

It's Not The Queen's English, But It's Mine

Ach, awa an' bile yer heid!
Gramps mutters in my mouth
toward the voice on the kitchen radio.

My mother was *the Bairn* until she had bairns of her own.
I haven't had. Didn't have.
Perhaps I'm a bairn, still.

Ca' canny with the salt, my father-tongue
Peppers my language,
As you season the spuds.

We're *Doin' away fine*,
Like my Gran, until she wasn't.
A thought as driech as the day.

I'm an *eejit!*
The plate cracks, keys dropped,
Wet laundry — forgotten, sour.

F for invectives:
Fer fuck's sake, ye fecker! I spit with
Sharp edges.

Grand so, I text back
When you tell me you'll be late.
Easy like.

Unless *I'm up to high doh*.
Emotion — like language —
is pitched and specific,

As the extra *i* in *Iain*.
The name for my father,
by those who knew him as a boy.

Otherwise known as *John*.
Which is not a word,
But the distinction carries meaning all the same.

The way *ken* and kin are so alike.
To know, and
Those by whom you are most known.

Like the way she'd call me *lass*.
With tenderness,
mind.

Mind:
Remember.
Recollect.

How if I'm good, I'm
Not bad.
Can't complain.

I'm up to my *oxters*
In the flow of the words
Speaking back.

So I write a *poem*
About how Dad says it,
poy-im

And how he gave us a *quaich*
On the day we got wed.

It's like *Ritual*
And recitation:
Reciprocating,

Slàinte mhath!
But *what a slaister!*
As words spill

And *tongue* slips
Despite honoring tradition
Above assimilation.

Yet to be mis-*Understood*

Vexes me still...

Haud yer Wheest!
Can you not see the treasure?

X marks the spot and x is
Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
*Ae fareweel, alas, for ever!**

As Rabbie wrote
To *yer wan*.
These words are all
Intimately said.

All biography and memory
Like that time he taught you
How *Dalziel* has a silent **zed**.

*Robert Burns, *Ae Fond Kiss*, 1791