haunted by a face...'), Clann 'ic Cruimein agus Cumha na Cloinne fhàgail às. Tha e nas coltaiche gur ann a' lughdachadh àile Ghàidhealach nan dàn a dh'aona-ghnothaich a bha e, agus a shùil air an luchd-leughaidh Gallda air a robh e ag amas, ach tha a bhuil cronail air na dàn. Ann an XXIII, tha iomhaigh na rèil gun teagamh freagarrach agus dìleas do shamhlaidheachd MhicGill-Eain san ruith-dhàn, ach tha cus brìgh is soilleireachd air an call ann a bhith a' tionndadh

Thachd an fhiabhras iomadh truagh  
 's dh'fhàg i iomadh athair breòite,  
 ach dh'fhàg ceòl cumha Phàdraig Mhòir  
 àmhghar a chloinne glòrmhor.

gu

Fever has throttled many a hero,  
 leaving his descendants bare –  
 but the music of his elegy  
 transformed his flesh to a blazing star.

(MacGill-Eain 1999: 56–7)

Dh’fhaodadh gur e an gearradh ann an XXIII a thug air a’ bhàrd Clann ’Ic Criomain a dhubhadh à LVII cuideachd, ach, air cho ionmholta is a tha na rinn Mac a’ Ghobhainn den ‘Tathaich’, is bochd gun do chaill dàn a tha cho eas-chruthach inntleachdail iomradh cho deimhinne soilleir Gàidhealach.

Is furasta an gearan. ’S e euchd litreachais a tha ann am *Poems to Eimhir* air nach gabh dìmeas a chur mar bhàrdachd no mar shanasachd air mìorbhail nan dàn do Eimhir. Mhothaich MacThòmais air ‘an t-sùil-chruthaich a bha ceithir-thimcheall air an eadar-theangair an còmhnaidh’ (MacThòmais 1971: 383), agus rinn na lèirmheasan air tionndaidhean Mhic a’ Ghobhainn obair luachmhor ann a bhith a’ soillearachadh nan ceistean mòra a bhios a’ togail ceann gu bràth air an t-slighe chugallach eadar ath-aithris is ath-chruthachadh, eadar-theangachadh agus eadar-mhineachadh.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> A rèir sanas a nochd ann an *Lines Review* 37 (1971): 36. Chan eil am fear-ealain a’ faighinn aithneachadh sam bith anns an leabhar fhèin.
- <sup>2</sup> Gu mì-fhortanach lean an aon mhearachd a bha ann an clò-bhualadh 1971 tro gach foillseachadh eile: ‘now’ an àite ‘nor’ ann an LVII (‘An Tathaich’: ‘I’m haunted by a face...’), sr. 19.
- <sup>3</sup> ‘Homage to Sorley MacLean’, *Saltire Review* 5/15 (Summer 1958); ‘The Poetry of Sorley Maclean’, *An Gaidheal* 53/10, 99–100 & 53/11: 109–10 (Dàmhair & Samhain 1958). Tha an dàrna foillseachadh beagan nas làine. Mo thaing don Dr Emma Dymock airson a’ chiad fhoillseachadh a thoirt gu m’ aire.
- <sup>4</sup> Tha e coltach gur e seo an t-alt a nochd anns a’ *Ghàidheal* agus ann an *Saltire Review* san aon bhliadhna. Chanadh Mac a’ Ghobhainn ann an litir eile (bho 1960?) nach robh leabhar sam bith ann a leugh e na bu thrice na *Dàin do Eimhir* (LNA LS 29538, 13).
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*: 3. Lean e: ‘I don’t find it [thought and music] often in Scottish poetry which appears to me to show its muscles, as if the poet were trying to get on through the medium of poetry.’
- <sup>6</sup> *ibid.*: 6; ‘Obituaries: Robin Lorimer’, *The Times* (24/8/1996), 21.
- <sup>7</sup> LS 29538: 8.
- <sup>8</sup> *ibid.*: 11–12.
- <sup>9</sup> ‘I am writing to you at once in order to apologise for my miserable impatience. [...] Please remember if you felt angry with me that it is only out of my regard for the quality of your poems that I was so impatient’ (*ibid.*: 13).

- <sup>10</sup> Faic MacGill-Eain 2003: 34–35, airson anfhòis a’ bhàird fhèin ris an t-sreath.
- <sup>11</sup> MacCaig & Scott 1970: 163–64. Tha an dàn air a sgrùdadh le Crisdean Whyte ann am Byrne *et al.* 2006: 191–3.
- <sup>12</sup> LS 29502, 69 (30/9/1967).
- <sup>13</sup> LS 29502, 97 (1/11/1968).
- <sup>14</sup> *Stand* 12/2 (May 1971): 8–11.
- <sup>15</sup> Faic *Stand* 11/1 (1969–70), agus mun aon àm ri bàrdachd Eimhir 12/2 is 12/3 (1971).
- <sup>16</sup> A rèir an aonta ris na chuir MacGill-Eain is Mac a’ Ghobhainn an ainm aig deireadh 1970, bhiodh na dleasaidhean ùghdair air an roinn gu h-ionnan eadar an dithis (LS 29503, 73–74). Anns an Dàmhair 1971 bha dleasaidhean air an toirt seachad airson 40 den 50 lethbhreac cruaidh le ainm-sgrìobhte nam bàrd, agus 500 leabhraichean boga (*ibid.*: 134).
- <sup>17</sup> *Lines Review* 29 (June 1969).
- <sup>18</sup> *Lines Review* 34 (1970); *Gairm* 72 (1970): 313–22; LS 29503, 1 & 26.
- <sup>19</sup> LS 29503, 8 (11/2/70).
- <sup>20</sup> *ibid.*: 40 (11/8/70).
- <sup>21</sup> *ibid.*: 46 (18/9/70) agus nota pearsanta don ùghdar 22/6/92.
- <sup>22</sup> *ibid.*: 25 & 70. Bha MacGriogair agus Nèill air buidheann bàrdachd ùr ‘The Heretics’ a stèidheachadh an Dùn Èideann san Earrach 1970 (*ibid.*: 18).
- <sup>23</sup> *ibid.*: 109–10 (litir 9/7/71), 119 (litir 21/8/71).
- <sup>24</sup> ‘From the Height of the Cuilinn’, air a dhealbhadh le Hamilton; iomradh ann an LS 29503, 125 (litir bho R. L. C. Lorimer, 18/9/1971). Tha e na iongnadh gun d’ fhuair Lorimer cead foillseachaidh airson dàn a bu shuarach leis a’ bhàrd; cha do nochd an dàn ann an *Reothairt is Contraigh*, agus dhiùlt MacGill-Eain cead do dheasaiche Cuimreach ann an 1984, o nach robh an dàn airidh air ath fhoillseachadh, ‘ged nach eil e cho buileach truagh ri ‘An seo an gaol’ [bho na ‘Dàin Eile’]’ a bha an deasaiche air taghadh cuideachd (LS 29516, 82–83).
- <sup>25</sup> ‘Obituaries: Robin Lorimer’.
- <sup>26</sup> LS 29503: 95 (litir bho Ruairaidh MacThòmais 23/5/71) agus 133 & 142 (litrichean bho Fhrank Thompson, 30/9/71 & 18/11/71).
- <sup>27</sup> LS 29708, 35 (agallamh le Ray Burnett agus Iain Mac a’ Ghobhainn, ?Gearran 1970). Faic deasachadh 2002 de na *Dàin do Eimhir* (le Crisdean Whyte) agus Whyte, ‘Sorley Maclean’s ‘Dàin do Eimhir’: new light’, 186, airson mionaideachd air amannan-sgrìobhaidh agus structar nan Dàn do Eimhir.
- <sup>28</sup> MacThòmais, *Gairm* 76 (Foghar 1971): 379–84; Thomson, *Scottish International* (December 1971): 35. MacInnes, ‘Sorley MacLean: the harvest of his genius’, *Weekend Scotsman* 23/4/1977: 2; Herdman, ‘The Poetry of Sorley MacLean: A Non-Gael’s View’, *Lines Review* 61 (1977): 25–36 (25–29); as dèidh foillseachadh *Eimhir*: J. MacInnes, ‘Gaelic Page’, *Scottish Book Collector* 6/7 (2000): 38. Nochd lèirmheasan eile gun cus suspaid le



- sgrùdairean aig nach robh Gàidhlig: Christine Mitchell ann an *New Edinburgh Review* 19 (1972): 40 (air a luaidh ann an Wilson 1990: 190), agus Patrick Gaffney san *Weekend Scotsman* (14/8/1971): 2.
- <sup>29</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> *Eimhir* 37, 95, 27, 39, 45, 73, 79, 83, 89, 91, 109.
- <sup>31</sup> *Stand* 12/2: 9.
- <sup>32</sup> *Eimhir* 48–49. Chan eil am beum air ‘your’ ann an leabhar 1971 ri fhaicinn ann an deasachadh 1999.
- <sup>33</sup> *Stand* 12/2 (1971): 9.
- <sup>34</sup> LS 29538, 18 (5/11/1968).
- <sup>35</sup> LS 29538, 5 (12/8/1959).
- <sup>36</sup> *ibid.*: 14.
- <sup>37</sup> ‘S e an dà dhàn dheug (a bharrachd air an ‘Dimitto’) nach d’ fhuair àite am *Poems to Eimhir*: IX (‘Rinn mi luaidh...’), X (‘Theagamh nach eil i...’), XXV (‘B’ fheàrr leam na goid...’), XXXVIII (‘Labhair mi mu reic anama...’), XXXIX (‘Griosach’), XLIV (‘Ged chuirinn dhìom èideadh...’), LI (‘Crionnachd’), LIII (‘Gur suarach leam...’), LVIII (‘A nighean, ’s tu beairteachadh...’), LIX (‘Mhic Ghille Mhicheil, ...’), LX (‘Nuair chunna mi...’).
- <sup>38</sup> MacInnes, ‘Gaelic Review’, *SBC*; agus còmhradh leis an Dr MacAonghais, 28 Ògmhios 2008. Mo mhòr thaing dha airson a chuideachaidh.

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