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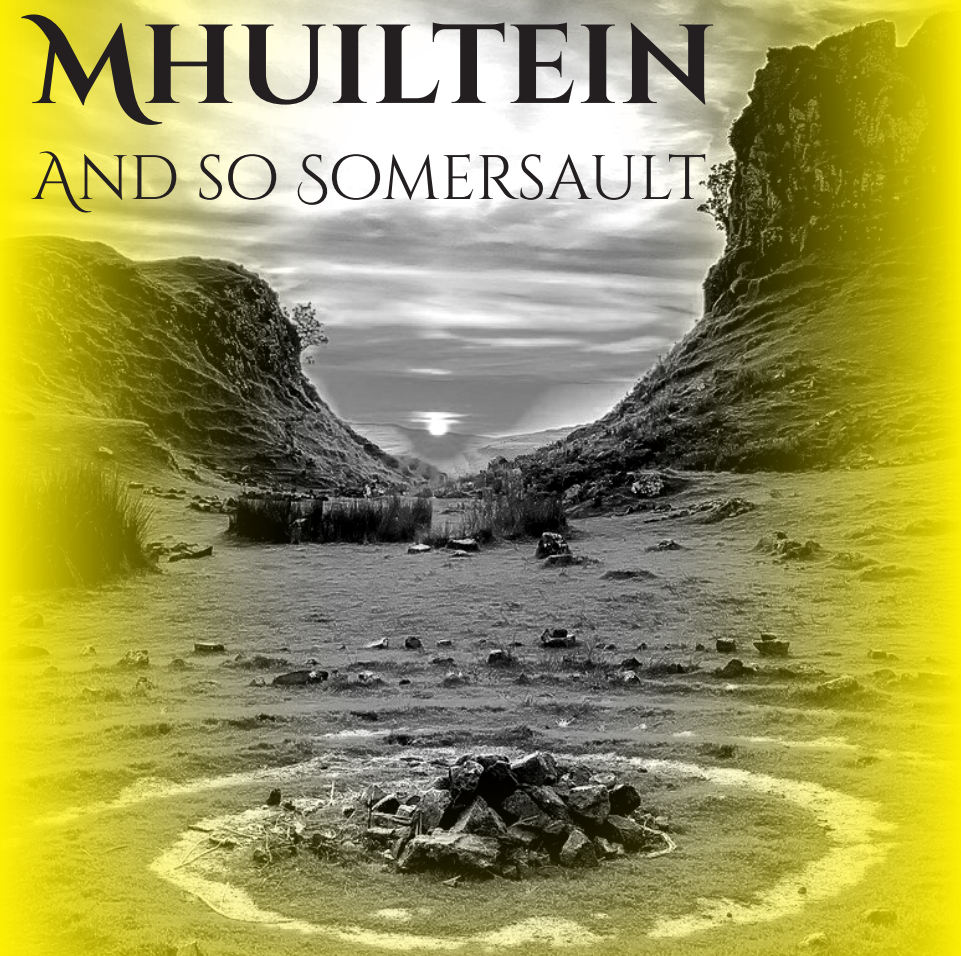
And so somersault



Maoilios Caimbeul

Agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein

And so somersault

MAOILIOS CAIMBEUL

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INTRODUCTION

You hold in your hands a remarkable prose poem that is newly translated into English. A bardic tour de force where the mythical and the divine dance together. If it touches you like it has us, you'll be somersaulting, smiling and giggling at the humour woven throughout. For in our view, this beautifully crafted limited edition merits a place amongst Scotland's most distinguished mythic and religious poetry.

We can safely say that. Indeed, we can safely place our assessment beyond criticism. Because it's a joke! Isn't it? It's a poem about the faeries, for goodness' sake. And so … somersault. Let's press in deeper and find out.

The plot has William coming home tipsy from a wedding. He hijacks a horse, it speeds him faster than he'd bargained for, and so he's somersaulted off into the sìthean, the faerie hill. There he dreams "the knowledge-fullness" of his journey.

Soon he's dancing with the faeries for a night that lasts a-year-and-a-day. Somersaulting through the ecstasies and torments of the Otherworld, he eventually wearies of "the cold eternities" and yearns for home. And so, they take him to the temple. And here, the presence shining clear above the altar sends him to the healing well. And the girl with the love in her eyes, the girl who shimmers in the waters of the everlasting waterfall, tells him to "accept the flood… accept … accept … accept."

It's just so heart-rending beautiful. Suffice to say, we've said enough to rest this poem rightly into SEALL's 2021 programme theme: Scotland's Coasts and Waters. But let's not leave it there quite yet.

With family roots in Ness in Lewis and Flodigarry in Skye, Maoilios Caimbeul (Myles Campbell) was born in Staffin, Skye, 1944, the son of

Free Church missionary parents. It was a tough call for that generation to live both poetry and faith.

The late Tessa Ransford, who founded the Scottish Poetry Library, often said how "the poets" of the Hebrides wrestled with both their own inner and their wider cultural tensions. As Maoilios tells in his short foreword, his poem, too, is cathartic. Like so many of us, he too left his community until, brought to the healing well, he found it once again, afresh. And the Free Church, and his dear wife Margaret, they both found him also.

At one level, then, the faeries and this poem are a joke. But to take a deeper look: Who are the faeries? The Rassay poet Sorley MacLean tried to go there in his epic poem, Uamha 'n Óir, The Cave of Gold: but, as one reading might have it, he was beaten back. Beaten, by the powers that have assailed the Gaelic world throughout the era of modernity. The faerie dog that kept the treasure guarded left his vision clouded. And worse, his heart bereft of hope.

W.B. Yeats might not have been surprised at this. In his sparkling essay collection, The Celtic Twilight, Yeats said that we Scots had been "too theological, too gloomy".

We had "discovered the fairies to be pagan and wicked", denounced them from the pulpit, and failed to be good neighbours with the species of the Otherworld. Therefore: for their "gay and graceful doings you must go to Ireland; for their deeds of terror to Scotland."

But Yeats seems not to have known the depth of Gaelic vision. He overlooked the fact that, very often, our traditions were preserved by Presbyterian clergy. The Rev Robert Kirk of Aberfoyle, the Rev J.G. Campbell of Islay, the Rev Kenneth Macleod of Staffin and Eigg, to name but three amongst the highest apples.

Neither did he have the key to understand the Otherworld that was left us by the late Dr John MacInnes of Raasay, himself the son of a Lewis manse and of Uist and Skye parentage. “We could take the faerie knoll as a metaphor of the imagination,” wrote MacInnes, softly, before his thunderclap: “From this shadowy realm comes the creative power of mankind.”

In our tradition, then, faerie is anything but a joke. And in our view, Maoilios’ great poem somersaults through the contradictions, and reconciles us to the Scottish Gaelic Otherworld. Moreover, the temple scene prefigures his real-life journey home. And if we listen carefully, we’ll pick up distant echoes of Ezekiel’s mighty river, and louder, ever louder, the joyous summons of the prophet Amos: “But let justice roll down like waters. And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

Here then, and faithful to the theme, are your Scotland’s Coasts and Waters 2020/21. Those for which we’ve thirsted long and deep. Here – in its passion for imagination, community and righteousness - is the gift that Maoilios passes down to future tradition bearers. We hear it said, too often in lament, about the fading navigators of the culture’s carrying stream: “Soon they’ll be all gone.”

They will, they will be gone beyond the western twilight edge, if we don’t pick their baton up and take from them our bearings. And that, to serve what end? To speak into the wider world’s most pressing needs. As the last chapter of the New Testament has it: “For the healing of the nations.”

Alastair McIntosh of North Lochs
Catherine MacPhee of Harlosh
Iain MacKinnon of Camuscross

FACAL BHON ÙGHDAR

Chaidh an rosg-dhàn Agus mar sin Car a' Mhuiltein fhoillseachadh an toiseach ann an Gàidhlig le Gairm ann an 1994 sa chruinneachadh A' Gabhail Ris. 'S e an leabhran seo a' chiad eadar-theangachadh dheth gu Beurla, ach a-mhàin pìos beag san duanaire An Tuil air a dheasachadh le Raghnall Mac Ille Dhuibh.

Sgrìobh mi an dàn ionnlaideach seo ann an '93 no '94 aig àm duilich na mo bheatha, agus dh'fhaodadh gu bheil faileas dhe na thachair dhomh aig an àm anns an dàn.

B' ann an '92 a thill mi, às dèidh eilthireachd fad is farsaing, gu Stafainn, àite air an robh mi a' coimhead mar dhachaigh spioradail. 'S beag a bha dh'fhios a'm dè bha romham: mar neach-siridh agus eas-creidmheach, mar a dh'fhàgainn, às dèidh tachartasan do-chreidsinn, an saoghal sìdh air a bheil Alastair Mac an Tòisich a' toirt iomradh agus a thiginn na b' fhaisge – cha dùraig dhomh a ràdh gu ruige – air fìrinn Chrìosd.

Tha mi gu mòr an comain Alastair, seach gur e an ùidh a bh' aige san dàn a thug orm am pìos air fad eadar-theangachadh. Shaoil mi gu robh e cothromach, ma bha sinn a' dol a bhruidhinn mun dàn, gum faigheadh e cothrom air an dàn air fad.

Feumaidh mi a ràdh, às dèidh dhomh Poacher's Pilgrimage le Alastair a leughadh, gu bheil mi a' faireachdainn dàimh ris mar dhuine a tha a' sireadh na fìrinn gu daingeann, a thèid ge brith càite a bheil an fhianais ga thoirt, agus uaireannan bheir an fhianais e gu àiteachan gu tur annasach, eadhon dhan t-sìthean fhèin.

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

The prose poem Agus mar sin Car a' Mhuiltein was first published in Gaelic in the 1994 Gairm booklet A' Gabhail Ris. This is the first translation of it into English, apart from a small excerpt in Ronald Black's An Tuil anthology.

I wrote what is a cathartic poem in '92 or '93 at a traumatic time in my life, and the poem probably reflects some of what I went through at the time.

It was in '92 that I returned, after exile far and wide, to Staffin, a place to which I looked as my spiritual home. Little did I realise what I was coming home to: through being a seeker and a sceptic how I would, through unbelievable events, leave what Alastair McIntosh calls the faerie realm behind and approach – I dare not say enter, that would be presumptuous – the Christ reality.

I am very much indebted to Alastair for being the prompt which caused me to translate the whole poem. I thought it only fair that if we were to discuss the poem at all that he should have full access to it.

Having read his book Poacher's Pilgrimage, I must say I feel a kinship with him as a person who seeks the truth regardless, who will go wherever the evidence leads, and sometimes the evidence will lead into very strange places, even into the sìthean itself.

Mo thaing dha Alastair, Catrìona Nic a' Phì agus Iain MacFhionghain airson an Ro-ràdh a sgrìobhadh. Mo thaing cuideachd dha Sara Bain aig SEALL airson na obrach cruaidh a rinn i a' cur an leabhran ri chèile agus taing cuideachd dha luchd-obrach Atlas Arts a chlò-bhuail e.

MAOILIOS CAIMBEUL FLÒDAIGEARRAIDH
30 AN T-IUCHAR 2021

My thanks to Alastair, Catherine MacPhee and Iain MacKinnon for writing the introduction. Thanks also to Sara Bain of SEALL for all her hard work in bringing the pamphlet to fruition and to Atlas Arts for providing the means to hand-print it.

MYLES CAMPBELL OF FLODIGARRY
30 JULY 2021

AGUS MAR SIN CAR A' MHUILTEIN ...

I.

Agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein a' tighinn bho bhanais Raghail a' tighinn tarsaing nan cnoc bho thaigh-òsta Ostabhaig a' tighinn tro na cnuic air oidhche thioram reultach oidhche gheamhraidh reòthte agus an taigh pìos air falbh agus mi 'g iarraidh dhachaigh m' inntinn air ghleus le milleanan na speur agus chunnaic mi an t-each a bha seo an t-each air Peigi Anna agus smaoinich mi gum faighinn pillean air dhachaigh agus thilg mi mo sheacaid tarrsaing 's leum mi suas ach ma leum bha siud an donas air iteig tarsaing na feannagan thairis na mòintich a' leum nan tom 's nan còsan 'Stad, a mhic fhirean' ghlaodh mi ach 's e esan nach do stad gus mu dheireadh ann an gleann starrabach fad às ghiorraich e cheum 's thàinig e gu làn-stad 's rinn e goic-mhoit cinn 's chaidh mi tarsaing an còir mo chinn gu talamh 's chan eil fhios a'm an d' fhuair mi gnog ach bha mi ann an neul-cheò 's na dùilean a' dol seachad 's gach nì a' dol timcheall 's cha robh fhios a'm tuilleadh cà' robh mi 's mar sin car a' mhuiltein ...

AND SO SOMERSAULT ...

I.

And so somersault coming back from Ron's wedding across the hills from the Ostabhaig hotel through the hills on a dry starry night a freezing winter's night and the house some distance away and I wanted home my mind in tune with the millions of the sky and I saw this horse Peggy Ann's horse and I thought I would get a ride on him home and I threw my jacket over it and I jumped up but if I did the devil was off like a shot over the lazybeds across the moor leaping over knolls and hollows 'Stop, you effen brute' I cried but would he stop no not him till at last in a rough glen far away he slowed down and came to a full stop and tossed his head high and over I went head first to the ground and I don't know if I got a knock but I was in a dwam and the elements passing everything whirling and I no longer knew where I was and so somersault ...

2.

'S nuair a thàinig mi mun cuairt ma 's ann mun cuairt a bha mi bha mi air chrith le fuachd 's cha robh each 's cha robh seacaid air sgeul 's thòisich mi ri bruadair air lànachd air lànachd eòlais mo chùrsa 's thòisich na leabhraichean a' càrnadh suas iad a' dòrtadh a-mach às an adhar a' tighinn a-nuas nan cuairteagan nan loidhnichean clis tana a-mach às na speuran reultach nam parabolan srianach ioma-dhathte soillseach agus dhòirt iad aig mo chasan agus rinn iad staidhre mòr farsaing agus thòisich mi a' dìreadh suas agus suas gu ruig na sgòthan agus mu dheireadh bha mi a' coimhead sìos sìos bhon àirde bho àirde dhiabhalta agus bha eagal orm eagal mo bheatha agus thòisich an staidhre a' fàs na bu chasa na bu chaoile agus bha mi ag èigheach 'Ò mo chaoile' agus a' coimhead sìos agus ag amharc airson dhaoine agus bha iad uile cho fad às mar na h-ataman beaga shìos an sin shìos fodham air an t-saoghal a bha a' falbh bhuam aig astar camaig aig astar làn-stad agus bha a h-uile làn-stad a chunna mi riamh anns na leabhraichean timcheall orm mar chaoraich mar chinn nan caorach dubh-cheannach gam chuairteachadh agus thuit mi mar chloich gu talamh thuit mi ann am boglaich agus airson mionaid cha robh fios a'm cà' robh mi gus am faca mi na caoraich os mo chionn agus iad ag amharc orm le grad- le mòr-iongnadh agus dh'èirich mi às a' bhoglaich agus am poll gam chòmhdach agus bha iad fhathast ann a shin nan cearcall a' dùr amharc agus thuirt mi ris a' chiad tè an tè a b' fhaisge 'for his sake thoir dhomh drama thoir drama dhan duine nach eil thu gam fhaicinn? tha mi air tuiteam bho àirde chianail 's tha feum agam air drama' agus roilig a' chaora bha sin a sùilean roilig iad uile an sùilean agus spreig iad an talamh le an ladhran le an ladhran toisich agus thug an tè chòir sin an tè mhòr mholach chòir leth-bhotal às a pòcaid agus spìon mi e às a ladhran beaga cruaidhe dubha mus canadh tu hòro-gheallaidh agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein ...

2.

And when I woke if awake I was I was shivering with cold and not a sign of horse or jacket and I began to dream of the fullness of the knowledge-fullness of my journey and the books piled up pouring out of the sky whirling downwards sudden lines narrow out of the starry skies banded parabolas multi-coloured clear-shining and they poured at my feet and they made a big wide stairway and I started to climb upwards to the clouds and at last I was looking down down from the height a devilish height and I was afraid dead scared and the stair started to get steeper narrower and I was shouting 'O desperation' and looking down searching for people and they were all so distant like tiny atoms down there down below me on the earth that was receding at a comma's pace at a full stop's pace and all the full stops I ever saw in the books were round me like sheep like the heads of the blackfaced sheep surrounding me and I fell like a stone to earth I fell into a bog and for a moment I didn't know where I was till I saw the sheep above me viewing me with sudden- with great wonder and I rose from the bog covered in mud and they were still there in a circle staring and I said to the first one the nearest one 'for his sake give me a dram give the man a dram don't you see me? I've fallen from a dreadful height and I need a dram' and that sheep rolled her eyes they all rolled their eyes and prodded the ground with their hoofs with their front hoofs and yon kind one the big shaggy kind one took a half bottle from her pocket and I plucked it from her little hard black hoofs before you could say hòro-gheallaidh and so somersault ...

3.

Agus bha a' chaora air gealltainn dhomh nach bithinn fada gus am faighinn gu dòchas agus chaidh mi air adhart a' còmhradh a bheil sibh a' tuigsinn a' còmhradh rium fhìn na dh'fheuch thu fhèin riamh ri bruidhinn ri caora agus chaidh mi air adhart mar sin nuair a chuala mi an ceòl bu tiamhaidhe a thàinig riamh gu cluas duine an e fidheall an e phìob an e sionnsair an e cìr? A-mach às a' chnocan a bh' air mo bheulaibh agus dh'fhosgail an doras anns a' chnoc doras soillseach tarraingeach dìomhair le ceò de dhaoine beaga uaine air bioran an cois a' dannsa ann an ceathach a' chiùil agus bha mi air mo tharraing a dheòin no dh'aindeoin a-staigh ann an teis-meadhan na ceòtha uaine leis na daoine beaga tiugha a' dannsa 's a' gàireachdainn agus dh'fhàs mo theanga gun bhriathar agus chunnaic mi sradagan ag èirigh os mo chionn agus chaidh mi an tuaineal agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein ...

3.

And the sheep had promised me that it wouldn't be long till I came to hope and forward I went talking do you understand talking with myself have you ever tried to speak to a sheep? and so I went on until I heard the sweetest sound ever to reach human ear was it fiddle was it bagpipe was it chanter was it comb? out from the hillock before me and a door opened in the hillock a bright inviting mysterious door with a cloud of little green people on tiptoe dancing in the music haze and I was drawn willingly or not into the middle of the green haze while the little stout people danced and laughed and I couldn't speak and I saw sparks rising above me and I turned giddy and so somersault ...

4.

Agus dhùisg mi ann an seòmar agus cha robh ann ach aon duine beag tiugh uaine le aodann cruinn dearg le gruaidhean mar na ròsan agus bha gàire air aodann agus bha e ag ràdh 'Bha sinne sean nuair a bha an saoghal òg' agus thuirt e 'dùisg a mhic an duine dùisg' agus thug e sgailc dhomh air an lethcheann agus air an lethcheann eile agus thòisich mi a' dùsgadh gu tuainealach lethcheannach agus thuirt e 'Tha thu ann an seòmar na maighdinn is e seo toiseach do thurais' agus choimhead mi mun cuairt orm ach chan fhaicinn càil ach ballachan dathte ballachan ioma-dhathte agus bha mo shùilean goirt leis na dathan a bha a' snàmh mar sgòthan gluasadach reubte ach thuirt e 'Seall agus chì thu air do bheulaibh a' mhaighdeann' agus ged a sheall an toiseach chan fhaicinn càil 'Seall air do bheulaibh' thuirt e 'Seall' agus chunnaic mi an uair sin i na seasamh mar choibhneas mar thaisbeanadh gràidh mar an aingeal gun sgiathan le a falt bàn fada agus a sùilean cho gorm ris a' mhuir bu ghuirme anns na tìrean blatha mu dheas agus a bodhaig gun stiall aodaich bho a bun gu a bàrr bho a casan cuimir sgiobalta le na h-ìnean dearga gu a mala chaol is beul tana agus thàinig cnap nam amhaich agus cha robh mi a' faireachdainn gu math nuair a chunnaic mi a glùinean agus thàinig dà chnap nam amhaich nuair a dh'èirich mi gu a slèisdean agus bha i a' tighinn na b' fhaisge agus mi a' faireachdainn mar gu robh mo mhionach mo bhroinn mo bhrù ann an còmhstri mar gu robh an dà fhichead 's a seachd 'ronain' na seachd fir eile airson Eachainn a' sabaid leis na seachd claidhnean agus mar a shuath i annam chaidh mi ann an neul ann an laigse dhìomhair agus nuair a dhùisg mi bha a' chrùbag a bha seo air m' uachdar a slige fuar air mo chraiceann

4.

And I awoke in a room and there was only one little stout green man with a round ruddy face with cheeks like roses and there was a smile on his face and he was saying 'We were old when the world was young' and he said 'wake up son of man wake up' and he gave me a slap on the cheek and on the other cheek and I began to waken dizzily half-knowingly and he said 'You are in the ladies' room this is the start of your journey' and I looked around me but could see nothing except coloured walls multicoloured walls and my eyes were sore with the colours which swam like ragged moving clouds but he said 'Look and you will see the lassie before you' and although I looked at first I couldn't see anything 'Look in front of you' he said 'Look' and then I saw her standing like kindness like a revelation of love like a wingless angel with her long fair hair and eyes bluer than any blue sea of the warm lands to the south and her body without a stitch from head to foot from her trim neat feet with the red nails to her narrow forehead and thin lips and a lump came to my throat and I didn't feel well when I saw her knees and two lumps came when I looked to her thighs and she was coming nearer and I felt as if my belly my inards my guts were at war as if the forty-seven ronins the seven other men for Hector were fighting with the seven swords and as she touched me I fell in a swoon in a mystery-deep faint and when I wakened there was this crab on top of me its cold shell on my skin

agus fad an t-siubhail bha mo laochan tiugh uaine a' gàireachdainn agus dh'fhairich mi na ladhran a' gearradh m' fheòil a' dol a-staigh fom chraiceann nam bhroinn a' dèanamh dìreach air mo chridhe agus bha mi fuar le fallas agus dh'fhairich mi eagal nach do dh'fhairich mi riamh roimhe 's an dà shùil bheag bhiorach bhon a' chuan chian chianail an-iochdmhor a' spleuchdadh orm gun truas a-mach às an t-slige àrsaidh chruaidh agus dh'fhàs a h-uile nì dubh agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein ...

and all this time my stout little hero was laughing and I felt the claws cutting my flesh going under my skin inside me making straight for my heart and I was in a cold sweat and I felt a fear I never before felt and the two little penetrating eyes from the far-off dreadful merciless ocean staring at me pitilessly out of the ancient hard shell and everything became black and so somersault ...

5.

Agus dhùisg mi ann an seòmar eile seòmar mòr fada làn ciùil agus dannsa agus conaltradh agus còmhradh agus bha daoine beaga na culaidh uaine a' dannsa le maighdeannan clis-chasach agus falt òr-bhuidh' 'buidhe mar òr cuailean mo ghaoil' dìreach mar a bha anns an òran agus bha iad a' dannsa gu h-aighearach sunndach còmhla ris na maighdeannan mar nach robh a-màireach air a ghealltainn 's bha ceud fidheall air ghleus le ceòl binn bras blasta cho binn 's nach fairicheadh duine gu robh casan air fhad 's a bha e a' dannsa 's ann an oisean den t-seòmar bha gàrradh le planndaichean 's lusan 's craobhan agus fo na craobhan bha fuarain a' spùtadh gu h-innleachdach ann an àircean òr-bhuidh' 's bho àm gu àm dheigheadh na daoine beaga agus na maighdeannan a-null agus ghabhadh iad aon de na cuachan òir bha an crochadh bho na craobhan agus ghabhadh iad srùbag gus an robh iad làn sùbhachais agus gàire agus an uair sin air ais chun an dannsa agus chunnaic mi seo agus dh'òl mi dh'òl mise cuideachd agus ma dh'òl bha mi air mhire còmhla ris a' chòrr agus dhìochuimhnich mi a' chrùbag agus chunnaic mi a' mhaighdeann ri mo thaobh cha b' e an tè a bh' anns an t-seòmar eile ach maighdeann bhrèagha bhàn tais-shùileach agus thug mi dhi mo làmh agus ghabh i i agus thòisich sinn a' dannsa a' leum a' ruidhleadh agus thug mi an aire dha ceann bha crùn air a ceann air a ceann òr-bhuidh' agus thuirt mi rithe 'Tha crùn air do cheann' agus thuirt i 'Tha fhios a'm is mise banrigh nan sìthichean' agus thuirt mi 'Tha eagal orm' agus thuirt i 'Chan eil adhbhar gheibh thu air ais gu Ostabhaig'

'Gu Ostabhaig tha mi ag iarraidh air ais' arsa mise 'Ged a tha e math a' seo tha mi ag iarraidh air ais' agus bha a crùn a' deàrrsadh le soilleireachd reultan agus thuirt mi a-rithist 'Tha mi ag iarraidh air ais gu Ostabhaig gun taigh-òsta' agus thuirt i 'Tha thu an seo airson bliadhna agus

5.

And I wakened in another room a big long room full of music and company and conversation and little men in green clothes dancing with maidens fleet-footed golden-haired 'yellow like gold the tresses of my love' just as in the song in a joyful lively dance with the maidens as if there was no tomorrow and a hundred fiddles were tuned in sweet swift melodious music so sweet one felt foot free as one danced and in the corner of the room there was a garden with plants and herbs and trees and beneath the trees an ingenious fountain spouted in golden arcs and now and again the little men and maidens would go over and take one of the golden cups hanging from the trees and they would take a drink until full of merriment and laughter and then back to the dance and I saw this and I drank I also drank and if I did I was merry with the rest and I forgot the crab and I saw this lass beside me not the one in the other room but a beautiful blond soft-eyed lass and I gave her my hand and she took it and we started dancing leaping reeling and I noticed her head there was a crown on her head on her golden head and I said to her 'There is a crown on your head' and she said 'I know I'm the queen of the fairies' and I said 'I'm scared' and she said 'There is no reason you will get back to Ostabhaig'
'I want back to Ostabhaig' I said 'Although it's good here I want back' and her crown shone with the brilliance of stars and I said again 'I want back to Ostabhaig to the hotel' and she said 'You are here for a year

latha agus an uair sin gheibh thu a-mach' agus 's ann an uair sin a thuig mi far an robh mi gu robh mi ann an sìthean agus mar a bha sinn a' bruidhinn bha sinn aig doras an t-seòmair agus ruith mi bha mi a' dol a ruith a-mach air ais gu Ostabhaig agus dh'èigh i orm 'Stad' ach cha do stad ruith mi gus an robh mi aig an doras agus an uair sin stad mi cha b' urrainn dhomh gluasad bha mo chasan mar luaithe agus chuala mi air mo chùlabh a' ghàireachdainn agus thionndaidh mi mo cheann ged a bha mo chasan glaodhte glaodhte ris an làr 's chunna mi gu robh an dannsa air sgur 's bha na daoine beaga tiugha agus na maighdeannan agus a' bhanrigh uile a' gàireachdainn agus thuit mi air an talamh ann an neul ann an laigse agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein ...

and a day and then you will get out' and it was then I understood where I was that I was in a fairy knoll and as we were speaking we were at the door of the room and I ran I was going to run back to Ostabhaig and she shouted to me 'Stop' but I didn't stop I ran till I was at the door and then I stopped I couldn't move my feet were like lead and I heard laughter behind me and I turned my head although my feet were glued glued to the floor I saw that the dance had stopped the little stout men and maidens and the queen all were laughing and I fell to the ground in a faint in a swoon and so somersault ...

6.

Agus nuair a dhùisg mi bha mi ann an àite fuar liath-ghorm air a dhèanamh de dheigh agus cha robh duine còmh' rium agus ghlaodh mi a-mach 'Ille bhig uaine cà' bheil thu ille bhig ...' 's chaidh am fuachd a-staigh na mo chnàmhan 's dh'fhairich mi gu robh mi ann am meadhan cloich 's gu robh an saoghal air a dhèanamh de chloich 's gu robh mi fhìn a' fàs gu bhith nam chloich agus smaoinich mi air a' mhaighdinn air a crùn deàlrach agus air a' mhaighdinn eile le a slèisdean àghmhor 's bha iad uile fuar mar chloich agus smaoinich mi air a' bhàrd air a' bhàrd a thuirt 'While his bowed head seemed listening to the earth His ancient mother for some comfort yet' 's bha a h-uile nì fuar fuar agus sàmhach 'fuar, fad às, lòghmhor, àlainn' 's bha aon mhionaid cho fada ri sìorraidheachd agus mhiannaich mi gu robh mi far an robh blàths 's chaidh na miodaidean fada na sìorraidheachdan fuara seachad while 'the Naiad 'mid her reeds Pressed her cold finger closer to her lips' 's bha mi ag iarraidh dhachaigh gu Ostabhaig 'far am biodh còmhradh, is tea, is blàths' a-mach à cruinne-cè a' gluasad sàmhach aigne leatha fhèin san àrainn' agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein ...

6.

And when I awoke I was in a grey-blue cold place made of ice and I was alone and I cried out 'Little green manie where are you little manie ...' and the cold entered my bones and I felt as if I was in the middle of stone and that the world was made of stone and that I was growing to be stone and I thought of the maiden of her shining crown and of the other maiden with the consumate thighs and they were all cold like stone and I thought of the poet the poet who said 'While his bowed head seemed listening to the earth His ancient mother for some comfort yet' and everything was cold cold and silent 'cold, far off, bright, beautiful' and one minute was an eternity and I wished to be where there was warmth and the long minutes the cold eternities passed 'and the Naiad 'mid her reeds Pressed her cold finger closer to her lips' and I wanted home to Ostabhaig 'where there would be conversation, and tea, and warmth' out of 'a universe moving silently a mind alone in the environs' and so somersault ...

7.

Agus a Dhè bheannaichte chaidh mi tro na caran tro na cearcaill dheàlrach thuit mi mar chloich tro na cearcaill gun àireamh tro na lasraichean gus na ràinig mi toll domhainn an toll teth domhainn far an robh a h-uile càil a' tachairt agus dh'fhairich mi mi fhìn a' fàs teth mar gum biodh coire dealain air nach gabhadh cuir dheth agus bha m' fhuil agus m' fheòil agus mo leasraidh uile mar sin a' goil gun lasachadh agus chunnaic mi daoine gun fheòil 's gun annta ach na cnàmhan 's iad an cruaidh ghlac a chèile agus os an cionn an uilebheist leis an earball cham-lùbach 's na sùilean teinnteach 's na làimh bha am muirghe trì-chorranach 's e smèideadh seo bho thaobh gu taobh eadar na h-adhaircean maslach 's bha an t-àite làn de dhaoine a' marbhadh a chèile a-rithist agus a-rithist agus a-rithist agus a-rithist le sginean is gunnaichean is làmhan agus dh'fhairich mi m' fheòil a' fàs gann a' dol bhuam na ceò gam fhàgail nàrach tana mar chnàmhan 's thàinig na seachd bana-bhuidsich gam ionnsaigh mar na seachd siantan agus thuirt mi a thighearna càite bheil am fear a bh' ann am maodhan an t-òganach maodh agus chunna mi iad a' sgriachail thugam ag iarraidh m' anam a thoirt a-mach gus nach biodh annam ach a' slige agus rug a' chiad tè shalach ghrànda air mo chasan agus an dàrna tè air mo cheann agus an treas tè chan eil fhios a'm càite 's bha iad uile a' gàgail 's a' tarraing gu làidir 's bha mi gam fhaireachadh a' falbh a' falbh às a chèile agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein ...

7.

And blessed One I went turn on turn through the shining circles I fell like a stone through innumerable circles through the flames circles of flames till I reached the deep pit the hot deep pit where it was all happening and I felt myself getting hot like an electric kettle that couldn't be switched off and my blood and flesh and loins were all like that boiling ceaselessly and I saw people without flesh nothing but bones wrestling with each other and above them the monster with the forked tail and fiery eyes and in his hand was a three-pronged trident waving it from side to side between the shameful horns and the place was full of people killing each other again and again and again and again with knives and guns and hands and I felt my flesh leaving me departing like mist leaving me ashamed thin like a bone and the seven witches came at me like the seven tempests and I said lord where is the one who used to be the tender one the tender youngster and I saw them screaming towards me wanting to destroy my soul leaving but a shell and the first dirty ugly one seized my feet and the second one my head and the third one I know not where and they were all cackling and pulling strongly and I felt myself parting splitting asunder and so somersault ...

8.

Agus dhùisg mi air leacan fuar aig doras teampaill 's bha mi na mo laighe gu còmhnard air na leacan 's os mo chionn bha daoine nan cleòcan dubha a' coimhead sìos orm 's os an cionn-san bha a' ghrian a' deàrrsadh 's thuirt mi 'Càite bheil mi?' 's thuirt iad 'Tha thu aig doras an teampaill' agus ghabh iad grèim orm agus tharraing iad a-staigh mi ged a bha mi lag agus rag agus uabhasach sòbar agus chunna mise am pearsa soillseach mar gum biodh e seòladh os cionn na h-altarach agus ars muinntir nan cleòcaichean 'Dè nì sinn ris?' agus thuirt esan mar gum biodh a-mach às an sgòth 'Thoir e gu seòmar na tobrach tha e air fulang gu leòr' agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein ...

8.

And I wakened on a cold slab at the door of a temple and I was lying flat on the slab and above me I could see people in black cloaks looking down on me and above them the sun shone and I said 'Where am I?' and they said 'You are at the door of the temple' and they took hold of me and pulled me inside although I was weak and stiff and terribly sober and I saw a clear-shining person as if suspended above the altar and the cloak people said 'What will we do with him?' and he said as if out of the cloud 'Take him to the room of the well he has suffered enough' and so somersault ...

9.

Agus dhùisg mi aon uair eile an turas seo ann am bàta agus an duine beag na shuidhe anns an deireadh agus thuirt e 'Cha bhi thu a' seo a-màireach' 'Ò mo ghràdh ort' arsa mise mar gu robh fios agam cà' robh mi no cà' 'm bithinn an ath thiotan agus rinn mi gàire ach thuirt e 'Tha do bhliadhna gu bhith suas a-màireach bidh thu air ais ann an Ostabhaig' 's ged a bha mi faireachadh màbte choimhead mi mun cuairt orm 's bha mi air loch ciùin cho ciùin ri Pàrras 's bha bogha-frois air fàire os cionn nan craobhan 's bha eas a' tuiteam o chreagan àrda gu mall gun chùram mar gum biodh gu sìorraidh 's bha mi dol a bhruidhinn a' dol a bhruidhinn ris an duine bheag uaine ach cha robh e ann na àite bha an nighean àlainn sèimh agus ciùin bha a gàire agus bha i mar gum biodh i na pàirt dhen uisge agus dh'fhairich mise cuideachd ciùin mar phàirt de nàdar nàdarrach mar a bha nàdar mar a bha an t-uisge anns an eas gu bràth a' tuiteam anns an aon àite agus thuirt an nighean a bha seo an nighean leis a' ghràdh na sùilean 'Gabhaidh tu ris' 's thuirt mise 'Gabhaidh mi ri dè?' agus thuirt i a-rithist anns an aon ghuth chiùin 'Gabhaidh tu ris ris an tuil ris a' chiùine ris na Sìthichean 's ri daoine' 's bha a falt bàn thar a gualainn a' deàrrsadh 's chaidh mi airson bontainn rithe airson mo làmh a chur na làimh ach chaidh i à sealladh agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein ...

9.

And I woke once more this time in a boat and the little man sitting in the stern and he said 'You won't be here tomorrow' 'O bless you' I said as if I knew where I was or where I'd be the next moment and I laughed but he said 'Your year is nearly up tomorrow you will be back in Ostabhaig' and although I felt savaged I looked around me and I was on a calm loch as peaceful as Paradise and there was a rainbow on the horizon above the trees and there was a waterfall tumbling down from high rocks steadily untroubled as if everlastingly and I was going to speak to speak to the little green man but he wasn't there where he had been was the lovely girl gentle and calm was her smile and she was as if merged with the water and I also felt calm as if a part of nature natural as was nature as the water was in the waterfall forever falling in the one place and this girl said the girl with love in her eyes 'You will accept it' and I said 'I will accept what?' and she said again in the same calm voice 'You will accept it accept the flood accept the calmness accept the Otherworld people and accept human beings' and her blonde hair over her shoulders was shining and I made a motion to touch her made a motion to put my hand in hers but she disappeared and so somersault ...

IO.

Agus dhùisg mi anns an òg-mhadainn anns a' ghleann agus mo cheann goirt agus e agam na mo làmhan agus mi a' coimhead air na clachan agus air a' ghlasaich uaine agus chuala mi 'n guth 's thuirt an guth 'Uilleim tha thu air tuiteam 's tha a' bhanais seachad trobhad dhachaigh tha na caoraich rim biadhadh' agus thuirt mi 'Ma leigeas e dhomh ma cheadaicheas an duine uaine' agus sheall i orm le uabhas agus chuala mi a' lòn beag a' sruthadh agus cha tuirt mi an còrr agus mar car a' mhuiltein ... agus mar sin car a' mhuiltein ...

IO.

And I woke in the early morning in the glen and my head was sore holding it in my hands and I was looking at the stones and the green grass and I heard a voice the voice said 'William you've fallen and the wedding is past come on home the sheep need fed' and I said 'If he allows me if the green man lets me' and she looked at me in horror and I heard a little stream bubbling and I was silent and so somersault ... and so somersault ...

UISGE
EÀRR-NÒTA DHA CAR A' MHUILTEIN

O chunnaic chunnaic e an t-uisge ionganatach!
an òg-mhadainn an t-saoghail rugadh am mìorbhail
a' sruthadh às an dìomhair bog trìd-shoilleir

a' còmhdach an t-saoghail am brat dealrach
ciùin mar sgàthan an ath mhionaid mar bheathach beucach
doimhneachdan làn sheòmraichean beatha èisg gad shlìobadh

air madainn gheamhraidh pàtranan criostail air glainne is linne
corragan fìnealta mìn-phàtran obair-ghrèis dhiombuan
fìor ealain an tiotain cinnteach cinnteach ris an ìre theòthachd

O uisge is fìor do sgeul bog mar mheileabhaid còir
is cruaidh brisidh tu a' chreag a' criomadh a maitheis
an uillt 's an aibhnichean a' giùlan eabar na beatha gu achadh rèidh

is fìor do sgeul an stuth giùlanach làn brìgh
cagarsaich ri creig is ceòl do shlighe dhan an tartmhor mòr
do chaidreachas fhonn ris na dìthreibh binneas gun mheang

chunnaic chunnaic e an t-uisge an loch mar sgàthan
na casan a' coiseachd air gibht nan speur a' lìonadh a thuigse
donn is òir-dhonn a' mhonaidh latha foghair sàmhach falaichte

frasan ag uisgeachadh fonn mìn-fhreastalach feur ga dheothal
a' drùdhadh do gach sgoltadh is sgàineadh cùil is cealla
craobh nach do cheannaich cuislean an t-aineolach nach beannaich

WATER
A FOOTNOTE TO SOMERSAULT

O yes he saw the water amazing
in the dawn of the world miracle born
streaming from the hidden soft transparency

covering the world the radiant canopy
still as a mirror next minute a roaring beast
depths chambers full of life fish-caressed

winter morning crystal patterns on glass and pool
delicate fingers intricate designs transient embroidery
real instant art certain certain as the temperature

water your story is true velvet soft kind
and hard you break the rock eroding its goodness
to streams and rivers carrying the mud of life to level plain

your story is true the carrying substance meaning-full
whisperer to rock your way is music to the thirsty great
your melodious friendship with the wildernesses perfect harmony

yes he saw the water the loch like a mirror
feet walking on it sky's gift filling his sense
moor's brown and golden-brown autumn day silent hidden

showers watering land fine provision grass-sipped
penetrating to every crack and cranny nook and cell
by tree unbought arteries by the blind unblessed

O uisge a ghiùlaineas làthach poll agus salchar 's a thig glan
às a-rithist aiseirigh an iongantais dian nad bhrìgh a ghiùlaineas fuil
gu cuislean a' chridhe tobar a' ghliocais Crìosda ar sìth.

water! carrying mire mud and dirt to come clean
again reborn wonder intense in essence carrier of blood
to heart veins wisdom well Christ our peace.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Poet and writer Maoilios Caimbeul (Myles Campbell) lives in Flodigarry on the Isle of Skye. He has published nine collections or booklets of poetry, two of them co-authored, and eight children's novels. He wrote the book Island Conversion with his wife, Margaret, telling how he came to the Christian faith. His poetry has won many awards, including the Dunleary Féile Filiochta cup, 1998, and the Gaelic Wigtown Prize, 2008.