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Allt an t-Siùcair

A' dol thar Allt an t-Siùcair
air madainn chùbhraidh Chèit,
is paidirean geal, dlùth-chneap
den drùchd ghorm air an fheur;
bha Richard 's Robin brùdhearg
ri seinn 's fear dhiubh na bheus,
's goic mhoit air cuthaig chùl-ghuirm,
's gug-gùg aic' air a' ghèig.

Bha smèorach cur na smùid dhi
air bacan cùil leath' fhèin;
an dreathan-donn gu sùrdail
's a rifeid-chiùil na bheul;
am breacean-beithe 's lùb air,
's e gleusadh lùth a theud,
an coileach-dubh ri dùrdan
's a' chearc ri tùchan rèidh.

Na bric a' gearradh shùrdag,
ri plubraich dhlùth le chèil',
taobh leumnaich mear le lùth-chleas,
a bùrn le mùirn ri grèin;
ri ceapadh chuileag siùbhlach,
le'm bristeadh lùthmhor fhèin:
druim lann-ghorm, 's ball-bhreac giùran,
's an lannair-chùil mar lèig.

I cross into summer. Ripe dawn
grass necklaced with dew
like glass rosary beads.
Richard and Robin redbreast
are a belter as one takes bass,
the cuckoo in blue dress
with a proud head toss
cries from her perch,

cuckoo cuckoo. She rivals
the soloist mavis atop the fence post,
steaming, song-drunk indeed,
but not the wren, its beak a chanter reed.
Poor chaffinch, a perfectionist
doubled over. Blackcock
and hen under their breath
both pity him, while trout in

close succession riff
staccato off water and the water
like sunny glass shatters
with joyousness. Vivace
they play a tablature of flies,
break nature's laws. By scales of light:
agility jeweled,
gill-brilliant, blue.

Mil-dheoghladh sheillean srianach
le crònan 's fiata srann,
'nan dithean baglach, riabhach
mu d' bhlàithean grianach chrann;
straibh-dhriùchdain dhonna, thiachdaidh
fo shinean cìochan t' fheòir,
gun theachd-an-tìr no bhiadh ac',
ach fàileadh ciatach ròs.

Gur milis, brisg-gheal, bùrn-ghlan
meall-chùirneineach 's binn fuaim,
bras-shruthain Allt-an-t-Siùcair
ri torman siùbhlach, luath;
gach biolair 's luibh le 'n ùr ròis
a' cinntinn dlùth mu bhruaich,
's e toirt dhaibh bhuadhan sùghmhor
g' an sùgh-bheathchadh mu'n cuairt.

Bùrn tana glan gun ruadhan,
gun deathach, ruaim no ceò
bheir anam fàs is gluasad
da chluanagan mu bhòrd;
gaoir-bheachainn bhuidhe 's ruadha
ri diogladh chluaran òir
's cìr-mheala da chuir suas leò
'n cèir-chuachagan 'nan stòr.

Clear sunny blossoms cluster round trees,
daisies, marsh marigolds,
and striped honey-loving honey bees
buzz port à beul. Sepals
clean-licked, their crystallized wild
in viscous dewdrops, sap
under grass awns
secreted at the tip.

Subsistence nor bread,
but rose feeds the still air,
the creek, Allt an t-Siùcair:
sweetwater, crisp white-
wine water, clear water ringing clear,
sparkling-in-spate, rapid as rapids crash,
every herb, every watercress
thick along banks grows

beside the rose. Pure
sharp water. No iron slime,
scum or muck, but for both fields
that bound it, flux and
spiritual rush. Red and gold
buzzing bees tickle gold thistles
and build honeycomb,
each waxy cell and store.

Gur sòlas an ceòl cluaise
àrd-bhàirich bhuar mu ad chrò,
laoigh cheannfhion bhreaca ghunach
ri freagradh, 's nuallan bhò;
a' bhanarach le buaraich
's am buachaill' dol nan còir,
gu blaoghan a' chruidh ghuailfhinn
air cuaich a thogas cròic.

Bidh lòchrain-mheala lùbadh
nan sràbh, 's brùth air gach gèig
de mheasan milis, cùbhraidh
nan ùbhlan is nam peur;
na duilleagan a'liùgadh,
is fallus-cùil diubh fèin,
is clann a' gabhail tùchaidh
'gan imlich dlùth le'm beul.

Bè 'n crònan téasan srùlach
an dùrdail mhùirneach Mhàigh;
's do bhoircean daite sgùm-gheal
tiugh flùireanach, dlùth, tlàth;
le d' mhantal de dhealt ùr-mhìn
mar dhùbhradh cùil mu d' bhlàth;
's air calg gach feòrein t'ùr-fheòir
gorm neamhainn dhriùchd a' fas.

Mooers moo out loud round
the cattle fold. Music
to my ears, theirs
a solace, a tall call called back,
the sharp response
of spotty white-headed calves.
The milkmaid with her spancel,
the cowherd helps

and in a harmony of milk
the bleating wee things
are all milked, whole foamy pails:
milk spilt, calves soaked,
their chucks flecked
with cream curds. Stalks
dangle honeycomb like lamps
and from every branch

the sweet smell of sweet fruits,
a firlo: pear, apple.
Dewy leaves along the midrib
drip, droop and
the young dumb from mouthing it:
honeycomb, lips
honeyed to hard light
are sticky, stick shut, but shine.

Do bhrat làn shradag daoinein;
do bhraon ni soills' air làr;
An carpet 's gasda foidh-neul,
gun cho fine an Whitehall;
mu d' bhearradh gorm-bhreac, coillteach,
an cinn an loinn le àl;
na sòbhraichean mar choinnlean
'nan coinnlearan a'd sgàth.

Bidh guileag eala tùchan
's eòin bhùchuinn am bàrr thonn
aig ionmbhar Allt an t-Siùcair
snàmh lùth-chleasach le fonn,
ri seinn gu moiteil, cùirteil,
le muineil-chiùil 's iad crom,
mar mhàla pìoba 's lùb air,
ceòl aoifidh ciùin nach trom.

'S grinn an obair ghràbhail
rinn nàdur air do bhruaich;
le d' lurachain creamhach, fàsmhor,
's am buicean bàn orra shuas;
gach saimir, neòinean 's màsag
mìn bhreac air làr do chluain,
mar reultan reòt' an deàrrsaidh
'na spangan àluinn, nuadh.

Water tiered as small falls
streaming May, colorful froth-laced banks
thicken to wildflowers, fresh, dense
with new dew. If shade vignettes
the edges, blossoms blossom
and the meadow grass
grows blue, every grass blade,
and on every blade of grass, dew:

diamond that pure sparkles, spray stippling
light on earth as it is in heaven,
carpet par excellence,
so fine Whitehall's palace gardens
are jack-squat by comparison.
This brae's changeable leafy green:
explosive life and light. Primroses like
candles in candlesticks

finish off any remaining shade.
A muffled swan warbles its swan song
and long-tailed ducks
at the mouth of Allt an t-Siùcair
surf, swim. Their slick knack for it, for singing
loud and proud with bent windpipes
like a bent note leaves a bagpipe:
music mild, light. Magic.

Bidh croinn 's am bàrr mar sgàrlaid,
de chaoraibh àluinn ann;
is cnothan bachlach, àrbhuidh
a' faoisgneadh àrd mu d' cheann;
bidh dearcan 's suibhean sùghmhor
trom-lùbadh an luis fhein,
caoin, seacaidh, blàsda, cùbhraidh,
ag call an drùis ri grèin.

'S co làn mo lios ri Pàrras
de gach cnuas is feàrr an coill';
'na rèidhlich arbhar fàsaidh
bheir piseach àrd is sgoinn;
pòr reachdmhor, minear, fàsmhor
nach cinn gu fàs 'na laoim,
cho reamhar, luchdmhor càileachd
's gu'n sgàin a' ghràn o dhruim.

Do thacar mara 's tìre,
bu teachd-an-tìr leis fèin;
'nan treudan, fèidh ad fhrithean,
's ad chladach 's mìlteach èisg;
'nad thràigh tha maorach lionmhor,
's air t-uisge 's fìor-bhras leus
aig òganacha rìomhach
le morghath fìor-chruaidh geur.

Place-shaped banks
spick-and-span. Thriving wild garlic
under the white fuzz above,
the nutgall—hazel bud
swollen to knot. Clover, daisy,
a small red berry each and the folds
all starred with them sparkle like iceblink
in pristine detail.

Tree crowns darken
with rowanberry, corymbs
there, and here auburn nuts
cluster and unhusk overhead.
Fat brambles, blackcurrants
bend the branches. The weight
of ripening. Ache, tang and gush
sustained by a drying sun.

My garden dares Paradise to be so
complete: collection
as coille, as grassland raining grain
the ground up, windfall
in reverse, seed-rich tender grass
run riot but never overrun.
Leaves, lavish, spurt
and from the back burst.

Gur h-ùrail, sliochdmhor, cuanta
greigh each air d' fhuarain ghorm,
le 'n ìotadh tarruinn suas riut,
le cluintinn nuall do thoirm;
bidh buicean binneach 's ruadhag
's minn mheanbh-bhreac, chluas-dearg, òg
ri h-ionaltradh gu h-uaigneach,
's ri ruideis luath mu d' lòn.

Gur damhach, aghach, laoghach,
mangach, maoiseach, d' fhonn;
do ghlinn le seilg air laomadh,
do gharbhlach-chraobh 's do lom;
gur h-àluinn barr-fhionn, braonach
do chanach caoin-gheal thom,
'na mhaibeanan caoin maoth-mhìn
'nad mhòintich sgaoth chearc donn.

Bè siud an sealladh èibhinn,
do bhruachan glè-dhearg ròs,
's iad daite le gath grèine
mar bhiosgnich leug-bhuidhe òir;
bè siud an geiltreadh glè-ghrinn,
cinn dhèideag am measg feòir,
de bharran luibhean ceutach,
's fuaim bhinn aig teud gach eòin.

Yield of sea and field.
Sustenance, a yield-field.
Deer over the deer park
and over shoal and shore run,
and with shellfish the beaches teem,
and on the water a face
revealed through sun glitter:
a fisher lad wielding

his hard sharp fishing spear.
Horses at the green source,
their herd's replenished flash.
As their lowing is heard,
so my thirst grows. Roebuck, doe
and their red-eared marked young
graze in secret then
bound down the watery ground.

Oxen, cows, calves, roe
belong all to this allt-song.
Glens buzzing with the hunt,
a rough tree country spruced up.
Bonny dewy bog cotton white-on-white
softens the hillsides. Through
soft, gentle, pillowy tufts, through
uplands, the brown grouse flock.

O, lilidh, rìgh nam flùran!
thug bàrr-mais air ùr-ròs gheug,
'na bhabaidean cruinn, plùr-mhìn
's a chrùn geal, ùr mar ghrèin;
don uisg ud, Allt an t-Siùcair,
's e cùbhraidh da bho bheud,
'na rionnagan m'a lùbaibh
mar reultan-iùil nan speur.

Do shealbhadh ghlan 's do luachair
a' bòrcadh suas mu d' chòir;
do dhìthein lurach, luaineach
mar thuairneagan den òr;
do phris làn neda cuachach,
cruinn, cuarsgagach aig d' eòin;
bàrr-braonain 's an t-sàil-chuachaig
'nan dos an uachdar d' fheòir.

B' e siud an leigheas lèirsinn
do loingeas brèid-gheal, luath
'nan squadron seòl bhrèid-chrom,
a' bòrdadh geur ri d' chluais,
'nan giùthsaidhean beò-ghleusta
's an cainb gu lèir riu shuas,
's Caol Muile fuar 'ga reubadh
le anail-speur bho thuath.

That unreal sight: when sunlight
over the rose bank slides.
Scarlet undarkened, splashed to platinum.
That delicate balance: flowerheads
of ribwort among grass,
lovely wildflower heads
and the harmonic ring
of every bird.

Lily is flower-king
to which flowering rose canes bow.
Delicate petals its garland,
its white sunstruck crown.
Its scent wafts off water and
as Allt an t-Siùcair curves
it constellates with lily
starring soil-dark earth.

Washed sorrel and flowering rush
tap into grace. Flowers lure
then fall to little
goldleaf cups. Thickets decked out
with the round wreaths
and twists of birds' nests.
Grassy tufts prop tormentil
and dog violet up.

Is cruaidh a bhàirlinn fhuair mi
bho'n fhuaran 's blasda glòir;
an caochan is mò buadhan
a tha fo thuath 'san Eòrp;
lion ach am bòla suas deth,
's de bhrandaidh fhuair na 's leòir,
am puinse milis, guanach
a thàirneas sluagh gu ceòl.

Muim-altruim gach pòir uasail
nach meath le fuachd nan speur;
tha sgiath o'n àirde tuath oirre
dh' fhàg math a buar 's a feur;
fonn deiseireach, fìor uaibhreach,
'na speuclair buan do'n ghrèin;
le sprèidh thèid duine suas ann
cho luath ri each 'na leum.

Is aol is grunnd d'a dhailean
dh'fhàg Nàdar tarbhach iad;
air ma meinn gun toir iad arbhar,
s' tiugh starbhanach ni fàs;
bidh dearrasanaich shearr-fhiaclach
'ga lannadh sìos am boinn
le luinneagan binn nìghneag,
an ceòl is mìlse rainn.

Way out, swift ships with white sails
sail squadrons, sails-wide.
To watch them, their tack and turn, brings peace.
The shore's ear traced as they curve.
From those pine-crafts
canvas sails like flags unfurl
to the wind. One sky-breath exhaled
south, and through

Caol Muile they move, and I move
evicted from spring-fed ecstasy,
Europe's best-mixed stream
at this latitude. Gone.
It's wrong. Just a mugful of the stuff
and a dram of brandy
packs a sweet, dizzying punch.
Folk all reeling . . .

Nurturer to every right,
undaunted by embittered stars.
Protector, wing of the north,
there remains good
to your haymaking and cattle herd.
Sunny country, a second canticle
to the sun, and our fierce pride:
a drover riding high on hot-blood.

An coire 's fheàrr 'san dùthaich,
an coire 's sùghmhoir' fonn,
's e coirean Allt an t-Siùcair,
an coirean rùnach, lom;
's ge lom, gur molach, ùrail,
bog, miadail 's dlùth a thom,
'm bheil mil is bainne brùcadh
's uisg' ruith air siùcar pronn.

An coire searrachach, uanach,
meannach, uaigneach àidh;
an coire gleannach, uaine,
bliochdach, luath gu dàir;
an coire coillteach, luachrach
an goir a' chuach 'sa Mhàrt;
an coire 'm faigh duin' uasal
biast dhubh is ruadh 'na chàrn.

An coire brocach, taobh-ghorm
torcach, faoilidh, blàth;
an coire lonach, naosgach,
cearcach, craobhach, gràidh;
gu bainneach, bailceach, braonach,
breacach, laoghach, blàr,
an sultmhor mart is caora,
's is torach laoimsgir bàrr.