

Portree High School, Isle of Skye, Scotland

Students aged 13 and 14 years old worked with the poet Dr Pàdraig MacAoidh over three workshops, to discuss and write poetry about love as a physical force with the power to transform objects in the natural world.

Inspired by the poetry in both Gaelic and English of the great Scottish poet Sorley Maclean, their poetry is infused with vivid depictions of the emotional and physical landscapes of their island home.

Translations from the Gaelic to English are by Dr Pàdraig MacAoidh.

‘Mo Opa’

Fada, fada air falbh,
gun càil air fhàgail
ach smaointean.

Smaointean na cloinne
agus oghan aige.
A’ coimhead air na dealbhan,
seann dealbhan,
dubh ’s geal, dealbhan,
seann Ferdinand Jahn,
an athair aige.

Fhathast ann an cuimhne daoine
fhathast ann,
dìreach a’ feitheamh,
le dìreach smaointean air fhàgail.

Rhiannon Knight
Portree High School

'Mo Opa' - Translation

Far, far away
with nothing left
but thoughts.

Thoughts of his children
And grandchild.
Looking at the pictures,
Old pictures,
Black and white, pictures,
Old Ferdinand Jahn,
His father.

Still remembered
Still there
Just waiting
With only memories left.

'Badhof Gasthein'

The high, forest-clad mountains,
the highest wearing crowns of snow,
the black marks, stark against the snow,
Man's way of changing nature, stopping avalanches.

The protective ring of mountains,
the guardians of the Alps,
proud and aloof, yet motherly and protective.
Little villages nestling on the valley floor.

Badhof Gasthein, its many fountains
and sparkling, clear blue stream:
snake's-head fountain, steaming in the ice of winter,
the endless tinkle of the fountains.

The distant, towering peaks of the Dolomites,
so near and yet so far:
through the pass
Italy, the Mediterranean, far off places.

The place of safety,
a place of peace,
a place of timelessness
of protection, of love.

Rhiannon Knight
Portree High School

'Bàta'

Bàta beag sa mhuir
Seòladh air ais 's air adhart,
Geàrradh tro na tuinn.

Hannah Dickson
Portree High School

Translation

Boat

A small boat in the sea
Sailing back and forth
Cutting through the waves.

'Like the Midnight Sky'

Like the twinkling stars
his glowing eyes

like the sun fading at sunset
his blonde bouncing locks

like the dark stretch of blue & black sky
his velvet skin

like the red planet Mars
his warm rosy cheeks

like the bright shining moon
his beautiful smile

like the last feeling of warmth
when he arrives

like the nippy cold air
the chill when he leaves

the love I feel for him
like the midnight sky

Heather Spiden
Portree High School

‘Na Hearadh’

A’ coiseachd sìos an tràigh fhada
is a’ coimhead air na beanntan
is air a’ mhuir bhrèagha.

A’ ghainmheach a’ leum
is a’ dannsa tro m’ òrdagan.
A’ ghaoth a’ bualadh air a’ mhuir
is na tuinn a’ dèanamh cruth,
as dèidh cruth.
Blas na gaoithe ùire
na mo bheul.

Aig taigh a’ chèilidh,
ar cultar a’ tighinn beò,
a’ cluinntinn mo chànain
anns a h-uile àite,
tha an samhradh air tilleadh
dhan eilean bheag bhrèagha seo.

Lauren NicDhùghail
Portree High School

Translation: ‘Harris’

Walking down the long beach
And looking at the hills
And the beautiful sea.

The sand jumping
And dancing through my toes.
The wind hitting the sea
And the waves making shape
After shape.
The taste of the new wind
On my mouth.

At the ceilidh house
Our culture comes alive,
Hearing my language
Everywhere,
The summer returns
To this small lovely island.

'Gone'

The moon above an empty beach
creates a cold shadow,
as I follow the footprints
left behind by someone unknown.

The footprints lead nowhere,
stop dead in their tracks;
I look back and see nothing
except the barren wasteland.

My mind wanders to a
memory that never was,
a brother that never left,
a foot that never imprinted the sand.

Anna Hodgetts
Portree High School

'Shelter'

In an alcove stood a shed
an old rusty locked-up shack,
a buoy as heavy as lead
as the sea whispered back.

The water sparkles at twilight,
the ocean wafting up the beach,
my calm, sheltered hideaway – I will fight
to bring a bit of peace to each:

I will fight to keep it my own,
to keep the isolation
to stay secluded all alone,
to keep my piece of the ocean.

Anna Hodgetts
Portree High School

'Empty'

No one can get in
the ruined old cottage
deserted on an old croft
with a broken door.
It's uninhabitable.

Lonely and depressed
with a rusty iron roof
that's falling apart.
The fire went out
many years ago
and will never burn again.

A strong gale blows
in the black inky sky
shaking the roots of the cottage,
banging at the door.
But nothing can enter.
But nothing can leave.

Rachel Mackinnon
Portree High School

'You'

you are beautiful
with your bright blue sky
which hurts my eyes
and your always green grass
being eaten by cows and sheep

you are peaceful
with your tall slim trees
which move silently
and your sweet small streams
flowing freely as a waterfall

you are mine
no matter what changes
you are always here
in my memories
and forever in my heart.

Rachel Mackinnon
Portree High School

‘A’ Siubhal’

Ann am bàta beag
seòladh a-mach gu muir
a’ ghaoth a’ sèideadh.

Suas gu h-àrd
air iteig tro na sgòthan,
seallaidhean breagha.

Coigrich bho gach àite
a’ draibheadh tron bhaile,
solas cho soilleir.

An saoghal cho brèagha
far am bi na h-eòin a’ seinn
's a ghrian a’ dearrsadh.

Victor MacConnell
Portree High School

Translation **‘Travelling’**

In a small boat
sailing out to sea,
the wind blowing.

Up high
on the wing in the clouds
beautiful sights.

Migrants from each place
driving through the city,
the light so bright.

The world so beautiful
where the birds sing
and the sun shines.

‘An gaol air chall’

Fuar is dorch,
tha mi a’ coiseachd air na geugagan briste
na duilleagan grod agus leacan briste agad;
tha mi a’ faireachdainn na froise fuair’ agad air mo chraiceann.

Geataichean a’ crathadh anns a’ ghaoith bhig:
tha mi a’ coimhead sìos
anns an dorchadas
air doras na ciste-laighe, a’ dùnadh.

Aileas MacLeod
Portree High School

TRANSLATION: The lost love

Cold and dark
I am walking on the broken twigs
The rotten leaves and your broken headstones;
I feel your cold shower on my skin.

Gates creak in the slight wind:
I look down
In the darkness
At the coffin lid closing.

'This is a bustling city'

This is a bustling city, crammed with life
but this is not a city of concrete or metal
or a city of humans; this is a place of rock and stone
of life and death, of salt and water,
a collage of black and white
a slum of the natural world.

Garrow Wilson
Portree High School

'Home'

hills and mountains
heather and bracken
bogs and streams

in the distance the sea
in the summer the sound of bees
in the winter the frosty breeze

the black mountain watching
the purple-covered hills keeping guard
ancient rocks standing, staring
daunting, watching life go on

the eerie voices of this land
speak within the gales that cross it
they howl as if you stood on sacred ground,
like a pack of wolves in the wind

this is my home
this is where I live

Garrow Wilson
Portree High School

‘Am Braighe’

Air fasgadh fho bheinn
fo ghàirdean làidir
a’ cumail a h-uile càil sàbhailte
bailtean, daoine, cultar, eachdraidh
uile fo sgiath an èoin.

Grian ag èirigh air fàire
a h-uile càil a’ dùsgadh
ciùin, sàbhailte, snog, brèagha,
na beathaichean a’ tòiseachdaidh a ghluasad
mean air mhean.
Èoin, uain, tuinn
uile ann an nead shàbhailte a’ Bhraighe.

Kayleigh Nicolson
Portree High School

TRANSLATION

Braes

Sheltered under the hills
Under strong arms
Keeping everything safe:
Villages, people, culture, history,
Everything under the bird’s wing.

The sun rising on the horizon
Everything waking
Peaceful, safe, nice, lovely,
The animals beginning to move
Bit by bit.
Birds, lambs, waves,
Everything in the nest of Braes.

'Glendale Poem'

The valley green, the grass
swaying in the summer breeze,
animals jumping, jeeps bumping
up the hard, windy roads.
The farmers making noise
with their tractors and machines,
a retired couple visiting their vegetable patch;
the clouds – not clear –
make the sun disappear.

Cows being milked,
sheep staring with no observation,
the dogs all travelling in formation.
For some reason I can't explain
the farmer won't release his cane:
mindlessly beating his dogs,
drunk off the fumes
of his own whisky smell,
feeling the dog's fleas.
All in the warm summer breeze.

Charlie Carpenter
Portree High School

'The rock face'

Bird huddle with care and love
with grip and danger
on the sketchy rock face.

The winters hard,
The summers with food and warmth.

Flying for miles on end for food
waiting to get home
to safety
on the sketchy rock face.

Not able to sleep
skinny feet
random birds flock
with no identity
all the same, no fame,
on the sketchy rock face.

Charlie Carpenter
Portree High School

‘Am Bràighe’

Tuath air Caol Acain
Deas air Port Rìgh
Iar air Ratharsaigh
Ear air Carbost

Am Braighe:
an oisean as fheàrr – an tràigh,
beanntan mar ghàirdean mòr
mar dhuine cofhurtail.

Aig bonn na beinne,
na clachan brèagha,
cho cruinn ri ball-coise
agus cho rèidh ri tòn bèibidh.

Sealladh cho brèagha
gam ghlacadh
mar aodann boireannaich
gam tharraing le bòidhchead.

Angie Grant
Portree High School

TRANSLATION: **Braes**

North of Kyleakin
South of Portree
West of Raasay
East of Carbost

Braes:
My favourite bit – the beach,
Hills like a long arm
Like a comforting man.

At the foot of the hill,
The beautiful stones,
As round as a football
As smooth as a baby’s bum.

A beautiful view
Catching me
Like a girl’s face
Pulling me with its beauty.

'The tug boat'

White all over
with a ring of orange
around the bottom.

Small and weak
to the unknowing eye,
but really

stronger than many others,
the lower levels seeming
to never stop.

Seeing the engine –
the size of a bedroom! –
making the whole boat shake.

Sean Stevenson
Portree High School

'Flòdaigearraidh'

Latha aotrom, brèagha, soilleir
sùil gu h-àrd air na creagan dorch'
a tha làn sgeulachdan shìthichean.
A' cluinntinn mac-talla nan
caorach air a' bhruaich
gu h-ìosal.

Sùil a-null air Loch Langaig
cho socair, sìtheil
luasgan ciùin a' diogladh oir na locha
m' inntinn aig fois.

Spaidsearachd tron fhraoich,
tiugh, tioram,
fàileadh ùr an earraich gam chuartaich
's mi sliobadh seachad air an raineach,
mo cheann-uidhe cho dlùth
dathan brèagha an eilein
ann an sgàthan gorm na mara
a' ruith thairis gu Rubha Rèidh
a' toirt m' anail air falbh.

Emma Beaton
Portree High School

TRANSLATION: **Flodigarry**

Light, beautiful, bright day
eye high on the dark cliffs
full of stories of fairies.
Hearing the echo of
Sheep on the banks
Below.

Looking across to Loch Langaig
So calm, peaceful
Gentle ripples tickling the lochside
My mind at rest.

Trudging through the heather,
Thick and dry,
The new smells of spring surrounding me,
As I brush past the bracken,
My destination so close:

The beautiful colours of the island
In the blue mirror of the sea
Running down to Rubha Reidh
Taking my breath away.

‘Air Cùl an Taighe’

Am feur a’ sèideadh sa ghaoith,
an t-adhar ’s na lochan cho gorm ri chèile,
an èadhar cho fionnar,
an t-àite cho ciùin is sàmhach.
Na beathaichean a’ tarraing anail,
’S iad ag èigheach air feadhainn òga.
Mi a’ streap airson uairean,
slighe fhada bhon dachaigh,
ach mu dheireadh thall, tha mi ann
air mullach na beinne.
Seallaidhean nach fhaic thu an àite sam bith eile
ach far a bheil mo chridhe.

Kirsty Matheson
Portree High School

TRANSLATION: Behind the house

The grass blows in the wind,
The sky and lochs as blue as each other,
The air so cool
The place so peaceful and calm.
The animals draw breath,
And call to their young.
And I climb for hours
A long way from home,
But at last I’m there
On top of the hill.
Views you’ll never see anywhere else
But where my heart is.

'The Field'

Fields, so open you feel at home,
the field beside my house. Stretching so long
starting up high, then falling down in waves
rolling down is almost like being on a rollercoaster ride
the bumps, pushing you off, letting you fly for a few seconds
before landing once again.

When summer comes around, the field glistens,
daffodils fill the ground, creating a blanket
the sun beating down in soft waves, lapping over my skin
peaceful, tranquil, serene, perfect in every way.

A sweet taste filling my mouth,
the smell of flowers & hay intertwining together
creating a soft smell, drifting with the breeze;
stressful thoughts flowing away,
fingering lightly, tracing the patterns all around me: flowers, heather,
whispers carry round the empty field.

Eilean MacLeod
Portree High School

‘Stafainn’

Na coin a’ ruith às mo dhèidh
caoraich ag èigheach airson biadh
's Corrie a’ comhartaich ris na caoraich.

A’ ghrian a’ deàrrsadh air na h-uain
na lusan a’ fàs air a’ chroit
fàileadh làidir an *silage* air feadh an àite
fàileadh brèagha air a’ chroit.

A’ ghaoth air mo dhruim:
tha e cho sàmhach
chluinneadh tu na h-eòin
is an t-uisge a’ bualadh air na creagan.

Alex MacDonald
Portree High School

TRANSLATION: **Staffin**

The dogs running after me
The sheep calling for food
And Corrie barking at the sheep/

The sun shining on the lambs
The plants growing on the croft
The smell of silage all over the place
The beautiful smell of the croft.

The wind on my back:
It is so quiet
You could hear the birds
And the water hitting the cliffs.

‘An Eadailt’

Bràtach uaine, geal is dearg
air a crochadh
air an doras
mar a tha a’ ghrian a’ dearrsadh,
air na taighean cho uaine is pinc
leis a’ ghrèin a’ dearrsadh air m’ aodann
is na monaidhean mòra brèagha
ga mo chuirteachadh le blàths is fois.
Tha mi toilichte a bhith air ais,
air ais ann am *Bella Italia*.

Kirsty MacDougall
Portree High School

TRANSLATION:Italy

Green, white and red flag
Hanging
On the door
Like the sun shining
On the houses, so green and pink
With the sun shining on my face
And the high, lovely mountains.
I am happy to be back
Back in *Bella Italia*.

‘Caol-Reatha’

Caol-Reatha le bàta
Aiseig, ag
Obair seachd
Latha san t-seachdain

Ruith fad an latha
Eadar Gleann-Eilg
Agus an t-Eilean.
Thèid sinn a-null air Caolas na
H-Eachdraidh mar a rinn
Ar sinnsearan.

Isabelle Law
Portree High School

TRANSLATION: **‘Kylarhea’**

Kylarhea, with a ferry
boat, which
works seven
days a week

Running all day
Between Glenelg
And the island.
We’ll go across the Kyle of
History like
Our ancestors.

(It is obviously an acrostic in the Gaelic). Here is the English version she did.

Kylarhea
ferrY with orange
Life rings, the
Engine
Rumbling, in the west
Highlands!
thE last turntable ferry
Alive...

'Air an Thames'

Càraichean a' dol seachad,
mi cho cleachte ris a' ghearain fhuimneach aca;
a-mach an uinneig,
tha na càraichean a' dol sìos na h-aibhne;
fad an latha, tha am microfòn ag èigheachd.

Air an oidhche tha na solais a' lasadh an adhair,
ga thionndadh orains,
gus nach eil e idir dorch.
Tha cuimhne agam a bhith nam sheasamh,
aig an uinneig a' coimhead air an t-saoghal
a' dol seachad;
na pleanaichean san adhar, na bàtaichean air an Thames,
na càraichean air an A3050.

Tha na siotaichean a' faireachdainn blàth fom chorp,
ach feumaidh mi èirigh.
Sìos an staidhre leam,
fiodh fuar air mo chasan.
A-steach dhan chidsin, cho soilleir air mo shùilean,
a h-uile duine ann mar thà,
is sia diofar gràn bracais air a' bhòrd.
Sèist de 'mhadainn mhath'.

Ruby Partridge
Portree High School

TRANSLATION

On the Thames'

Cars going past
and me so used to their noisy complaints;
out the window
the cars are going down the river;
all day, the microphone shouts.

At night the lights kindle the air,
turn it orange,
until it is not at all dark.
I remember standing,
at the window looking at the world
going past;
the planes in the sky, the boats on the Thames,
the cars on the A3050.

The sheets are warm beneath my body,
but I have to get up.
Downstairs with me then,
the wood cold on my feet.
Into the kitchen, so bright on my eyes,
everybody there already,
and six types of cereal on the table.
A chorus of 'good morning.'

‘Chambœuf’

A’ dùisgeadh sgìth le fuaim mo mhàthair,
is math mo chuimhne den turas ud dhan phort adhair ...
a’ leum bhon leabaidh dhan adhar fhuar,
's mi do-chreidmheach gu bheil e cairteal as dèidh uair.
An siud 's an seo, a h-uile duine trang,
tha an càr mar-tha làn le sandals 's peile,
a-steach don charbad leis na bagaichean eile,
mu dheireadh a’ fàgail air ar turas don Fhraing.

An ceann oidhche 's latha, ràinig sinn e,
sealladh cho brèagha 's a chunnaic mi riamh.
Dathan uaine, orainds, teth,
's chan eil muinntir a’ bhaile a’ smaoineachadh càil dheth.
A’ togail an teanta air pìos mhòr thalmhainn,
's an t-slighe dhachaigh seachdainn air falbh.

Fiann MacLeòid
Portree High School

TRANSLATION ‘Chambœuf’

Waking tired to my mother’s voice,
I well remember that trip to the airport-
Jumping from bed to the cold air
Not believing it is quarter past one.
Here and there, everyone busy,
The car already full with sandals and pails,
Into the car with all the other bags,
At last leaving for our trip to France.

After a night and day we reached it
A view as nice as any I’d ever seen.
Colours, greens and oranges, and heat,
The people of the village not paying attention to it.
Putting the tent up on a large bit of ground,
And the trip home a whole week away.

'Paris'

Opening the door I dance out of my *petit* apartment
et viola
my nose explodes with the love affair of the various smells.
I quickly disappear into the crowd.
The portly French bakers bellow out 'Baguette fraîche';
shuffling along, I finally get a taste of the warm dough.
I trace the outline of ancient engravings:
the rough stone splinters my skin
then onto the marble – its softness forgets my pain.

Hazel Isles
Portree High School

'Ski-ing'

The cludding of the boots
in unknown territory
sitting warily on the seat then –
slowly –
moving up, until if you fell
you'd plummet to your death.

You're at the top,
it's your time to get off.
Don't fail the others.
The soft crunch and woosh
as you gently glide forwards,
people crashing past,
putting you in your place.

You look down at the soft
white indulgent bed of snow,
making you feel at home,
making you trust its icy depths,
but its you who takes the risk
for your own enjoyment
but with danger leaving you on edge.
How I love Morzine.

Tilly Prentice
Portree High School

