

AM BUACHAILLE BÀN

The fair-haired herd (or youth)

Verse 1

Och, ochan, a Rìgh, gur tinn an galar an gràdh!

Alas, alack, how sore an illness love is!

Chan eil neach air am bi nach saoil gur seachdain gach là.

There is no-one who has suffered from it who hasn't felt each day as long as a week.

Gun bhrìst e mo chrìdh' `s gun sgaoil e cuislean mo shlàint'

It has broken my heart and slit open the veins of my health

A bhith `g amharc ad dhèidh, a ghèig, a bhroillich ghilbhàin, ghilbhàin.

To see you leaving, o young sapling of the breast, so fair-white, so fair white.

Verse 2

A bhuachaille bhàin, mas àill leat labhairt air thùs,

O fair-haired herd, if you wish to make the first approach,

Gur a leatsa gun dàil mo làmh ma thig thu rium dlùth;

'Tis you without delay who will have my hand as soon as you come to me;

Nach truagh mar a tà nach d' thàrlaidh mis' agus thu

What a pity it is that you and I were not destined to be

Ann an eilean gun tràigh, gun ràmh, gun choite, gun stiùir, gun stiùir.

In an island without a sea-shore, without an oar, without a boat, without a rudder, without a rudder.

Verse 3

Nan robh mise `s thu ann am beinn, no monadh, no sliabh,

If you and I were on a mountain, or a moor, or a hillside,

No air an tràigh bhàin an àit' nach robh duine riamh

Or on the white beach in a place where no man has ever been,

Seachd oidhche seachd là gun tàmh, gun chadal, gun bhiadh,

For seven nights, seven days, without rest, without sleep, without food,

Ach thus' a bhith, ghràidh `s do làmh gheal tharam gu fial, gu fial,

But you there, my love, and your white hand caressing me kindly, kindly.

Verse 4 /

Verse 4

Gur toil leam an deud `s am beul nach labhradh le sgraing

I would like you whose tooth and mouth never displayed anger

A bhith sìnte rim thaobh, a ghaoil, nan tigeadh tu ann;

To be stretched out by my side, my love, if only you would come there;

Mur biodh luchd nam breug bha m'èudai `s mise gun taing

Were it not for the lying gossips, my love and I would in defiance of them

Le òrdugh na clèir le chèile `n ceangal gu teann, gu teann.

Have been joined by the clergy, bound together securely, securely.

NOTE

A classical love song, with strong links to Ireland, as suggested by the melody and some of the vocabulary. Three of the original verses have been omitted including the verse which Sorley Maclean admired because of the line in which the poet uses five adjectives to qualify one noun – ‘An cridhe geal, fialaidh, aotrom, aighearach, òg.’ This is symbolic of some of the imagery contained in the poem.