

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk**

An robh sibh a’ coimhead anns an sgàthan an-diugh? Tha fhios gu robh – a’ chiad char anns a’ mhadainn, agus sibh a’ cur ur falt ceart airson a dhol a dh’obair, neo don sgoil, neo airson coimhead brèagha do chàch aig bòrd na bracaist. Agus dè chunnaic sibh anns an sgàthan? Nàdar de Phierce Brosnan, ’s dòcha, neo faileas brèagha mar a chìtheadh Catherine Zeta-Jones? Uill, tha fhios a’ m air aon rud: chanamaid uile an aon rud mu dheidhinn – “chunnaic mi mi-fhìn.”

Tha mi’n dòchas gu bheil sibh air obrachadh a-mach gur ann air tòimhseachan na seachdain ’s a chaidh a tha mi a’ bruidhinn. A bheil cuimhn’ agaibh air? Seo mar a chaidh e:

*Is mi mi-fhìn,
Is mi gach duine
Ach sgrìob mo dhruim
's cha mhi duin' idir.*

Agus ’s e sgàthan a bh’ann. Tha faileas de gach duine a’ nochdadh ann nuair a sheasas gach duine mu a choinneamh. Ach ma sgrìobas tu druim an sgàthain, far a bheil am peant airgid, caillidh e a chomas faileas ceart a dhèanamh – agus, an uairsin, cha nochd d’fhaileas ann idir nuair a sheasas tu mu a choinneamh. Bha e sìmplidh, nach robh?!

Chan aithne dhomh gu bheil am facal “sgàthan” a’ nochdadh gu tric idir ann an gnàthsan-cainnt neo seanfhaclan Gàidhlig, ach ’s aithne dhomh aon seanfhacal anns a bheil e. Agus, nam bheachd-san, tha an seanfhacal sin gu math ciallach, agus gu math snog. *Is math an sgàthan sùil caraid.* Tha e a’ ciallachadh gum faod sinn deagh iomhaigh fhaicinn dhinn fhèin ann an sùilean caraid. Chì sinn tro shùilean caraid mar a chì daoine eile sinne.

Agus nach e sin an gnothach air an robh am bàrd ainmeil Gallda, Raibeart Burns, a’ meòmhrachadh nuair a sgrìobh e a dhàn, *To a Louse*. “*O wad some Pow’r the giftie gie us,*” sgrìobh e, “*tae see oursels as ithers see us.*”

Tha an sgàthan a’ nochdadh gu tric ann am beul-aithris na Roinn-Eòrpa agus, mar is trice, tha e gu math onorach, ’s dòcha nas onoraiche na tha daoine. Agus chan eil an sgàthan diùid. Bidh e ag innse na firinn, co-dhiù tha sin a’ toileachadh an duine a tha a’ coimhead ann neo nach eil.

Bidh sibh uile eòlach air an t-seann sgeulachd Ghearmailtich a chaidh a chruinneachadh leis na bràithrean Iacob agus Wilhelm Grimm. Ann an Gàidhlig ’s e “Ròs Bhàn agus na

Seachd Troichean” a th’oirre; ach ’s dòcha gum bi sibh eòlach oirre mar “Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.”

Ann an sgeulachd sin, tha sgàthan ann a tha ag innse don Bhànrighe olc gur ise am boireannach as brèagha a th’ann. Agus tha sin ga toileachadh. Ach an ceann greis, tha an tè òg, Ròs Bhàn, a’ tighinn gu ìre agus tha ise, a-rèir choltais, cho brèagha ris an tè ainmeil anns na sgeulachdan againn fhèin – Deirdre. Chanadh iad mu dheidhinn Deirdre gur ise am boinne-fala a bu mhaisiche a bh’ann eadar grian agus talamh agus nach do rugadh tè a-riamh a bha cho maiseach rithe.

Uill, chan eil fhios a’ m, ach ’s dòcha gu robh Ròs Bhàn cho brèagha ri Deirdre. Co-dhiù b’e sin beachd an sgàthain – gur i Ròs Bhàn an tè a bu bhoidhche air an t-saoghal gu lèir. Agus, anns an sgeulachd, nuair a dh’fhaighnicheas a’ Bhànrighe dhen sgàthan cò as maisich’ a th’ann, tha an sgàthan a’ freagairt “Ròs Bhàn”. Chan eil a’ Bhànrighe toilichte.

Ach ’s dòcha, an àite a bhith a’ fàs feargach mu bheachd an sgàthain, gu robh còir aig a’ Bhànrighe a ràdh ris gu robh i coma. Dh’fhaodadh i seanfhacal eile a ràdh ris an sgàthan mar dhearbhadh gu robh i coma – “Cha toir a’ bhòidhchead goil air a’ phoit.”

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Faclan na seachdaine: sgàthan: *mirror*; falt: *hair*; càch: *the others (in a group or family)*; faileas, d’fhaileas: *reflection, your (sing) reflection*; a’ nochdadh: *appearing*; diùid: *shy*; troich: *dwarf*; olc: *evil*; maiseach: *beautiful*; feargach: *angry*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: a chiad char anns a’ mhadainn: *first thing in the morning*; nàdar de Phierce Brosnan: *a Pierce Brosnan-type (of reflection)*; mar a chìtheadh X: *as X would see*; tha fhios a’ m (“a’ m” is short for “agam” and is very common in speech – listen out for it): *I know*; chanamaid uile: *we would all say*; tòimhseachan na seachdain ’s a chaidh: *last week’s riddle*; mu a choinneamh: *opposite, in front of it (masc)*; caillidh e a chomas: *it (masc) loses its ability*; co-dhiù tha sin a’ toileachadh X neo nach eil: *whether that pleases X or not*; a chaidh a chruinneachadh: *which was collected*; tha X a’ tighinn gu ìre: *X reaches maturity*; am boinne-fala a bu mhaisiche: *lit. the most beautiful drop of blood – this is an old Gaelic expression, found in traditional stories, for a woman of exquisite beauty*; an tè a bu bhoidhche: *the most beautiful (woman)*; mar dhearbhadh gu robh i coma: *as proof that she was indifferent (to the mirror’s opinion)*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: gum faod sinn deagh iomhaigh fhaicinn (dhinn fhèin): *that we can see a good (ie accurate) image (of ourselves)*. When a clause (a bit of a sentence containing a verb) contains two verbs, the second, which is in the form of a (lenited) verbal noun, generally goes at the end. Failure to observe this “rule” is a common mistake made by learners. eg am faod mi a’ cheist a fhreagairt? (*may I answer the question?*) **NOT** am faod mi freagairt a’ cheist? *Similarly*, an urrainn dhut sin a dhèanamh? (*can you do that?*) **NOT** an urrainn dhut dèanamh sin? *And* dh’iarr e orm an copan a lìonadh (*he asked me to fill the cup*) **NOT** dh’iarr e orm lìonadh an copan. *Wrong phraseology of this nature grates badly on the ears of fluent speakers even though they understand what is meant. But, like all “rules” there are exceptions. In this case, note that with rach (“go”) this inversion does not take place* eg tha mi a’ dol a dhèanamh sin (*I am going to do that*) **NOT** tha mi a’ dol sin a dhèanamh. Chaidh mi a dh’fhuireach ann an Glaschu (*I went to live in Glasgow*) **NOT** chaidh mi ann an Glaschu a dh’fhuireach.

Seanfhacal na seachdaine: Is math an sgàthan sùil caraid: *a friend’s eye is a good mirror. This is self-explanatory*. Cha toir a’ bhòidhchead goil air a’ phoit: *beauty won’t*

boil the pot. In other words, beauty is not everything (a good one to say, with a resigned sigh, to the mirror in the morning when “Pierce Brosnan” or “Catherine Zeta-Jones” fails to appear in your reflection!)

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