

The Big Stravaig

...noo gloamin faws...

King sun, wi yer rose-reid chowks, day's ringin croun,
ye tig me, and ma skin turns tae a cornea,
ma rigbane tae an optic nerve, and ma haill bouk shithers
hauf daizzelt in the pool o gowd ye jaw
oot ower this sea and toun, and I'm made blin.
Here raws yince stude – and aye I ken they staun –
o hooses and streets that belang anither toun,
no this yin ye hae chynged ayont itsel.

We dauner by the waterfront. The nicht
fishers' boats are aw redd up for gaun oot,
motors shoggin, paraffin lamps in the bows,
and the haill toun's oot for the big stravaig,
luffers cleekin airms, and young lads struntin,
mithers and fathers, bairnies eatin ice-cream,
auld men lookin on frae causey café tables,
and the mirkenin hills draw in, like freenly beasts.

Douce leam o forenicht's lift, skailt on hills and bay,
yer airm skiffs mine noo, casual-like,
like the touch o this lass daunerin at ma side
weel-hippit, wi wee steps and sweyin gait,
jet hair back-soopit, jimp o thrapple, and shouthers
deep simmer gowdent, and her olive broun een lauchin.
I drink ye, skimmerin licht, like wine, like music,
as her forebeirs hae drunk ye thoosans o years.

Sypin toun, *Eleftheria* she's cried,
and though yer scaurs are riach spreckles in her een,
yet, at this oor when licht and licht's infaulds
kythe canny in her face as speik or sang,
hers is the age-auld richt tae walk this shoreheid
as guairdian and wark-lume o yer licht
ingaitherin it tae the wells o her deep een,
and hers, the darlin freedom, tae tread ye like a dancer.

Darlin forenicht, licht thoosans o years auld,
clear-thrappled singer, leesome as this lassie,

hoo can I no adore the grace ye cast
this toun and its indwellers in, a mould
that faushions aw it touches, the haill world?
I hae become yer sclave, gin no yer citizen.
And, wi a drouth tae drink ye haill, I'd ful masel
lip-fou wi yer leamin lowe, her freedom.

Richard Berengarten

Translated by James Robertson

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