

## **An Litir Bheag** **le Ruairidh MacIlleathain**

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 489 (which corresponds to Litir 793). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*We don't have too much writing in Gaelic that deals with desire and lust. At least the type of desire and lust connected to sex. The famous poet, Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, wrote poetry like that, however. But not much of it was published. The Victorians weren't too keen on it. John Mackenzie in his famous collection 'The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry' wrote, 'while as a poet [Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair] merits the highest praise, he is not to be excused for his immoral pieces, which of course are excluded from [this publication].'*

*The Victorians weren't too keen on any writing that was 'immoral', at least when it came to sex. Perhaps fighting and killing were okay, but it wouldn't be at all healthy to advertise that men and women were lustful, whether or not that was inside the bedroom or outside of it. In the Gaelic world, that restriction was just as strong as it was in the English-speaking world. To this very day, it's almost impossible to locate Mac Mhaighstir's erotic poetry.*

*In the twentieth century,*

Chan eil cus sgrìobhaidh againn ann an Gàidhlig a tha a' dèiligeadh ri ana-miann no sannt. Co-dhiù an seòrsa de dh'ana-miann is sannt a tha co-cheangailte ri feise. Sgrìobh am bàrd ainmeil, Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, bàrdachd mar sin, ge-tà. Ach cha deach mòran dhith fhoillseachadh. Cha robh na Bhictòirianaich ro dhèidheil oirre. Sgrìobh Iain MacCoinnich anns a' chruinneachadh ainmeil aige 'Sàr-obair nam Bàrd Gàidhealach', 'while as a poet [Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair] merits the highest praise, he is not to be excused for his immoral pieces, which of course are excluded from [this publication].'

Cha robh na Bhictòirianaich ro dhèidheil air sgrìobhadh sam bith a bha 'mì-mhoralta', co-dhiù nuair a thigeadh e gu feise. 'S dòcha gun robh sabaid is marbhadh ceart gu leòr, ach cha bhiodh e idir fallain a bhith a' foillseachadh gu robh fir is boireannaich ana-miannach, co-dhiù bha sin anns an t-seòmar-chadail no air an taobh a-muigh dheth. Ann an saoghal na Gàidhlig, bha an casg sin a cheart cho làidir 's a bha e ann an saoghal na Beurla. Chun an latha an-diugh, cha mhòr nach eil e do-dhèante bàrdachd dhrabasta Mhic Mhaighstir Alasdair a lorg.

Ann an fhicheadamh linn,

*things changed in the English-speaking world. It took time, however. Lady Chatterley's Lover by D H Lawrence was published in Italy in 1928. But it was in 1960 that the full version was published in the United Kingdom. And in Gaelic, well ... we're still waiting for a novel like that!*

*But – like every other people in the world – the Gaels would think about things like that – love, fancy, desire, lust. And they still do! But it's not easy to see that in our literature. It appears that we don't even swear!*

*Well, that's no longer true. Recently a small book came out called The Naughty Little Book of Gaelic. We'll look at it next week. At least, we'll look at the permitted passages...!*

dh'atharraich cùisean ann an saoghal na Beurla. Thug e ùine, ge-tà. Chaidh *Lady Chatterley's Lover* le D H Lawrence fhoillseachadh san Eadailt ann an naoi ceud deug, fichead 's a h-ochd (1928). Ach 's ann an naoi ceud deug is seasgad (1960) a chaidh an dreach slàn a chur ann an clò anns an Rìoghachd Aonaichte. Agus, ann an Gàidhlig, uill ... tha sinn a' feitheamh fhathast airson a leithid de nobhail!

Ach – cleas gach sluagh eile san t-saoghal – bhitheadh na Gàidheil a' beachdachadh air cuspairean mar sin – gaol, nòisean, miann, sannt. Agus bithidh fhathast! Ach chan eil e furasta sin fhaicinn anns an litreachas againn. Tha e coltach nach bi sinn eadhon ri droch chainnt!

Uill, chan eil sin fìor tuilleadh. O chionn ghoirid thàinig leabhar beag a-mach air a bheil *The Naughty Little Book of Gaelic*. Bheir sinn sùil air an-ath-sheachdain. Co-dhiù air na pìosan a tha cèadaichte...!