

THE BAESTIAL O THE DESERT

Kenlin

The shorte voar seasoun is lik some yae bittock
kinna calleratioun o the desert year.
Baith baestial an men soom gyan bienlik
on sic a swaw; the baests hae thur fuhll an mair
o swaeter leafs an the gou o better gerss,
an soor-dook's rowthie in the Aarab bothies:
but thare wasnae meikle avaa in paer Zeyd's howff. 7

The kids an lammies aa stuid in a raw,
the ilk wee hause kinsht, haudent til a lang raip
streetcht-oot along the grund athin the bothie.
At the dawin, the blaetin younkers are puit alow
the dams, and ilka mither taks her ain yin
bi the gou ot, an will aye puit bye ilkither.
Whuin the baestial is led furril til the gerssin,
the wee yins are still boond at hame, for gif
they were allooed tae follie the dams, they'd dram them
a drooth athin the dugs wuid leave nae maet
for the Arab-bodies' toom kytes at that. 18

The waarsit bothie's fangit fou aa day
wi hungerie smaa blaetins, until the *ghrannem*
come hame at een, whuin they are lowsed again-lyke,
an rin tae drink, butt-buttin alow the tits
o the mithers, the-tyme thur wiggle tails wig-waggle
as tho delyte made guid-desyre delytit
the-wy desyre maks-guid delyte desyrous.
In thir voar weeks, thare is nae rest avaa
fae thur wafflik greetin aa nicht-thru i the bothies
o the Aarab whoere the wyfies draw the lave
o the swaet melk efter the smaa yins haed thur fuhll. 29

The hielan Beny Wáhab clans o this airt
are caumel-Beduins, the'smaa kye' baestial
o sheep an goats a bit pickle-juist amang them:
ginn cauvin, they hae thur voartimm baestie-melk.
The yeanin caumel-cou, doon sydelins liggin,
lik some auld tel sair doon-gane in its eildin,
is deleevert athooten soond, the cauf in faain
as muckle's a growne man. An syne the hird

oot-raxes its legs wi aa his micht, roon-ruggin
the deidlik cauf afore the dam tae snooch
for the better kennin o its ain, nane else;
she ryses, staunds up for tae lick her cauf
as she wuid lick nane ither nor her ain yin.
wi a muckle dunt fae the loof o the haund o the hirdman
upon her waukit sole the Arab folk
caa zôra (set alow the breist o the caumel
bi natur, sterklik as onie stell tae haud up
the muckle hause a the baest, an stoorlik)
the cauf comes-tae: and efter some three oors,
still wafflik as gyan totterrie, and efter
monie the faa, syne it is able for tae staund
an rax up thon lang hause tae seek the tit.

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On the morn's morn, this new-born caumel follies
the dam ootbye til the boond o the desert grun.
The cou may be melkt at yince, but the baestie-melk
for twoe-three days is lyker scoor-the-gaet.
The furst vyce o the cauf is a kinna sheeplik girmin,
a wee beh-beh, but lood enyeuch, weel-soondin.
The flaece is silken saft, heid roond and heech;
an this wi a shortelik bodie, cairriet airchwys,
and a lowpin staig upon thae langish legs,
micht, gin yer een were steekit a wee thing, gar ye
tak the baess for new-flowne getts o a muckle burd.
For a towmond haill, they follie the tit, yit ginn
twoe-three weeks auld, they chowe for thursels areadies
the taps o the desert busses, tho, as the hause
cannae weel rax juist-yit juist-sae, feed dae they
at the grund atween a fore-leg streddle stance.

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Yae nicht, as I straiokit ower the saft, woollie chynes
o the new-born caumels, "Khalil!" yowled the hird,
wi a glaik athin his een gy hetlik glowerin,
"See ye dae nae mair o that! Ye'll gar them growe
as hyde-boond as puit skaith on bookein-oot!
Dae ye no ken that?" He thocht this freemit yin,
masel, was daein a malefice, but Zeyd, noo,
whose spreit sic supersteetiouns favourt-nane,
puit wheesht upon him wi a smirtled easement,
for the baests I straiokit were his ain bit caumels.

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The caumel is wurth yae real born, an syne,
the ilka month it ryses as muckle again.

In some hoosehalds, whuin faur intil sair paertith,
the veal is slauchtert whoere they maun slooch aa
the caumel melk thursels. The duin-doon dam
waunners, rowtin saftlie, an snoochin for her cauf;
and as she murns, she greets: her deerlik een,
say the Arab folk, “Staun fou o tears”. Anither
ten days, and her baesslik dool is gane forever
intil forgetfouness will gar her feed
her fuhll for a fou wame that will yield a wecht
o nourice-melk for the coggies o the Aarab.
Three guid pynts fae her may be tuimmed ilk mornin,
an juist as meikle for thur supper brode:
the udder o thir great an caunnie baests
is no that muckle mair nor I hae seen
the dugs o Malta goats. Melk-cou wi cauf
is melkit eenintyde alanerlie.
Her udder haes fower tits that the suddroun nomads
divvie bi wappin twoe wi waarstit corde
an wuiden spales for thursels, laein alane the-tithers
for the sookin-cauf. The Aarab o the north
mak siccar anent the caumel udder, hainin’t
wi a waarstit pocke. Whuin vaigin attoore, or droothie,
the *nâga*’s melk for yaisual’s nocht nor hauf.
Aa thur *nâgas* daenae gie melk the samin wy.
The-tyme thare’s rowthe o voar melk in thur aucht,
the nomads hae nocht else for nourishment.
In paerer hoosehalds, voar melk’s vittle, brose
an beef in yin for thae twoe months thegither.
Apairt fae the melk o thur caumels, the Beduins
pree haill-melk nane, an fae thur smaalik baess
sluch nocht but soor-dook. The hareem mak the butter,
thrangitie jowin an jummelin the soor blawn melk-skin
upon thur knees. In the growthie wilderness,
the *semily*’s a muckle-bookeit pocke,
and is hingit tae be jowit in the gushet
o a stoorlik haudin-up stab o the nomad bothie.

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As a merk o the preein ot bi Beduin lyfe,
I finnd melk-diet is the wale o scran
for humans. Yit, in ilka nomad *menzil*,
thare are some kytes whyles cannae weel haud wi it;
strang men whoe yaise this sklidderie drink-maet
whyles hae a hungerie disease in bodie,
tho they micht seem in fynest tid at that.
The Beduins say this o divers kynds o melk:

“Goat melk is swaet, it fattens mair nor strenthens
the bodie; yowe’s melk, noo, is awfie swaet,
an creeshiest o aa, it’s juist a wee thing
no healthsomelyke tae sluch-haill doon.” Say they,
“It kills folk.” That is, wi the colic, lyke. 128

Ne-myn thur saws, whyles I hae drammed it waarm
fae the dug wi meikle comfort the-tyme forfairn,
ay, intae languorsomeness fair-forfochent.
It’s awfie ruch in the verie best o *samn*.
“Soor-dook made fae the yowie-melk,” they say,
“suid be weel bonnie-clabbert whyles athin
the *semily*, alang wi ither melkins,
till aa be melled thegither lyke a sang,
an syne it will be juist as fit for sookin
as onie sang weel made is fit for soochin.” 138

They think the caumel melk the verie wale
o fairin, but abuin them aa, the best
(tho a wee thing scoorinlyke) comes fae the bukkra,
or yingest *nâga*, as a baestie-melk
efter furst cauvin. The folk here say maist doocelie,
gy semplelyke i the wy o the Beduin,
“Whoe drinks the baestie-melk and haes a *jâra*
wuidhae abyde wi her an oor avaa.” 146

The goat an *nâga* melk hae a gou o the growthe
whoere the baestial chowe-the-cood: in soorlik lees,
I fund it gy wurmwuidlik in ma dram.
Yin o the Allayda sheykhs caad oot til me yince
athin the *râhla*, “Here, and hae ye no
a pickle Damascus cake we baith nicht eat?
Wellah, it’s gane six weeks sin I hae chowit
ocht avaa wi thir teeth o mynes; oor haill paer fairin
is noo this spate o melk. Weel you can see
whitlyke the lyfe o the Beduin is! They are
lik gemme ootsperflt ower the wilderness!”
Anither craikt at me for a haunfie o dates
because, he said, “Wi melk alanerlie,
I feel a hungerie curmurrin athin
that winnae byde its wheesht, but gangs craik, craik.” 161

The Beduins keep a kynlie myndin o
divvident scran yince etten, and again
will caa ye hertilie til’t whuin haein ocht. 164

Melk-fangit Aarab are gled for the auntrin chowe
o smaaer gemme. Alang wi the desert hare-baess
that's af ten fleggit in the *râhlas* thare is
the *thób*, kenspeckle enyeuch: kinna pawkielyke,
“Maister Hamed, the Sheykh o Wyld Baess” they caa him
hereaboots, an say that he is gyan human,
that is, *zillamy*, or a man o the people,
and in pruif o that, they haud up his wee hauns
that hae five fingers as oor humankynd hae —
this is the pawkie wy o the Beduin
wi a sleekit smirtlin as they mak the ploy.

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They winnae eat the paums o yon wee baest,
nor the seeven hinend jaggie rings upon
Sheykh Hamed's lang tail, “That's man's flesh” thur threepin.
The wee sheykh grazes on the wyld Nejd busses,
el-arrafej, gy swaetlik for the snoochin.
His bodie sprauchles braid an flet, and ends up
in a trainlik tail o even lenth, whoere I
hae coontit twintie-three rings. Blackish, he
haes greenie spreckles abuin the waanlik yella
o his dull bellie: fae his skin, the nomads mak
thur smaa melk-bottles for the yuiss o herdsmen.
This manlin saurian, wi the sterklik hauns,
howks his bit boorie alow haurd grushie syle,
an liggs doon ben thare thru aa his winter's dwaum
for a rucher voartimm or the suimmer's drooth.
The *thób*-catcher, finndin the hole in grund ingaein,
an puittin intilt yae lang rash airn-thyeukit
for sairest clauchtin, pous paer Hamed oot.
Folk cast his hail corp on the coals, his thrapple
athorte cut, syne, ginn bakeit, think he is
as kitchenlyke as the best o roastit maet.
Amang the wyld baests, his main fae that kills him,
they tell, haes the name thurbàn, and herries him
fae alow, syne fae the tail tae powe him gollops.
Folk ken-nane gif that baest's a leevin yin
or fabled lyke the phoenix in a lowe.

201

Jerboa or spring rat, is yae smaa craitur
o thir braid airts, the deserts watterless:
it is as aerie-eyndlik's a wishie wuin,
wi fairheid peetifou as fuhll the een.

205

Thir smaalik desert craiturs ligg alow
the grund i the daylight oors; they never sloke
thur drooth the day lang wi the sun abuin.

208

The haidgehog they caa *kunfuth*, *abu shauk*,
that is, “Faither Prickles”, is etten in thir pairts
bi Fejir clansfolk, aa thur neebors but
haein nocht adae wi’t, tho they are folk clannit
wi thaem o Annezy. Selím brocht in
yae urchin he haed chappit on the heid,
syne roastit Prickles on the coals, him ryvit,
an gart the dentie bits be aa dividident,
til ilka yin his pairt: i the bygaun, tho,
i the whylock, I gied mynes tae the stervin groo,
but the duag-baess, smellin the maet, wuid hae it nane.
Yae ither timm, I telt this tale amang
the neebor clans: they laucht maleeciouslyke
that the Fukara chiels haed gollopt doon
the verie maet the duags left weel alane.

223

The porkiepyne is etten bi ea the nomads,
an sae is the *wabbar*, a kinna rottan baess
fae the desert hills, thick-bodied and as stoot
as a wechtie hare, lik the rottan o the Alps.
They gang the twoe, fower, six, aicht, ten thegither.
The *wabbar* is fund in the saunstane moontain places,
maistlie alow the border pand o the hills
whoere it can finnd the dentie herbs for fairin,
an the gum-acacia leafs whose trees he sklimms
as jimp as jook-awo, the-tyme he’s haudin
wi his pad feet athooten claws; the fore pairts hae
the fower taes, and hin paws three; the flesh is fat
as butter-baas an swaet as sookie-pommies;
they daenae seem tae sit on thur hin-ends:
the pelt is a bit lik hodden-gray, but feels
mair lyke the cleedin o the bear at that.

No aften dae the nomad gunners kill
the wolf, but gif the auntrin siccan baess
faa til thur shote, he is ettent bi the Beduins
(the wolf was etten in mediaeval Europe).

The Aarab think sic flesh medeecinal,
an say, “It’s awfie guid for shank-baens sairlik,”
a skaithin as common as cannae-help-it aye
wi thaem that gang as bare-leg as bare-fuit

thru aa timm o the year, as in and oot o seasoun
as in and oot o reasoun. Zeyd haed gutsed
the wolf, but allooed it was duag's kyn the lyker.
"Eech, *billah*," he aunswert me whuin I speirt at him
"the mither o the wolf is the messan's aunt." 252

The tode, caad hosseny bi Arab folk,
is etten bi the Fejîr whuin taen bi thur rinnin groos:
the flesh is "swaet an gy near guid's the hare." 255

They will even eat the scunnersome hyena
gif they suid tak her, an say, "She is guid aetin." 257

O the meikle desert gemme, but seenlins killt
bi the shote o thir vaigin an bothie-bydein folk,
thare is the bédan o the moontains (yince caad
the wyld goat o the Scriptures, *pl. bedûn*;
or *waûl* bi yon Arabian Kahtân,
as wee as folk in Syria thare styin).
The muckle horns growe til a haill paum-breedth,
and I hae seen them twoe and a hauf fuit lang;
they growe back-raxin upon the chyne til the hainshes.
As monie the hunter's storie, cairriet-nane,
can tell, the baest at need will cast hissel doon
heidlang upon them backwards: he's nearhaun kin
til the stane-buck o the European Alps. 270

The gazelle, that is, *ghrazel*, the *pl. ghrazlân*:
is a plains-gaun baest, an the Arabians
mair aften caa him *thobby* ('Tabitha', that's
in oor new Testament, Acts 9, a wuird
fae the Syriac that means 'cleir-sichtit', or
athin its 'Dorcas' meanin, 'doe', 'gazelle',
or gin ye lyke it better, 'roe-buck female').
Gazelle are whyte in the faur saun-plains, swaart-groo
on yon black Harra, the vulcanic kintrie;
thir baests are Scripture roes as said areadies. 280

Thare is anither animal, as noble
attoore the deserts o Arabia
amang the-tither wyldlyke baestial,
as yon broo-wechtiness in man's ingyne
ootbookes the maist highheidinlyke amang us:
wothyhi caad, or 'wyld cou'. I didnae ken
this baest afore, but later on I saw

baith male an female bydein ower Hâyil wy;
it is an antelope, *Beatrix*, lyke
the brawest animals o Africa.

This wuidnae be the ‘wyld ox’ o auld Moses
in Deuteronomy at 14.5,
but I wunner whyles gif this is no the *reem*
or ‘unicorn’ o the Septuagint speilers? —
Her horns are siccan sklender waands as seen
in bairnheid picturt ‘the horns o the unicorns’.
We read in Balaam’s parable, “El brocht
them oot o Egypt; He is strenthie as a *reem*,”
and intil Moses’ blissin o the clans,
“The horns o Joseph are twoe horns o *reems*.”
In Job especial (39.9,10),

we read about the *velox*, thrawnlik, doorelik,
a wyld and heidstrang craitur, pooerfielyke.
“Will the *reem* be willant you tae ser? Can you
waap intil your ain furrs this wyld *reem* baess?”

Gang you nane near *wothyhi* that’s woundit:
wi a thraw o thae sherp horns she haes, she’ll straik
ootthru the bodie o a man lik kebbuck thirled,
sae hunters byde thur wheesht until the deid-thraw
afore they rin-in smertlik for tae cut
the thrapple o the gynear daed paer baess.

Ben the ingyne, shairlie it was a monkish daurkness
in naitural laer that thocht tae puit yae horn
upon a dooble foreheid for a ploy! —

An dae we no sin juist as muckle puittin
wings on the pagan eemages o godes,
and angels for that pairt? Whitforno
twoe pair o forelegs for tae mak them peels! —
The gleggest hunters are the yins caw doon
wothyhi, thae braw baess that follie about
athorte the droothie deserts in thur troops
o threes or aiblins fives in sic a gaet.

322

Amang the desert vermin snakes and adders,
nane avaa are etten bi the clans o nomads.

324

Jelámy is yae smaa broonlik lizard thingie
o the wilderness, an sterts fae ilka fuitstep.

326

Scorpions are in hiddlins alow the caller stanes
or yirdlins beildin ayont the beekin sun,
and I hae fund them snode athin ma bothie

and in ma claes, but I was neever skaitht.
Monie growne folk an bairns hae I seen nippt,
but the jag o siccan craiturs isnae daith,
an whyles some sae-caad 'wyss' man 'reads' abuin them.

The skaithit pairt whyles gowps as tho the jag
was a kinna dull yin, and is sair three days lang,
but thare is neever onie awfie hovin.

336

Monie are the ceeties o seed-getherin eemocks
alow the desert saund in aa the airts,
an some larg watling-street o thairs I measurt
nae less nor aichtie-five guid paces lang:
tae gang yon gaet lik caumel-baests, an back,
weel-ladent, is a suimmer day's haill traikin
for aa thir smaalik thrangitie bit things.

343

Ower and abuin thae pooterie wee craiturs,
amang the muckle mair tith-herriein
o baests, yon yin maist common is the *thùbba*,
that we caa the hyena; leopard neist
that Arab folk caa *nimmr*, sprecklt black
an broon as ower the bonnie skin, an dichtit
tae mak a genzie growes athorte the grun.

350

No sae common is the *fáhd* baest, yae wyld cat
as meikle, but nae mair sae nor the tode,
and he is sprecklt, raid an broonlik spottit.

Athin the myndin o thir Beduins,
a ying *fáhd* was bred up amang the Bishr,
(a sept o Annezy in yon Wast Nejd)
syne yaissed bi his nomad maister tae tak gazelles
for the *fáhd* can fairlie pad-the-hoof at that!

358

Thare is yae unco supersteetioun amang
the parents aa attoore in Arab airts,
(and even in Syria anang the Ohristians,
as paerochenlik as thur great releegiouns),
that gin a bairn be seiklik, or let's say,
no that weel-at-hissel athin the haern-pan,
or gin his folk hae deed afore fae illth,
syne an thae puit upon him onie name
o some wyld baest, and in especial, leopard,
or mibbe wolf, or aiblins wolverine,
an daein that, the delicatelik human
will tak intil hissel the better kinna tid

that thae same animals hae in thur kynd.

371

Aften gleds an buzzard-gleds are seen roon-pirlin
i the luf t abuin the dowie desert stanes;
el-agab tae, an that's a smaa black eagle-burd;
er-rákhm as weel, whyte carrioun eagle, smaa —
fleein thru the air, they're lyke oor ain sea-maws.
I haena seen the vulture, nor great eagle,
save in til Sinai, in this desert airt.

378

Noo, thir's the maist o craitur-baests oot here:
thare arenae muckle muir avaa athin
the wilderness athorte Arabia.

Kennin

The wurld's as ill-divvident wi scran as mankyn
wi ingyne can gar twoe thochts growe that yin mair
will dae as muckle for haerns as the extrie gersses
we yaisst tae hear aboot. A sea o green
athin the mynd as on the grun nicht gar
us guts oorsels intil releegious faestin
instead o hinnie kynliness o myn.

7a

Dae whit we will, or will that ithers dae
whit we has nane-the-will tae dae oorsels,
an we are in the paers' hoose o oor kennin
the-wy we daena waant tae see the staurs
o laer come skinklin oot lik een o hoolets
abuin us ower the mappamoond o thinkin.
Yince thare was yon auld leddie-bodie waffin
yae haund abuin the-tither for tae dicht
awo the leever aurs o eildin
upon her skin: sae dicht awo can we
the paertith o oor kennin for tae dee.

18a

The skirl o waens an wyfies whyles can be
gy lyke wurds here that tell Auld Tyme is coontin
oor days, in tones o verses that can measure
us oot in seellables o wurds that tell
tyme-oot itsel, as tho thare wasnae versin
enyeuch tae tell the coont o Tyme areadies,
or even ten seellables tae tell the coontin
o Tyme as thir wurds tell the coont o Tyme

is no ten seellables avaa, nor even
the yin at that that cannae even coont
the measure o the saut in yae bairn's tears.

29a

The cauld o eenin, sklidderie's a spear,
skliffs-ower athorte ma hert; the dirklik tree lyne
stauns sentinel, lik daurk thocht thinkin intil,
garrin this nicht vheesht itsel whoere reever soonds
echo thur seellables lik bairnies speirin
athin a shell a soond's resoond an stoondin.
But lyke yer bein wi me, the green-shote plydies
o buck trees hain me in ma gloamin walk,
lanelie nae mair, ma luver's thochts noo waarmin
the ilk til ilk as tho they taen apiece
ma greinin. This young summer wuin amang
the hawthorns talks o florish, nestin whyles.
Puit easement in ma hert wi gentleness;
cleed ewer ma myn's bare brainsh sae I am buskit
wi thae green leafs o waarmth athin yer een
can dicht me ower, for waanlik sair desyre
I hae can bleeze for the esperance ye gie me
anent ma memories o thae blawn roses
in yon year. The wast air sings this sang tae ye:
"Luve is a bairn, as wafflik in its greinin
for glories noo nae mair, but memorie
faithers the bairn oor luve was yince afore."

51a

Lik memorie ruch raggl, dwaumin wechtit,
he thocht he cood be whit he wasnae then,
an thocht a taet less nor a haill man daes:
it was as tho the wintle o a wuin,
lik some young lassie's haund, a wee thing caller
on a het day for a comfort on a foreheid,
played tig upon the ee-broos' sweit draps thare,
an licht's the lauchin o the loesome lassie,
gart thae draps faa leide-heavie on the kist
tae rin alang the bellie for a myndin
this was the tropical athin a dream
thocht yince upon a man whoe made him, yin
whoe was a thochtie no that haill, nae tall man,
but muckle-kistit that yae great pit-stane
mair muckle streddlt: his mort-kist, they say,
was wechtie enyeuch tae gar the bearers pech.

67a

Thocht aiblins is whyte lik innocence

wi een fuhll aipent, an ruid lyfe itsel
the ruid rose o realitie, lik florish
a kinna taerrificatioun but frontie aye
as fear nocht at the onset o a fecht;
but historie is a tentie chaissin made
tae tell us o the thryvance o bluid bylin
an the failyie o oor rummel-gumptioun tae:
sittin doon wi yon auld cronie, thocht, colloquin
as quaet as caunnilie, is lyker kennin.

77a

Whuin the kennin ee see haun-made wark ill-duin,
an lyker fuit-made and ill-tasht as tho
the haunler haed been as big taes at the graftin,
ne-mynd as thooms, it's lyke the luker's gien
a sair face gruein at the wastrie ot.
The skeelie fuhlla waants tae tak the thing —
aiblins tae bits — an puit his ain bit wy
o daein upon it as faur as caunnie mendin
is possible: at the same timm, he'll be sortein
the graith anaa that haes tae dae the jobe.
The same kinna conseederatioun can be made
the yuiss o til the yird itsel, an til its oceans,
til air an caller watters, til growein maitter.
Athin needcessitie, the wy o remeid
is seen at yince as weel it may become,
a consant soochin ower it in the ingyne:
an ongaun speil o laer o the wy it's duin.
Thir maitters intil, naething is ower smaa,
ower muckle aither, for tae puit the hems on
sic ongaun tentieness. Thinkin anent
green-growthie yird and hoo we're yaissin
the baests o the wurld, whether as wechtie as
the muckle mastodons or licht as craiturs
gy peentie-peerie amang thur knowes o saun-grains,
thur moontain riggs o haundie chuckie stanes,
is aathegither seen in terms gy lyke
a micro-surgerie, control bein nocht
but a maitter o servo-sensiteevitie.
In ceevil engineerin, ondeemas wark
that luks attoore the wurld for a place will mak it
something afore it mak a tooshie o itsel,
muckle thocht skytes moontain bookein aff the yird
lik a bairn skliffin yce-craem aff a piece-flet;
muckle-think-mair hains waals o yle lik meikle
poories for tae skoosh the yle at will anang

the birlin horrals o thur creeshie wurld;
think-muckle-thocht-mair can boorie-in, deep dernin
alow the swaw tae hae a gliff at the gottans 115a

o langsinsyne, thae places o the maist
unceevil engineerin aa timm past
whuin Tyme was lukin for a place tae gang til
whoere it haednae been afore itsel a tooshie.
Aneath needcessitie athin a tyme
o naitural mishanter for a tulyie,
the mynd o man is intil its remeid
at yince the wy it can tak-in and hain
onie mair o unco freits the maist ondeemas.
In weires, ingyne maist casual athin
an ingle-nyeuk oot-generals the wyssest
o aa the captains on the grun the-tyme
even tentie-myndit folk may think the laest 128a

o the meelitarie myn the wy it failed
tae yaise the waeponrie at haun the-wy
it is maist swythe tae be athin the battle,
an sherpest for the swythest cut o aa.
Yit, forfochent whyles bi sherpster folk
caad politeecians whoe deal a haun
lik a fuit til ilka yin i the gemme o leevin,
as tho we haed nae rummel-gumptioun avaa
as a natioun, oor cleveralitie hauds furrit,
aiblins for the awfie orriest laudatioun 138a

fae the media, maist mealie-moued o chaps,
bi makkin troke as tinsie intil ingyne
as some gowf tee we caa a variorum
that plays a tune tae keep in tyme wi yipps,
sae that it baivers up an doon til the soond ot
the-wy we see a fuitbaa on the heid
o a bairn bab up an doon whuin he is playin
'keepie-up' lik a politeecian at the yaps. 146a

The waured amang the folk are bookeit maist
wi thair ain sairin nor the wurdie folk
wi thair sweare-swearein, haverin anent
the trinitie a daunce athin a threesome
that maks thur unitie gang birl at that
lik onie atom in its entitie.
The failyie isnae thairs but oor nane-kennin

that fairheid's cut across the myn wi keenin:
gin you're no intaet yit, ye arenae wi't,
for paer folk, mynd, hae cares no burthensome
ocht mair nor giein affhaun the tyme o day
i the bygaun, but yon mysticeeism, noo,
puts nae brose in the bellie, nae mair nor
thae black silk tirrorvees beef-up remeid
bi the whyte o innocence aroon the hause. 161a

Guid gaupin is weel-fyred's a birsslt scone
that snecks athorte the flet; flozent, ill-fyred
is lyke a daichie bap clags teeth ingaun. 164a

Man's ainsel maks his morals fae the leid
o this or that commaund that's made upon him
for makkin kirk or mill o laessons laert.
Whyles, he puts intilt for a taet o kail
the kitchen o his thocht maks dentie preein;
whyles, he taks-in a gou fae yuchie slaister
he wuidnae thole gin his auld mither made it,
but haes tae hae it or he'll be slaistert tae.
At sic a tyme, he's lyker in his morals
til onie baest he lykens til hissel,
but is the baest in greeance, is it gree'd? 175a

Thae things are something lyke a sang can wynd
in soond a something lyke a melodie
tae be a yae thing lyke the sooch o thinkin,
an that yae thing tae be whit soond itsel haes
as tho it were as ower and abuin the singin
as whit it says is ower and abuin the sayin:
it haes tae say yae thing in paradox
maintains it cannae be itsel alane
but bookeit wi a wechtiness can loonder
aabodie wi a dunt o kennin. It is as tho
mankyn were in the morn's morn areadies —
for ken dae we we're no on the wy tae be
aathare — amang the loonderin o the swaw
that rowes aroond us, deem in us lik daipth
that soonds athin itsel great buirdlie whales
can caa an better caa ootthru the faddoms
the-tyme they caw an better caw thur soondin;
it is as tho we heard a sea sang sweelin
an sweein in the lugs, gaein ben oor kennin
wi a freit can freath athin ingyne lik faem

amang the ruckies and on tanglt scree;
it is as tho sea sang for stave and owercome:

“Ma rowein ower ye’s lyke the wy ye grein
tae be doon ben ma saucht the deeper, liggin
the-wy yer gaein ben haed been gy lyke
the wy ye left me lanelie langsinsyne.”

201a

“Come intil me lik pair the nichtie saumon
says gang thru the powns athin the reever beds
as tho they sooked the oxygen can puit
auld fish amang the grush o burns tae spawn.”

205a

“Come intil me as tho ye werenae ower
yon wy awo, sae you’ll can say whit wy
ye gaed that made ye whit ye are, no were.”

208a

“Swaw, here ye see me as I’m ben yer sea
that jowes an jummels me lik memorie
o langsinsyne that isnae the day afore
the morn, nor ist the morn’s morn aither;
think on yer saumon yonder faddomt doon
aroon Greenland lik bairns thur laessons laern
athin yer cauldest oceans for a schuilroom;
an come they back will they in cauldriif passioun
will caw them til thur bairntimm alveus
lik sheep af ore the duag the Maister caas:
folk think the saumon deid the bonniest fish,
as tho man’s kyte taen kitchen for ingyne,
but saumnon, wyssest breistin lyke its lowp,
is sooplest soomin. Man, the Maister, tho,
whyles gars the fish growe foostert, lyke man’s greed.”

223a

“Lik memorie that jowes me, an me jummels,
sea, here, see here, ye hear me here ‘hear, hear!’
as tho encore were in the core o kennin
lik man can kill a clean-run saumon fish
syne pyson wi the aidle o his gutsin
the burns an reevers o the saumon’s passioun.
Yer swaw that hains lik saut aa man ootpooers,
syne gies the luft the dentiest o bree
tae drap a blissin on the hills an knowes,
is medium here that gangs the messages
for oxygen amang the rin-aff spate
that tells the saumon, lyke the tyme nockes tell,
the roond o makkin its ain rune o leevin

gars ilka saumon sooin alang a lyne
will rug it in the alveus alang
tae gar it tell it's tyme it chap the bell."

2 59a

"In aa ma ainsel," spells the ocean leid,
"Thare's nocht but me, fae the fechie-lechiest
o getts lik plankton haein a hurl in rip-tydes,
tae michtie waallopers lik yon blue rorquals
that loonder me byornarlyke gaein ben;
naething that leeves athin me lyke the siller
o the licht that tries tae win alow ma swaw
an be a marra til the siller fish;
naething that dees athin me lik the licht at dwynes in
finndin it cannae win faur ben ma daipth;
no yon yae wee thing, deein, drappin ben me
tae mak me mair, maks ocht itsel avaa:
aa gaein ben me bydes masel till deid."

252a

"Whyles," man made aunsver til the sea, "I myn
blae licht upon ye lyke an innocence
garred bairns gae ben ye on the siller saun."

255a

"I myn them glower in wonnerment upon ye
whuin you were tasht, groo-graithit lyke the cloodfauld."

257a

"Ay, ay," the sea says, "Sae daes myndin swaash
tae jowe an jummel me lik langsinsyne
says thare was something made a waen that left me
as tho it haednae been niynes tae be bairnt wi,
lik greinin gane intil desyre duin-doon.
Ay, weel ken I ma baestial is herriet
an ryvit fae me for tae fuhll the man
I made lik greinin for desyre langsyne."
"Ay, whyles," sea aunsvers man, "It's in ma myndin
the groo-graitht, faem-tasht toosin man's been gien
whuin I hae taen the rue for his oncairries
an puit him til the horn the three tymes ower
an gart him tumble-the-wulkies for his snash."

270a

"That's me aa richt," says man the man, "Was freed
bi wuninan caad 'the better hauf' o man,
the hauf that hains man in lik saucht o mynd
efter his sturt an steer a craitur bluid-ruid
as pech-mair lyke a founart in a fecht.
Think on yon bonnie lass in grace o mynd

a saucht lik hainin man's sel best in plaesure
can mak his waur hauf better bein haill,
a thoct haein nocht anent bein chookie-hertit
but aa adae wi no bein chuckie-heidit."

280a

"Be quaet noo, sea, be still as saucht can free ye
the-wy that mitherheid taks ben itsel
the leevin aathing o yon wurld-tae-be
that is as still an quaet as kangle-nane,
as you, sea, tak tae ye the deein aathing
o your ain wurld that mibbe will be deid
gif kanglesomeness be the weird o man
puits baestial an man in saucht deid-dowie.

Listen, lippen on a myndin o stramash
for you tae ken yer thunnerin watters bowff
lik doom a blatterin upon yer rowein
that taen nae tyme atween the pitch an swee
o twintie thoosan tons o skreechin steel
tae mak ocht mair o gowlin wuins an watters
but freath o faem berserkit, graithit groo
aa ower wi ilka grunshin dunt played scud
for scud, an strak the ilka strake, baith bilge
an garboard for a daith lik loonderin,
baith wales an sheer black-keppit for a deid
as tho the ship nicht foonder for a quaet
alanerlie fund ben the deeps for saucht.

Whit ist in men gars yae man staund in wunder
an ryde sic watters lyke a herriein
hote-fuit gars monie a border's trimmelin
sing lyke an owercome for a sang's ongaun?

Whit ist in wemen gars yae wumman trimmel
as fleggit as the daurk athin a dwaum
puits gruesome licht inbye ingyne can pree
her man sair skaitht he'a tholein sic a blatter?

Her man can tell ye thoct stauns still as stoond
is wecht that boories in the myn, cawed-in
atween nerve-ens that cannae feel for seein,
and his ingyne inbye tae merk the place
recaa will myn the seein o the stoond.

a pictur o the elements in onslaucht,
planned no lik senselessness o men at weire,
but wi a plan o battle orrie as
puits aa intilt, lik nae reserve at caa,
and at yae place, lik nae chyce but its ain,
an wi sic nicht, lik strategie a daith

made fell as tactics lyke a gaein ben
will sorte ilk man intil the strategie.” 322a

“Man,” says the sea, “At the hinnerend, yer greeance
will be lik mynes, intilt aathing a deein 324a

lik thae bit fechie-lechiest o beins,
plankton that mak aa else in me ma greein.” 326a

We tak oor chyce a whit man means in lyfe
lik paiks athin the weare-awaa o tyme,
but thare’s nae wy we’s e gar man growe the better
gin we suid think tae fash the auntrin baest
as tho oor daein sae heest man abuin
the baest athin man weares awo in tyme.
Tho ingyne is lyke a grammarie byornar,
mair orrie yit the freits it daesnae ken,
the-wy the baests are magic whyles, byornar
the wy intil thur speirin lyke spae-wyfyies. 336a

Let men skliff ower the seas for ease fas howkin
the yird lik mowdies for a burst o wurms;
let men play skoosh thru space lik peevers skytein
on gravitatiounal pauldie beds for skowthe;
let men gang ben the yird, ingaun lik dreels
for yle can waarm, keep caller, creesh thur birlin:
gin we think bigger for’t, think, think, ye gowk! 343a

Lik pent a pictur made bi seein ee;
lik dots on paper lynes a symphonie;
lik sang a stotterie o notes til versin;
lik wurds in order for a poetrie;
lik daunce the measure o a ballet telt;
lik drauchtin for a biggin made wi graunyemr:
thegither man in thaem, they’re grammerie. 350a

We see duag-baess wi man in companie
athorte the gru.n Lower fleein leet man’s ~rnd
ootgiein commaund can mak a duag a shepherd;
or brosielyke bi onie ingle-nyeuk
upstertin wi a gurl gin hoose be herriet;
or blye for-oot, tae daunner heechs and howes
lik plaesure daffin for a wheesht o dreamin:
thon is the duag-baess maks man’s suimmer days. 358a

Whyles man (for aa the reasouns men think shame),
taks an awfie scunner at hissel (lik boke
that bydes ben beild o bodie him tae scunner),
an glowers aroond him at the slaister made him
(lik aathing less nor hauf-haill no-aathare),
sae that he haes tae tak a thocht anent it
(lik thinkin thare's nae wy aroon the thing),
will gar him speir a better gaet tae gang
(lik lukin faur abuin the yird for airtin),
an sae haes even puit the baestial.
in heeven (lyke a cuairsht for tae daunner),
sae he can sing hissel amang the staurs
(lik makars mair upon the yird at hame). 371a

Hooever heech man flee, Parnassus speilin,
as tho he haednae made the godes hissel;
hooever laich he faa, wi deevils taiglin,
as tho he werenae deevilock hissel:
hooever doon he's duin, he's daein hissel,
an thare's nae ither fashes ower his flinders,
that fleein apairt, he haes tae catch hissel. 378a

Thare's little else tae say haes warth the laest
the-noo, tho aiblins thare's a thocht tao think
in tyme that is a gem o quaeter wheesht. 381a

ARAB WURDLEET

This wurdleet for *The Baestial othe Desert* in its *Kenlin* sectioun comes fae the “Index & Glossary of Arab Words” in Charles Montagu Doughty’s *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, tho here that author’s English haes been made ower intil Scots tae mak it peels wi the lave o the wark duin fae his byeuk.

Aarab: the nomad Arabs; ill-thocht o bi toonsfolk and oasis-wonnors as haernless an reiverlik whuin no intil ydilset.

allayda: the sheykhs’ féndy (a kin an naitural diveesioun o a clan).

(el)-Fejir: name o the féndy or kin o sheykhs in a clannit sept (in aulden tymes caad El-Menâbaha) o Annezy. This name o thur sheykhlie failmie is noo puittent on aa the clansfolk whoe are caad el-Fukára...

ghrannem: (or dubbush); sheep an goats that Doughty caas ‘small cattle’.

Hâyil: clachan capital o Jebel Shammar an saet o Ibn Rashîd’s government in Wast Nejd.

jâra: Beduin for hoosewyfe.

(el)-Kahtân: a blue-bluidit clan o the Soothern Aarab...

Khalîl: means ‘sheykh’ but here yaised as a by-name glen til Doughty.

ménzil: an ootspan place, the campin grund o a caravan or o nomads.

nâga: Beduin for naka, a cou-caumel.

râhla: the inspannin an vaigin o the nomads.

samn: cleirifeed butter.

Selîm: son o Zeyd es-Sbeykân (see alow).

semily: or semîla; melk-pootsh or skin (yaisuallie o sheep’s laether) an made lik a girby (see alow) for melk. The semîla, bein soor, soors caller melk in turn whuin poored intilt. Nomad hoosewyfies rowe the semily upon thur knees till the butter come: an that may be fund in a whylie in a daud at the mooth o the skin. (A girby is a watter-skin made o goat or sheep skin, athooten seam. Goat skin is the better o them).

thób: a desert saurian.

wella: lit. 'bi Gode', but haes come tae mean 'troulin's' or 'indaed'; the Beduins say commonlie billah (b'illah), i.e. bi Ullah or Allah, the common sweerie wurd. The Beduins say anaa wella-billah an wulla-bulla...

wothyhi (wothyhî): vulg. pronunciatioun aamaist Oth-thy'hî, this baest is the wyld ox, as lyke as no the Reem or Unicorn o Scripture...

Zeyd: his haille name was Zeyd es-Sbeyca(k)an; he was weel thoct o bi Doughty an was a highheid yin amang the Fukara Aarab, yin o thur sheykhs...

EFTERTHOCHT ANENT THE BAESTIAL O THE DESERT

The verse o the furst sectioun o *The Baestial o the Desert* was made fae the prose o Charles Montagu Doughty in his byornar *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, Vol.1, Chapter XI alow the subheidins The Kinds of Milk, The Unicorn found, an Wild Creatures of the Desert. The edeetioun yaissed was yon yin repretit in July 1926 bi Jonathan Cape and The Medici Society Ltd.

That verse is merkit Kenlin fae a caain til myn that Robert Graves telt aabodie yince that Classical Arabic poetrie yaissed a kinna prologue caad “kindling” tae puit folk in tid for the lave o the poetic speil.

In makkin verse o Doughty’s prose, his wurds were taen ower in thur order, as faur as possible, sae that the sooch o his ondeemas speil nicht no be tint aathegither, hooever made-ower the ootcome nicht be. At the samin tyme, it was seen fit tae hand on til the Arabic wurds in the screed as Doughty hisselt haed seen fit tae dae. Bi the natur o a leal-lik praesentatioun o his prose puit intil verse, there was little or nae wy that muckle poetrie cuid be made ot. Hooaneever, that prose faut cuid be puit tae yuiss bi makkin a conjunck screed lik grace-notes til the grund o an air. That grund is the rhythmic pettrens made in ilka displeishin o prose dividident. As may be seen, the ilka same nummer o lynes til a pettren haes the same rhythm, an that coont o lynes is keekit-at whoere the pettrens dooble-up in langer stanzas.

The hae duin that, and at the same timm tae hae puitten a poetic speil ben Doughty’s ain wark, wuid hae been lik takkin a culliecoad on aa he haed wrocht at. For that reasoun, a conjunck poetrie caad Kennin was wrocht sydie-for-sydie wi his versit prose. And here, aiblins it is wyss tae myn that “Kenning” haes adae wi veesioun as weel as periphrasis in the wy o the Auld Norse an Germanic poetrie. Mynd anaa that in aa the grush an saund an stane an drooth o the desert in this smaa chyce bittock taen fae the muckle wark o Doughty, there is juist the yae thoct o the great weet ayont the desert, an that is richt in his furst twoe-three lynes... ”The short spring season is the only refreshment of the desert year. Beasts and men swim upon this prosperous tide; the cattle have their fill of sweet pasture, butter-milk is in the booths of the Aarab; but there was little or none in Zeyd’s tent.” The drooth o ;he desert is Doughty’s, the weet o the sea is mynes.

Haein said thae things, and haein gien a swaatch o Doughty’s prose abuin, it nicht be yuissfie tae ken that there are three wys tae read *The Baestial o the Desert*. The furst wy is richt thru the *Kenlin*, sae Doughty’s wark will be kent at the remove o the versin ot; then straucht thru the *Kennin* as a wheen o single poems, sae the sooch o the poetic yokin ont will be felt: syne sydie-for-sydie even-on, fae yae rhythmic caurrie set til its richt-haun neebor, sae that the *Kenlin* beiks the *Kennin* till it lowe athin the ingyne.

As aabodie kens, an ettlement in ocht tae dae can whyles become a settlement as nocht as naething-duin, but the waarth o a makar’s wark haes naething avaa adae wi saw-it, but haes aa adae wi see it, as weel as a something else that haes adae no juist wi the speirin ot but wi the hearin ot: an furder til thae things, the yokin til the desert baestial jobe cam fae haein anither luk at a speil bi Barker Fairley anent Doughty’s wark in general that was publisht in 1927, and I

haed bocht saecont-haund in 1945. Langsinsyne, I was greatlie taen wi thir lynes he quotit fae Doughty's *The Dawn in Britain*, no juist for thursels but because some o thur vowel-soonds haed been keelivnyed bi Anonymous as shawn alow:

‘Where morrow’s mist yet vapours from the sod;
And gossamer, in smooth South wind, blows, they ride;
By brakes, by sloe-thorns, blossomed like a cloud;
In whose sweet boughs, chant blithe the early birds,
(Men feign, to-day, each chooseth for the year;
Her make:) by meadows then, where gaudy shines
Herb cuckoo, springing in new thicket grass;
And whiten daisies pied all the wide mead,
And gentle primrose blows, under wood-side.’

Tho I taen tent o the merkens thare, an saw that maist were sib wi ma ain speak, yon aicht lyne, wi ‘whiten’, ‘pied’, ‘wide’ an ‘mead’ owerscartit for wecht, didnae juist gang intil ma kennin thewy they micht hae been bookeit in the mynd o monie mair. Shair enyeuch, the ‘d’ soonds aa thru the lyne haed thur ain sooch, but ma ain wechtin o the haill lyne was mair concernit wi the differ atween the soond o the ‘i’ in ‘whiten’, ‘pied’ an ‘wide’. I am gy weel shair Doughty an the big feck o his English readers gied the ilka ‘i’ thare the samin sooch. But gif ‘pied’ soonds the same aff baith Scots and English tongues, ‘whiten’ an ‘wide’ daenae. Thare is the same kinna differ atween the ‘i’ soonds ootthru the nyne lynes: ‘ride’, ‘like’, ‘blithe’, ‘shines’, ‘wide’ an ‘-side’. An we mak the same kinna soond in wurds whoere ‘ai’ or ‘ay’ are yaissed, lik ‘Maisie’ that we pronounce ‘Mysie’ and ‘aye’ for ‘always’ that we daenae pronounce tae rhyme wi ‘day’.

On the furst page o his *The Raiders* S.R. Crockett pyntit this oot wi raeference til his Mary Maxwell, caad May Mischief, in his note that says:

‘May, the old Scots diminutive for Mary, was pronounced, not like the name of the month, but Mei - the German ei, a characteristic sound which occurs also in “gye,” “stey,” &c.’

As may be seen aa thru the spellin here the letter ‘y’ is yaissed aagaets for that partecular soond, except in ‘ay’(yes) or in fleshin-oot as in ‘yaissed’.

Thare are a wheen ither things micht be said anent the vowel soonds as merkit bi Anonymous in the Barker Fairley blad abuin, and in especial, conseederatiouns aboot the ‘é’ and ‘è’ yins in ‘make’, ‘meadows’, ‘then’ an ‘where’ in the sixth lyne, but whit cam furrir furdest in ma myn langsyne was that Scots English is a wurld awo fae English English (or Yrish English that is aiblins intil the merkin). The Scots timbre dirks the roonder an cleirer the mair it is bookeit thegither an made a yae thing that isnae twoe.

That is the foond an wechtin gien til the makkin o *The Baestial o the Desert*. But whit is said and hoo the sayin o dirks the timbre o poetrie is no for ma ain threipin ont. Yae thing, tho, I wuidnae faa-oot wi oniebodye that thocht ‘daesert’ soondit better here an thare nor ‘desert’.

Auchterarder

Novemer 1986

Excerpt

from *Travels in Arabia Deserta* by C. M. Doughty. One-volume edition, as reprinted in July 1926. Jonathan Cape & The Medici Society Ltd. (From Chap.XI, Vol.I)

...The short spring season is the only refreshment of the desert year. Beasts and men swim upon this prosperous tide; the cattle have their fill of sweet pasture, butter-milk is in the booths of the Aarab; but there was little or none in Zeyd's tent. The kids and lambs stood all tied, each little neck in a noose, upon a ground line which is stretched in the nomad booth. At day-break the bleating youngsters are put under the dams, and each mother receives her own, (it is by the scent) — she will put by every other. When the flock is led forth to pasture, the little ones are still bound at home; for following the dams, they would drink dry the dugs, and leave no food for the Arabs. The worsted tent is full all day of small hungry bleatings, until the ghrannem come home at evening, when they are loosed again, and run to drink, butting under the mother's teats, with their wiggle tails; and in these spring weeks, there is little rest for their feeble cries, all night in the booths of the Aarab: the housewives draw what remains of the sweet milk after them. The B. Wáhad tribes of these open highlands, are camel-Beduins; the small cattle are few among them: they have new spring milk when their hinds have calved. The yearning camel-cow, lying upon her side, is delivered without voice, the fallen calf is big as a grown man: the herdsman stretches out its legs, with all his might; and draws the calf, as dead, before the dam. She smells to her young, rises and stands upon her feet to lick it over. With a great clap of the man's palm upon that horny sole, zôra, (which, like a pillar, Nature has set under the camel's breast, to bear up the huge neck,) the calf revives: at three hours end, yet feeble and tottering, and after many falls, it is able to stand reaching up the long neck and feeling for the mother's teat. The next morrow this new born camel will follow to the field with the dam. The cow may be milked immediately, but that which is

drawn from her, for a day or two, is purgative. The first voice of the calf is a sheep-like complaint, bâh-bâh, loud and well sounding. The fleece is silken soft, the head round and high; and this with a short body, borne arch-wise, and a leaping gait upon so long legs, makes that, a little closing the eyes, you might take them for fledglings of some colossal bird. Till twelve months be out they follow the teat; but when a few weeks old they begin, already, to crop for themselves the tops of the desert bushes: and their necks being not yet of proportionate reach, it is

only betwixt the straddled fore legs, that they can feed at the ground. One evening, as I stroked the soft woolly chines of the new-born camels, "Khalil! said the hind (coming with a hostile face), see thou do no more so, — they will be hide-bound and not grow well; thou knowest not this!" He thought the stranger was about some maleficence; but Zeyd, whose spirit was far from all superstition with an easy smile appeased him, and they were his own camels.

The camel at the birth is worth a real, and every month rises as much in value. In some "weak" households, the veal is slaughtered, where they must drink themselves all their camel milk. The bereaved dam wanders, lowing softly, and smelling for her calf; and as she mourns, you shall see her deer-like pupils, say the Arabs, 'standing full of tears.' Other ten days, and her brutish distress is gone over to forgetfulness she will feed again full at the pasture, and yield her foster milk to the Aarab. Then three good pints may be drawn from her at morning, and as much to their supper: the udder of these huge frugal animals is not greater than I have seen the dugs of Malta goats. A

milch cow with the calf is milked only at evening. Her udder has four teats, which the southern nomads divide thus: two they tie up with a worsted twine and wooden pegs, for themselves, the other they leave to the suckling. The Aarab of the north make their camel udders sure, with a worsted bag-netting. Upon a journey, or when she is thirsting, the nâga's milk is lessened to the half. All their nâgas give not milk alike. Whilst the spring milk is in, the nomads nourish themselves of little else. In poorer households it is all their victual those two months. The Beduins drink no whole-milk, save that of their camels; of their small cattle they drink but the butter-milk. The hareem make butter, busily rocking the (blown) sour milk-skin upon their knees. In the plenteous wilderness the semily is greater; and is hanged to be rocked in the fork of a robust bearing-stake of the nomad tent. As for this milk-diet, I find it, by proof of the Beduin life, to

be the best of human food. But in every nomad menzil, there are some stomachs, which may never well bear it; and strong men using this sliding drink-meat feel always a hungry disease in their bodies; though they seem in never so good plight. The Beduins speak thus of the several kinds of milk: "Goat milk is sweet, it fattens more than strengthens the body; ewe's milk very sweet, and fattest of all, it is unwholesome to drink whole:" so they say, "it kills people," that is, with the colic. In spite of their saws, I have many times drunk it warm from the dug, with great comfort of languishing fatigue. It is very rich in the best samn: ewe butter-milk "should be let sour somewhile in the semily, with other milk, till all be tempered together, and then it is fit to drink." Camel milk is they think the best of all sustenance, and that most, (as lightly purgative,) of the *bukkra*, or young nâga, with her first calf, and the most sober of them add with a Beduin simplicity, "who drinks and has a jâra he would not abide an hour." The goat and nâga milk savour of the plants where the cattle are pastured; in some cankered grounds I have found it as wormwood. One of those Allayda sheykhs called to me in the ráhla, "Hast thou not some Damascus *kaak* (biscuit cakes) to give me to eat? wellah it is six weeks since I have chewed anything with the teeth; all our food is now this flood of milk. Seest thou not what is the Beduins' life; they are like game scattered in all the wilderness." Another craved of me a handful of dates; "with this milk, only, he felt such a creeping hunger within him." Of any dividing food with them the Beduins keep a kindly remembrance; and when they have aught will call thee heartily again.

The milk-dieted Aarab are glad to take any mouthful of small game. Beside the desert hare which is often startled in the ráhlas, before other is the thób; which they call here pleasantly 'Master Hamed, sheykh of wild beasts,' and say he is human, *zillamy*, — this is their elvish smiling and playing and in proof they hold up his little five-fingered hands. They eat not his palms, nor the seven latter thorny rings of sheykh Hamed's long tail, which, they say, is 'man's flesh.' His pasture is most of the sweet-smelling Nejd bush, *el-arrafej*. Sprawling wide and flat is the body, ending in a training tail of even length, where I have counted twenty-three rings. The colour is blackish and green-speckled, above the pale yellowish and dull belly: of his skin the nomads make small herdmen's milk-bottles. The manikin saurian, with the robust hands, digs his burrow under the hard gravel soil, wherein he lies in the winter, dreaming. The thób-catcher, finding the hole, and putting in his long reed armed with an iron hook, draws Hamed forth. His throat cut, they fling the carcase, whole, upon the coals; and thus baked they think it a delicious roast. His capital enemy among beasts, "which undermines and devours him, is, they say, the *thurbàn*" I know not whether a living or fabulous animal. The *jerboa*, or spring rat, is a small

white aery creature in the wide waterless deserts, of a pitiful beauty. These lesser desert creatures lie underground in the daylight, they never drink. The hedgehog, which they call *kúnfuth*, and *abu shauk*, ‘father prickles,’ is eaten in these parts by Fejir tribesmen, but by their neighbours disdained, although they be one stock with them of Annezy. Selim brought in an urchin which he had knocked on the head, he roasted Prickles in the coals and rent and distributed the morsels, to every one his part. That which fell to me I put away bye and bye to the starveling greyhound; but the dog smelling to the meat rejected it. When another day I told this tale in the next tribes, they laughed maliciously, that the Fukara should eat that which the hounds would not of. The porcupine is eaten by all the nomads, and the *wabbar*. I have seen this thick-bodied beast as much as a heavy hare, and resembling the Alpine rat; they go by pairs, or four, six, eight, ten, together. The *wabbar* is found under the border of the sandstone mountains, where tender herbs nourish him, and the gum-acacia leaves, upon which tree he climbs nimbly, holding with his pad feet without claws; the fore-parts have four toes, and hind-paws three: the flesh is fat and sweet: they are not seen to sit upon the hind quarters; the pelt is grey, and like the bear’s coat.

Rarely do any nomad gunners kill the wolf, but if any fall to their shot he is eaten by the Beduins, (the wolf was eaten in mediaeval Europe). The Aarab think the flesh medicinal, “very good they say for aches in the shins,” which are so common with them that go bare-legs and bare-footed in all the seasons. Zeyd had eaten the wolf, but he allowed it to be of dog’s kind, “Eigh, billah (he answered me), the wolf’s mother, that is the hound’s aunt.” The fox, *hosseny*, is often taken by their greyhounds, and eaten by the Jejr; the flesh is “sweet and next to the hare.” They will even eat the foul hyena when they may take her, and say, “she is good meat.” Of great desert game, but seldom slain by the shot of these pastoral and tent-dwelling people, is the *bédan* of the mountains (the wild goat of Scripture, pl. *bedûn*; with the Kahtân *waul*, as in Syria). The massive horns grow to a palm-breadth, I have seen them two and a half feet long; they grow stretching back upon the chine to the haunch. The beast at need, as all hunters relate, will cast himself down headlong upon them backwards: he is nigh of kin to the stone-buck of the European Alps.

The gazelle, *ghrazel*, pl. *ghrazlân* is of the plains; the Arabians say more often *thobby* (the N. T. Tabitha). They are white in the great sand-plains, and swart-grey upon the black Harra; these are the roes of the scriptures. There is yet a noble wild animal of the Arabian deserts, which was hitherto unknown among us, the *wothyhi*, or “wild cow”..... I saw later the male and female living at Hâyil; it is an antelope, *Beatrix*, akin to the beautiful animals of Africa. It seems that this is not the “wild ox” of Moses: but is not this the (Hebr.) *reem*, the “unicorn” of the Septuagint translators? — Her horns are such slender rods as from our childhood we have seen pictured “the horns of the unicorns.” We read in Balaam’s parable, “EL brought them out of Egypt; He hath as it were the strength of a *reem*,” and in Moses’ blessing of the tribes, “Joseph’s horns are the two horns of reems.” In Job especially, are shown the headstrong conditions of this *velox* wild creature. “Will the reem be willing to serve thee — canst thou bind the reem in thy furrow?” The wounded *wothyhi* is perilous to be approached; this antelope, with a cast of her sharp horns, may strike through a man’s body; hunters wait therefore the last moments to run in and out their quarry’s throat. It was a monkish darkness in natural knowledge to ascribe a single, horn to a double forehead — and we sin not less by addition, putting wings to the pagan images of gods and angels; so they should have two pairs of fore-limbs! The *wothyhi* falls only to the keenest hunters: the *wothyhies* accompany in the waterless desert by troops of three and five together.

Of vermin, there are many snakes and adders; none of them eaten by these tribes of nomads. *Jelámy* is that small brown lizard of the wilderness which starts from every footstep. Scorpions lurk under the cool stones; I have found them in my tent, upon my clothing, but never had any hurt. I have seen many grown persons and children bitten, but the sting is not perilous; some wise man is called to “read” over them. The wounded part throbs with numbness and aching till the third day, there is not much swelling. Many are the cities, under this desert sand, of seed-gathering ants; I have measured some waling-street of theirs, eighty-five paces: to speed once this length and come again, loaded as camels, is these small busy-bodies’ summer day’s journey.

Besides, of the great predatory animals, most common is the the *thùbba*, hyena; then the *nimmr*, a leopard, brindled black and brown and spotted: little common is the *fáhd*, a wild cat no bigger than the fox; he is red and brown brindled, and spotted. In these Beduins’ memory a young *fáhd* was bred up amongst Bishr, which (they are wonderfully swift footed) had been used by his nomad master to take gazelles. In all the Arabic countries there is a strange superstition of parents, (and this as well among the Christian sects of Syria,) that if any child seem to be sickly, of infirm understanding, or his brethern have died before, they will put upon him a wild beast’s name, (especially, wolf, leopard, wolverine,) — that their human fragility may take on as it were a temper of the kind of those animals. Hawks and buzzards are often seen wheeling in the desert sky, and *el-ágab*, which is a small black eagle, and *er-rákhm*, the small white carrion eagle, — flying in the air they resemble sea-mews: I have not seen vultures, nor any greater eagle in the deserts (save in Sinai). These are the most of living creatures, and there are few besides in the wilderness of Arabia.

THE WYS O THE DESERT

THE SODGER

Fae the Afrikaans o Uys Krige

In siccan a dreech ootlin orrie airt
ane wurld an groo but growthieness
that skyles in aa its sairie stanes
or the groo gangs lirt i the luft
sae nane may lippen ont,
his leefou lane
alang the stoorie pad
traiks
the lane sodger lad.

Abuin is the furst nicht staur,
abuin Fort Wajier liggin awo sae faur.

Alanerlie
the lane sodger lad
his leefou lane.
His leefou lane
wi a wurld o dool an luve
yirdit apairt
in the howff o his ain hert
that nane save he can prove.

His leefou lane
dreechlie in the desert dayligaun
that sweels aroond him lik the groo scaum
o the sperflin stoor
as the haevie ammo buits plowter the saund attoore.

An Fort Wajier
- oasis alane in this haill wilderness
whaur ilka bink an rowe o the camel pad maun gang,
whaur nuintyde murlis amang the leafs in the sooch o a saft wuin,
whaur aathing cawed tae the hunkers wi heat funds beild tae byde
ane airt alanerlie whaur the palms skinkle siller i the muin, an
whaur deep, deep, doon aneath the stye black waas, the whyte
waal watters hain in;
anerlie the yin snode airt
whaur leerielicht, guid watter an scrans, an the crack o men
pleasure the hert -
aneath the furst nicht staur

liggin awo sae faur.

Wi his helmet on his heid,
bandolier roond his breist,
watter-bottle on his hip,
rifle ower his shooter,
he traiks amang the stoor:
a groo-graithit taet
againss the mair groo
o the ondeemas luft
o the doore orrie erd
in sicna groo border
whaur the nicht
mells a weird wi the bricht
as the licht aye maun sperfle
amang the groo scadda.

Abuin is the furst nicht staur,
abuin Fort Wajier liggin awo sae faur.

A groo-graithit taet
gainss groo-graithit creatioun.
An the sodger traiks on,
traiks on
aye traiks on
alang the stoorie desert pad,
and his scadda raxin slawlie an siccarlie,
cawed attoore the groo pad
ower a binsh o broon lavastane,
intil the thorn buss.

The sodger's scadda
faas ower the desert.

The sodger's scadda
faas ower Africa.

Stievelik an sterklik an black wi aa dreedour,
ower the haill wurd
faas the sodger's black scadda.

Abuin is the furst nicht staur,
abuin Fort Wajier liggin awo sae faur.

On the Somaliland border.

December 1940.

THE DESERT PAD

Fae the Afrikaans o Uys Krige

The desert pad's a gyan lang, lang gaet.

A scart o quartz, grush, saund or lavastane,
gyan lang's the desert pad, a gy lang gaet.

Pitmirklik, bluidruidgowdlik, or chalkwhyteelik,
lang enyeuch the desert pad, enyeuch o a gaet.

Athorte donga an dook, and howe an knowock,
gy lang the desert pad, lang enyeuch o a gaet.

Athorte thon droothie hauch o grun
whaur the stoorie wuin skails ower itsel;
athorte thon sairlik sunscoort sautpan, brynewhytelik,
the yae braid myle-lang sautpan,
brodflet an scoort as bare's
the wheech o the wuin, athooten tree or buss,
or even the yae bit, wae bit blade o gress,
athoot even the yae bit stane tae brekk yon yae alaneness,
the desert pad's a gyan lang, lang gaet.

Athorte thon deep daurk pit o a langdooverin crater
among the wuinherried gullies o black volcanic mountains,
raxin whaur hethotterin fever sotters i the busses,
syne heech alang cliff aidges, laich bi the flet o the sea plain,
a traik, the desert pad, an awfie gaet.

Atween droothtaigt, withert thornbusses,
whaur thon illfaured flechfangit vulture
frames itsel i the fork o a tree, whyles glowerin
even-on, but syne garrin rax its sapsie hause,
gowpin, thae wing fedders flappin braid
atween bare branches groowbyte as leprosie thare,
an awfie traik, this desert pad o a gaet.

Thru birlaboot wuins, heech as steeples staunin,
saundeevils thegither lik a lyne o set dancers,
a yella upscoorin o stoor garrin thon sun dwyne tae't,
this desert pad's an awfie traik o a gaet.

Thru thon faurboond caller an sauchtlik meerage

that promises the yae quaet wattersyde o easement an rest
alow the waarslin tree fronds bi thon pown lik a siller flett,
the desert pad's a gyan lang, lang gaet.

Ower the hard wy o lymestane, granite or sunpan dy,
ower the saft o the poother o airnstane or lava-ase,
a sair wy, the desert pad, a sairgaun gaet.

Whyles granitepurpour, airnstaneorange whyles,
or else clybroon, but the colour o a lion maistlie,
a sairgaun wy, the desert pad, a sair gaet.

Alow thon fylit, lowerin luft,
bealyella, tawnie an tuim as this haill wilderness,
faur, furder nor the furdest boond,
furder nor yon haarhappit mountain,
furder nor the luft itsel can hain,
the desert pad's a sairgaun wy o a gaet.

As groo's an auld whang, the desert pad jooks on.
Stacher yon wy — is this the end o the ayebydein stoor?
Stotter this wy — is thon the bit clachan furrith thare?
But the desert pad's a gyan lang, lang gaet.

The desert pad's a gyan lang, lang gaet.

Man's dool is gyan lyke the desert pad.

Lang enyeuch an gyan lang at that
is the dool o fowk, lang enyeuch tae gae't.

In front o El Wak, December 1940

THE END O THE PAD

Fae the Afrikaans o Uys Krige

Suddenlyke, thare's an end tae't,
suddenlyke an end tae this desert pad o a gaet.

Suddenlyke — as the yae man losst i the wilderness
stachers, hauf-faain, yovein,
syne doonwechtin, the grun tae prove,
the-tyme his endmaist strenth ootwith can dwyne —
it's here the pad itsel can pyne
i the boond the ondeemas wyld can hyne.

As watter pickles throch the saund,
as the whyte scansin o the skliff o snaw-faem can tyne itsel i the straund,
as howp itsel can foze awo fas lichtlied laun,
as the hinmaist forfochen lowe o the ingyne flauchters i the cawin,
sae the desert pad can pyne
i the boond the ondeemas wyld can hyne.

Suddenlyke, thare's an end tae't,
suddenlyke an end tae thon desert pad o a gaet;
no the yae howff wi onie fire for tae blink
sherp an quicksillerlyke tae wink;
no even the bittockie o newspaper here
sydedykein wi the wuin, noo faur, noo near;
no even the sillerglisk o a sweetiepaper pirlin
its Capegrozet trademerk in the birlin;
naewhaur fanbelt, nor cartridge case attoore,
aa langsyne happit alow the saund an stoor;
naiter the skeleton o three-ton larrie
strippit bare fae aixle tae ruif as the wuin can herrie,
nor the yae fuitmerk, nor onie mair
witness o us in aa the airt o oor braidspreid airmie;
no even the scad o a fuitpad on this yird bare
an hardpackit bi the camel hoofs back an furrin thare,
vaigin i the desert, for the oasis watter sair forfairn
— alanerlie this bare laneliness, alane as terror, a wilderness alane,
this same laneliness o desolatioun as endless again
as the heech braid buch o the heevens, ayebydein, birlin an birnin abuin.

The daurkest day maun dwyne i the hinnerend
as the ilka last licht ot sperfles awo i the dayligaun.
The langest nicht o mirk maun syne be spent

as the constellatiouns skail i the blue abyss o the sun.

Lang last's an end lik the end o the desert pad,
even as the desert pad ends itsel at that.

But tae the plainyie o the wurld,
an the keenin o the erd,
tae fowklik wae an fowklik weerd,
tae the hunger o everilk hert,
ilka saul maun aye hae caad
for yaeness, britherlie saucht on erd, an blytheheid yit;
that ilka mairch in ilka airt
man maks tae pairt
natiouns, peoples, an men,
sall scaum awo as clouds i the birsslin sun can dwyne;
an syne, whaur frontiers sit,
sall rise thare yae day yit,
Luve, lyfie, sterk as onie stell,
an eemage stanewrocht bi a mell
(nocht dwaible, nor nesh nane avas
but stoore, steelhertit, stieve an aa)
— syne sae!
this gy auld-eildit craikin, freen,
this dreame o saucht ower man can grein,
syne sae
(caa this baith dreame an widdreime tae)
thare 'll be yae end tae't,
yae end tae this kinna pad o a gaet.

Dibbandibba, on the Abyssinian Frontier,
2 Februar 1941

FLOOERS IN THE BOLAND

Fae the Afrikaans o Uys Krige

Thare's nocht here
— juist saund an black lavastane
wi vulture burds
amang leafless thornbusses
and aagaets
the desert
aawhaur aathegither
yellie as the jaundies
or lik some auld
het bealin byle.

And here
flet alangsyde the lava pad
a lane bit crosse
abuin the yirdin
o a sodger laddie,
juist this yae crosse
timmert thegither
fae twaa bit brodes
o an airmie petrol-kist.

The crosse-piece cairriet
the name o the sodger,
the date o his lane deid,
his nummer
and his unit.

The desert wuin waff-waffit
athorte the desert
noo and again, wabbit
whyles, sair forfochen, baet
wi its comein an gaein
ower this braid desert.

Fykie aroon the lowsse flap ahint
oor muckle troop-cairrier,
it fankles in a smaa bing o lava-ase
athin a toorockin birlaboot,
syne liggs at peace.
But noo it sterts again,
draiglin thru the saund,

ootraivelin itsel upon the hauf-peelt bass
— that luks lik strips o spirlie scraps o paper —
aroon the bluegreen stem
o the whyte-thorn,
syne soochs in saucht ben the sklits
atween the lava-ruckies
happit upon the mool.

Jan van Niekerk,
say the cruikit black letters.

Jan van Niekerk,
lance-bombardier,
whaa cam fae the Cape.

Jan van Niekerk,
sae awfie semple, sae naitural,
yit yaisual-nane at that, byordnar
in the chyce the Guid Lorde Gode
made Jan's the wale o graves.

Whit will gang maun gang
i the middis o the desert.
A sodger chippt awaa a tuim C to C
fag-packet on the pad.
The wuin wafft the packet aipen,
an ruggit-oot its sillerpaper
and yin o its fag-cairds wi't.
The sillerpaper skinkit sillerlik
the mair i the skelp o the suinlicht,
an the caird, gaein birlin ower and ower,
syne fund a beild bi a lavastane,
wee pictur uppermaist:
fower blue bit gowans
that daunce i the wuin,
fower blue bit gowans
nod meadies abuin.

Fae the larrie, a sodger sklins doon
sae he'll can rax a bit.
He taks a bit daunner.
Then turns back again.
Noo he staunds alangsyde the grave
the-tyme the twaa daurk scaddas o the crosse,
lik lang, nerra crepp ribbans,

rax ower the mools for a daurker mort-claith.

Again the wuin waff-waffs the fag-caird,
an skytes it wi yae suddent skoosh
nearhaun the sodger lad,
lats it faa, then skaigin it yince mair,
caws it against his buit.

Slawlie the sodger bous doon,
lufts the fag-caird
an places it on the grave
wi the eemage uppermaist,
creddlt atweesh twaa stanes,
liggin laevel alow the crosse.
He claummers back
intil the muckle three-tonner,
an slawlie, aa
the lang, gear-grunshin convoy
at last gets gaun again.

In this whyte-skimmerin airt,
this boond o sic het-trimmelin glead,
abuin the waanrif mools
yon lythelik lane crosse staunds
againss the black lava-rigg.

Fower blue bit gowans yonder,
daunce you athin the wuin!
Fower blue bit gowans yonder,
nid-nod yer meads abuin!

GUITAR

(Efter Lorca)

Fae the Afrikaans o Uys Krige

Noo the fingers begin
tae reeshle the strings:
five whyte murners
thegither sing.
Noo the plainyie
o the guitar dings.

I' the gloamin oor
an the tassies stoond.
Thur purple draps glink
as they jaup i the roond,
an the day's bluidie daith
is the gowp o a wound.

The still o the nicht,
o ilka leaf an floer,
the still o the furst staur,
the strings' still doverin oor,
the hiddlins o stillness ben stillness,
and aathegither in pooer.
Ower aa, the plainyie
o the guitar dings.

Nae yuiss avaa
tae quaten him.
Ye cannae help
i the plainyie o him.
He greets, aye greets
as watters plain
again, again
til saund or stane,
an the rain
or the gulls blaw
laich's the wuins plain
ower the snaw.

He murns wi the waanhowp
saft ingyne til aa brings.

He greets wi the daith
whilk is lerkin in aa things.
Nae yuiss
tae quaten him!
Ye cannae help
i the plainyie o him!

He greets aboot thae things
fey awaa yonder:
the dreams, an the sichin, the wae things
an fonder
unspakken whan yae man forlorn
alane, aa alanerlie daunders.

He greets aboot thae things
fey awaa yonder:
saund o the waarm Sooth
for gardenias greinin.
Mosshags o the gray North
an sunfloors ilk eenin.
He murns for the flane athoot target,
boat wi nae haven, lass wi nae waen,
heech-nuin wi nae mornin,
the freemit athoot freen,
aa prayers, an sabbin, an sichin
that sperfle athorte the fower wuins.

Guitar, daurk guitar,
aa dool i the wurd!
Hert throch-thirlit
bi five swords.....

THE BALLAT O THE WATTERS O THE SEA

(Efter Lorca)

Fae the Afrikaans o Uys Krige.

The sea
laich lachs faur ayont:
whyte teeth o faem,
waan lips o the luft.

“Whit gauderan hae ye tae sell,
ma gallas bit lassie,
wi yer wyld ongauns
an yer sherp keekans,
yer prood, yer soondan
het ying breists?”

“Freen,
I hae naethin tae sell
cep the watters o the sea.”

“Whit’s the weerd ye hae ben ye,
ma quate mannie,
yer heid doon bent
an yer een glaumert,
sombre wi aa kennt;
yer langtholean smyle
bittersweet?
Whit rowes i yer veins, aye pairt
o yer blüde yit?”

“There rowes i ma veins aye
nocht but saut o the waves aye,
o the watters o the sea.”

“ But whye,
wee mither,
is yer sang
— hoo sauchtlik or saft — aye
a plainyie?
An the wairsh saut o yer tears,
Whaur dae they come fae,
hovean i yer een aa day?”

“Freemit-yin,
the waves are aye singan.
Thur sang
is aye sailrang.
Thur leid
— throch aa tyme syne —
is aye dool an deid
an waanhowp an wae.
Freemit-yin,
ma een greet the bryne
o the watters o the sea.”

“Oh hert,
an siccan bitterheid
wi blytheheid an stert-reid
— growean til hate aye an envie a weed —
whilk aye maun rax ma mense an gowps
agin ma wrangous howps:
an ootower yer deeps lik stowps
reeman ower, lik tassie or gourd
fae whaur did ye lowp?
Fae whitna weed?”

“Ower aathing they rowe
an the saut rowes slee,
mair whyte, aye whiter....
til aa growes bitter wi
the watters o the sea.”

The sea
laich lachs faur ayont
whyte teeth o faem,
waan lips o the luft.

BALLAT

Fae the afrikaans o Uys Krige

The staurs are thrang
whaur baith wuid stan,
the muinlicht thairs
at Malelaan.

— “Ma dear, for aye
yer hert and han?”

— “For aye, ma dear,
till aa sall gan...”

Muinlichtit flooers
are dichtit waan.
Waarm wintlin wuins
sooch ower the lan.

And aa the staurs
waanweirdlik stan
i the wattersheen
at Malelaan.

* * * *

Anither year,
anither sang,
an the reever rowes,
aye rowes alang...

Noo i the gloamin
but juist the tane.
— “Syne we were twae
an noo ma lane.”

“Maun ilka thing
aagaets aye gan
lik the snawwaan flooers
at Malelaan?”

Dowf i the boond
the peeweeps cass,
laichlie the wuins
i the rashes blaw:

“Ay, aa man maks
aye mells wi daith
as esperance
an blytheheid baith

aye struissle wi
waanhowp an dool,
as rinnin watter
meets the pool...”

Aye the sooch o the wuin
i the rashes, till
the reeshlin bydes
an the nicht growes still,

and aa is sterk
an the muinlicht waan
alow the staurs
that skinklin, gan

baenwhyte an cauld
ower Malelaan
ower Malelaan
ower Malelaan...

THE SEA-MAW

I

Fae the Afrikaans 0 Uys Krige

Atween tooer
an whyte tooer
o the cloodfauld
ower kyle an craig,
siller an blae,
hichtin abuin the sea,
siller an blae,
skliffin the luft
abuin the boond o the swaw,
sklimmin an scoorin,
the yae sea-maw
sklimmin an scoorin
its lane.

Whit can the sea sooch
but the wuin maun lament
an the sea-maw maen
its lane?

The sea soochs,
the wuin laments,
the sea-maw sabs:
atween tooer
an whyte tooer
o the cloodfauld
ower kyle an craig,
siller an blae
abuin i the cleir licht,
siller an blae,
yon hert maun maen
its lane.

THE SEA-MAW

II

Efter the Afrikaans o Uys Krige

Whit skraichin's yon fae the sea-maw, cawin againss
the blue aa thru the luft, againss the whyte
lik skymin o the licht ootthru the clood,
cawin againss the groo o haar aa ower
the ben, fae yon sea-maw, whit is yon skraichin?

Whit skraichin's yon fae the sea-maw? Fae yon
sea-maw, whit is yon skraichin ower the groo
o the dune, ower snaw-whyte straund lik the faem o the sea?

Atweesh the luft an the laund for a soondin-brode,
atweesh the ben an the bay for echo-stoond,
atweesh whyte clood an whyte clood for notes heecher,
atweesh green swaw an green swaw for laicher notes,
it skraichs an skraichs an skraichs as the wuin skraichs wi't,
lik the skraich o the sea tae't the-wy the skraich o the hert
intaet is aa alane, apairt, yit measurt
lik yon blue hicht o the luft, lik yon daurk daipth
o the soondin sea, lik eeriness as groolik
as haar aa ower the ben that smoors the skraichin.

Dool, ay, dool, dool fae't, and athooten saucht
yon caumer taet i the prood hert lyke a blissin,
for aa the skaith up-hichtit lyke a tholein,
or sair doon-wechtit, loondert wi the fricht
abuin the deemin ginn tyme maks accoontment —
abuin the need athin the breid the fautor
the-tyme breid's haill athin itsel in needment,
abuin the tyle lik torment tulyies us
wi sweit intaet oot ot as in a brulyie
an the skaith o the greed intae the bitter chrism
aa soored athin the stoond o humanness.

Naw, naw, an naw I daarsay! I say neer
sall yon dool-wechtin gan the faur awaa
until the blissit caa thur lyfe haill freed
or athooten trimmelin, athooten dreedour
lik murrain puit upon man for langtholance.

Naw, naw I daarsay, I say naw! An neer
sall yon skraich mell wi saucht avaa! Ay, ben
its ainsel lat it caw, as tho ilk scurroch
ben its ainsel was scart-scart-scartit sair,
tae gar it yelloch for a saucht tae skraich!
Neer lat its skraich be ocht but intilt aa,
no haill its ainsel intil, for divvident
as it is, it is nae sang lik melodie
says mair for measure nor the singin soochs,
but wi the grace-notes tint, rhythm ahint is.

I say naw, naw I daarsay, naw for ocht
o some guid-fortune faa yon skraichin on,
nor blytheheid, lyke a smyte as peentie-peerie,
tae sing a sang anent it for its measure
wuid say anent the singin mair nor sooch,
nor lyfieness lik ben ingyne gan vaigin,
nor in the waarslin wi't, wi blissins melled,
nor staurlicht thon daurk orbit for tae ken,
nor stuidie grun for fuit tae staun, no staucher,
and aathing aathegither an for aye,
for aye, for aye that was and is the ayeways
that maun be fae noo on, fae noo on, ay,
thru aa tyme fae noo on, ayebydein, ay.

EFTERTHOCHT ANENT THE WYS O THE DESERT

Efter bringin thegither the wark made aroond yae swaatch
o the prose o Charles M. Doughty, prose byordnar
an muckle intil itsel as in the airtin
attoore the Arabia he telt us o,
I taen a thocht, the hunner year in makkin,
that I haed duin some ither desert verses
an puit in Scots a wheen o weiretimm poems
Uys Krige made in his ain Afrikaans,
thon leid o his that fairlie yit gans traikin
ootthru his pages lyke the ilka pad
aagaets and oniegaets in Africa.

Thinkin I micht as weel yaise thaem fornent
the Arabian wark, lik contar bookein's wecht
for man alane athorte yon boond ondeemas,
an myndin hoo I'd puit some sea-chynge verse
againss the Arabian desert, anither thocht
I taen anent a puckle o 'watter' poems,
again Uys Krige's wark, that micht weel even
the weibauk o poetic veesioun made
gin I micht yaise them duin the Scots leid intilt,
soondin the wy the-tither verse was wechtit.

At the hinneren, tho, there was juist yon smaa bit
mair wechtin puitten on the Arabian airt,
a kinna contar-kennin cawin the keekin
at the veesioun agly, a wee thing skellielyke,
sae noo bi giein masel a culliecoad
on Afrikaans, I haed tae mak aa peels
upon *Die Seemeeu* (II), garrin
it gan fuhll flicht wi the same kinna cawin I gied
the desert baestial for thair ain wheeshin
upon the desert pages o thur poem.

Achterarder
Decemer 1986