THE POEMS OF ROBERT BURNS

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1. The Death And Dying Words Of Poor Mailie 1783

Death And Dying Words Of Poor Mailie, The Author's Only Pet Yowe

As Mailie, an' her lambs thegither, (together) *Was ae day nibbling on the tether*, (one day) Upon her cloot she coost a hitch. An' owre she warsl'd in the ditch: Molly is nibbling on the tether (attaché) when she threw a hitch (probably un noeud) over her hoof and over she wrestled into the ditch. Molly has got caught up in the rope which is used to tie her up but in struggling to free her hoof she has ended up in the ditch. There, groaning, dying, she did lie, When Hughoc he cam doytin by. Hughhoc came doddering by. To dodder is to move like an old person. Wi' glowrin een, and lifted han's *Poor Hughoc like a statue stan's;* Poor Hughoc stands like a statue with staring eyes and lifted hands He saw her days were near-hand ended, But, wae's my heart! he could na mend it! He saw the end was near for her but more's the pity there was nothing he could do *He gaped wide, but naething spak,* he stood open-mouthed but said nothing At langth poor Mailie silence brak. at length poor Mollie broke the silence

"O thou, whase lamentable face Appears to mourn my woefu' case! You there whose sad face seems to pity/to grieve for my sad/sorrowful predicament My dying words attentive hear, An' bear them to my Master dear. Listen carefully to my dying words and report them/ take them back to my dear master

"Tell him, if e'er again he keep As muckle gear as buy a sheeptell him if ever again he keep as much money to buy a sheep/if ever he has enough money to buy a sheep with O, bid him never tie them mair, command him never tie them more Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair! with wicked strings (made out of) hemp or hair. Horse hair was often used to make string. and hemp is chanvre I think But ca' them out to park or hill, An' let them wander at their will: But drive them out to the parks or hill and let them wander around where they please So may his flock increase, an' grow To scores o' lambs, an' packs o' woo'!

to scores (a score = 20) of lambs and a pack of wool = twelve stones of wool. A pound is about 450g I think but I'm not sure. Fourteen pounds = 1 stone. Well what it means is that if the flock increases it will produce a lot of wool. By the way we say a flock of geese as well.

"Tell him, he was a Master kin',

An' aye was guid to me an' mine;

tell him he was a kind master and always good to me and mine. This expression me and mine which means me and my family is still sometimes used.

An' now my dying charge I gie him, My helpless lambs, I trust them wi' him. And now my dying charge I give him (her charge is her lambs) I trust them with him.

"O, bid him save their harmless lives,
Frae dogs, an' tods, an' butcher's knives!
From dogs and foxes and the butcher's knives
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel';
But give them their fill of good cow's milk until they are fit (old enough/strong enough) to fend for themselves (se débrouiller)
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn,
Wi' taets o' hay an' ripps o' corn.
And heed them (look after) duly evening and morning with small quantities of hay (foin) and handfuls of corn from the sheaf. (gerbe)

"An' may they never learn the gaets, Of ither vile, wanrestfu' petsAnd may they never learn the manners of other vile, dangerous pets To slink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal
To slink (slip) through gaps in the hedges and rob and steal
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail!
from stacks (piles mais stack of hay = meule de foin) or stocks of cabbages
So may they, like their great forbears, For mony a year come thro the shears:
So may they like their great ancestors for many a year come through the shears
So wives will gie them bits o' bread, An' bairns greet for them when they're dead.
so wives will give them pieces of bread and children cry for them when they are dead

"My poor top-lamb, my son an' heir, my poor baby ram, my son and heir *O*, bid him breed him up wi' care! bid him (my master) breed/raise him up with care An' if he live to be a beast, To pit some havins in his breast! And if he lives to be a beast (in the sense ill-mannered; this word is often used of a man who is not very kind = malotru) to put some manners in his breast (heart) "An' warn him-what I winna nameand warn him – what I will not name To stay content wi' yowes at hame; to stay contented with ewes at home An' no to rin an' wear his cloots, *Like ither menseless, graceless brutes.* and not to run and wear out his hooves like other indiscrete, graceless brutes. Grosso modo il faut pas qu'il soit un coureur de jupons

"An' neist, my yowie, silly thing,
Gude keep thee frae a tether string!
And next my little ewe, silly thing, God keep from you a string to tie you up with
O, may thou ne'er forgather up,
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop;
O may you never take up with/frequent with any blasted moorland ram. (Que tu ne fréquentes n'importe qui!)
But aye keep mind to moop an' mell,

Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel'! But always keep in mind to nibble and mix with sheep of credit like yourself. (find someone of your own class)

"And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath, I lea'e my blessin wi' you baith: An' when you think upo' your mither, Mind to be kind to ane anither. And now, my children, with my last breath, I leave my blessing with you both. And when you think upon your mother mind (be careful) to be kind to one another

"Now, honest Hughoc, dinna fail, To tell my master a' my tale; Now, honest H do not fail (make sure) to tell my master all my tale An' bid him burn this cursed tether, An' for thy pains thou'se get my blether." and command/order him to burn this cursed (maudit) tether and for your pains you have got my blether = silly talk

This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head, And clos'd her een amang the dead! Molly turned her head and closed her eyes among the dead

2. Poor Mailie's Elegy 1783

Preliminary observation : this poem is called an elegy but it does not have the classic structure of an elegy. Gray's Elegy for example is in quatrains and uses anapest. This poem is written in the typical Burns Stanza. There are 8 sextains with aaabab rhyme scheme. The a lines have four feet and the b lines two. The stress pattern is mainly iambic.

Mailie is Molly in English and both names are variants of Mary.

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,

To say lament is quite formal and ceremonious and as a general rule the more words are from Romance language the more formal the tone.

Wi' saut tears trickling down your nose; (salty) Our bardie's fate is at a close,

Past a' remead!

However the formal opening is quickly counterbalanced by the very informal image of the salt tears and the use of the word 'bardie'. This implies that the bard is a local figure and is considered with affection. His fate/destiny is sealed/final and beyond all remedy/cure.

The last, sad cape-stane o' his woes; The last sad copestone of his troubles. The copestone = la Pierre de faîte and figuratively it is the summit/height = comble

Poor Mailie's dead!

Every stanza ends with the word dead and an exclamation mark so this gives the impression of the sound of the death knell (le glas) which a bell tolls (verb used for the striking of the bell in a church) in a small community to announce the death of somebody.

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,

That could sae bitter draw the tear, It is not the loss of worldy riches that could provoke such bitter tears. Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear The mourning weed: Or make our drooping/mournful bard wear mourning clothes. Widow's weeds is an

expression you may have come across in Shakespeare and even later writings. Here it has been abbreviated to weed probably for the rhyme scheme. To mourn/grieve *He's lost a friend an' neebor dear*

In Mailie dead.

With the death of Mailie he has lost a dear friend and neighbour.

Thro' a' the town she trotted by him;

A lang half-mile she could descry him;

She trotted by him through all the town and could spot him from a long half-mile away. With the verb trot and then bleat we understand that this elegy is being written for a sheep! This is quite unusual practice as elegies normally philosophise on the sense of existence and the life after death!

Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,

She ran wi' speed:

When she caught sight of him she ran with speed and with kindly bleat. To bleat is the noise a ship makes. We sometimes use it when someone keeps going on and on about something in a self-pitying manner.

A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him, A friend more faithful never came near him. Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,

An' could behave hersel' wi' mense:

I know she was a sensible sheep and could behave herself with good manners.

I'll say't, she never brak a fence,

Thro' thievish greed.

I will say it, she never broke a fence through/from thievish greed. Sheep often try to break a fence to eat the grass on the other side!

Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence

Sin' Mailie's dead.

Since Mailie had died our lonely bard stays in the parlour. This was a best room kept for visitors and formal occasions. The use of a parlour was mainly by poor people. Comes from the French parloir!

Or, if he wanders up the howe, But if he wanders up the hollow Her living image in her yowe her (Mailie's) living image in her ewe (female sheep). This ewe is Mailie's daughter and so the image of her mother. The hollow in the ground is a dénivellation. Comes bleating till him, owre the knowe, the little ewe comes bleating up to him over the knoll. The knoll is une monticule. For bits o' bread; An' down the briny pearls rowe and down the briny = salty; pearls = image for tears; rowe = flow or roll. Comparing tears to pearls is conventional and traditional.

For Mailie dead.

She was nae get o' moorland tips,

She (Mailie) was not bred from any of the moorland rams (daddy sheep). We discover the 'nobility' of Molly. Get here is the dialect abbreviation of to beget = to breed = to reproduce Jesus is God's only begotten son.

Wi' tauted ket, an' hairy hips;

With a matted coat and hairy flanks. Pelage = coat

For her forbears were brought in ships,

Frae 'yont the Tweed.

For her ancestors were brought (to Scotland) in ships from beyond the Tweed.

A bonier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips

A more beautiful fleece never crossed the shears. Sheep are raised for meat but at this time in Scotland the wool industry was very important. The wool on a sheep's back is know as its fleece. The shears were the scissors used to cut the wool. The verb is to shear sheep. However clippers can be used too and the expression is alive and well with nail-clippers. *Than Mailie's dead.*

Wae worth the man wha first did shape

Woe befall/betide the man who first created/made

That vile, wanchancie thing-a raip!

That vile and dangerous thing – a rope!

It maks guid fellows girn an' gape,

Wi' chokin dread;

It makes good fellows grin (here it means make a terrible grimace) and gape (have their mouths wide open) With the dread of choking. The verb choke is often used when one dies at the end of a rope. Strangle can be used too. Notice the alliteration with g and the hard sounds and grisly images of death by hanging. Molly died in an accident with a rope. *An' Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape*

And Robin's bonnet wrap around with crape. Robin is a popular form of diminutive for Robert. Crape is a black silk material and it was always worn for mourning and funerals. At this time too ribbons or bands of black crape were added to one's hat to indicate one was in mourning. Black armbands were also used. *For Mailie dead.*

O, a' ye bards on bonie Doon!
An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
O all you bards on the beautiful Doon (the river) and who tune your bagpipes on (in) Ayr.
Come, join the melancholious croon
Come and join the melancholic croon = low moaning melancholic song or music
O' Robin's reed!
of Robin's
His heart will never get aboonHis heart will never get above/in English get over = recover from
His Mailie's dead!
Burns writes about himself in this poem in the third person.

3. Address To The Deil 1785

O Prince! O chief of many throned Pow'rs That led th' embattl'd Seraphim to war-Milton, Book V1.

The poem opens with a quotation from Milton's Paradise lost. Milton was a deeply religious poet of the seventeenth century at the time of Cromwell.

O Thou! whatever title suit thee-Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie, Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie, Clos'd under hatches, Spairges about the brunstane cootie, To scaud poor wretches!

Burns is talking to the Devil directly and asks him to choose the title which suits him : Horny (because the Devil has horns on his head) or Clootie (because he has cloven feet) or Satan or Nick. He lives in yonder grim and sooty (la suie) cavern under hatches. A hatch is a door allowing access to an underground room. (une trappe) where he is splashing about the pail/bucket of brimstone/ saltpetre in order to scald.

Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,
An' let poor damned bodies be;
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
Ev'n to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
An' hear us squeel!
Hangie = hangman because the Devil can be compared to him = bourreau. Leave poor
damned people alone as it cannot give much pleasure even to a devil to spank and scald poor
dogs like myself and make me squeal!

Great is thy pow'r an' great thy fame;
Far ken'd an' noted is thy name;
An' tho' yon lowin' heuch's thy hame,
Thou travels far;
An' faith! thou's neither lag nor lame,
Nor blate, nor scaur.
Your power is very great as is your notoriety and your name is very well known far and wide.
And although your home is the glowing pit yonder you travel widely. You are neither slow or crippled nor shy nor scared.

Whiles, ranging like a roarin lion, For prey, a' holes and corners tryin; Whiles, on the strong-wind'd tempest flyin, Tirlin the kirks; Whiles, in the human bosom pryin, Unseen thou lurks.

Sometimes you go wandering about like a roaring lion for prey looking in holes and corners; sometimes you go flying on strong wind tempests unroofing the churches and sometimes you lurk (= trainer with evil intention) hidden to pry in the human heart. To pry is to show unhealthy or unwanted curiosity in the affairs of others.

I've heard my rev'rend graunie say, In lanely glens ye like to stray; Or where auld ruin'd castles grey Nod to the moon, Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way, Wi' eldritch croon.

I have heard my revered grandmother say that you like to roam around in lonely glens or where old grey ruined castles nod to the moon.

When twilight did my graunie summon, To say her pray'rs, douse, honest woman! Aft'yont the dyke she's heard you bummin, Wi' eerie drone;

When twilight used to summon my grandmother to say her prayers – sober honest woman – off beyond the dyke she heard you humming with an eerie drone (long moan) *Or, rustlin, thro' the boortrees comin, Wi' heavy groan.*

Or rustling and coming through the elder trees with a heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night, The stars shot down wi' sklentin light, Wi' you, mysel' I gat a fright, Ayont the lough; Ye, like a rash-buss, stood in sight, Wi' wavin' sough.

I, myself got a fright with you one dreary, windy, winter's night when the stars were shooting down with slanting light beyond the loch (lake, expanse of natural water). You stood in sight (before me) with a waving sigh like a clump of rushes. (rush = Roseau) A clump = a group when speaking of trees or bushes.

The cudgel in my nieve did shake, Each brist'ld hair stood like a stake, When wi' an eldritch, stoor "quaick, quaick," Amang the springs, Awa ye squatter'd like a drake, On whistlin' wings.

I shook the cudgel (a thick wooden stick used to defend oneself) in my fist and the hair on my arms bristled and stood up like stakes (épieux). When with a hideous, stern : "quack, quack" among the springs (waters) you flapped away like a drake on whistling wings. (to flap is the movement and noise birds make with their wings)

Let warlocks grim, an' wither'd hags, Tell how wi' you, on ragweed nags, They skim the muirs an' dizzy crags, Wi' wicked speed; And in kirk-yards renew their leagues, Owre howkit dead.

Let grim warlocks and withered (flétri) hags (disagreeable and ugly old women) tell you how they skim over the moors and dizzy crags (falaises étourdissantes) on ragwort broomsticks (ragwort is a poisonous plant and a nag is strictly speaking a horse so one has to interpret the line in the context.) with great speed and how they renew their covenants in the churchyards over the dug-up dead bodies. Witches were supposed to meet in groups for various ritual deeds. This was known as a witches' coven. They were said to make agreements to do bad deeds together which were called covenants or leagues and of course they would do this by digging up some dead bodies.

Thence countra wives, wi' toil and pain, May plunge an' plunge the kirn in vain; For oh! the yellow treasure's ta'en By witchin' skill; An' dawtit, twal-pint hawkie's gane As yell's the bill.

Thence = de là the country women with toil and pain may plunge and plunge the churn (baratte) all to no purpose because the yellow treasure (cheese) has been charmed away by witches' magic and crazed hawky (a white-faced cow) who produces twelve pints of milk has gone as barren as the bull. Her milk has dried up. The making of cheese carried many superstitions and when the cheese failed to take it was often blamed on the supernatural.

Thence mystic knots mak great abuse On young guidmen, fond, keen an' crouse, When the best wark-lume i' the house, By cantrip wit, Is instant made no worth a louse, Just at the bit.

The Scots produced fine wool and so the profession of weaver was a very common trade. Here the black magic has made problems for the weavers.

Mystic knots deceive young goodmen, who are silly, lively and cheerful when the best work loom in the house through magic charms/spells is in an instant made as useless/worthless as a louse right at the critical moment. The poor weavers have been weaving away happily but at the critical moment I suppose when they have to move the loom the threads are all mingled and knotted.

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord, An' float the jinglin' icy boord, Then water-kelpies haunt the foord, By your direction, And 'nighted trav'llers are allur'd To their destruction.

When the thaw (dégel) melts the snowy hoard (expanse of snow) and the jingling icy board begins to float (with the melting the ice plates look like boards and they make noise as they move, probably one against the other). At the moment the water Kelpies (spirits) haunt the fiord under your orders and night travellers are enticed to their destruction. The disappearance of travellers at night was often attributed to supernatural intervention.

And aft your moss-traversin Spunkies Decoy the wight that late an' drunk is: The bleezin, curst, mischievous monkies Delude his eyes, Till in some miry slough he sunk is, Ne'er mair to rise.

And often your will o the wisps (feux follets) crossing the moss (tourbe) deceive the man who is late and drunk. The blazing, cursed mischievous monkeys delude his eyes (blind him) until he is sunk in some muddy swamp from which he will never rise again!

When masons' mystic word an' grip In storms an' tempests raise you up, Some cock or cat your rage maun stop, Or, strange to tell! The youngest brither ye wad whip Aff straught to hell. This verse is probably a reference to Freemasons. He says that when they call up the Devil in storms and tempests through mystical incantation and mystical grip (the Masons have secret hand signs) they have to sacrifice a cock or cat to stop the devil's rage or as a sign of appeasement otherwise the devil would whip straight off the hell the youngest member of the fraternity.

Lang syne in Eden's bonie yard, When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd, An' all the soul of love they shar'd, The raptur'd hour, Sweet on the fragrant flow'ry swaird, In shady bower;^1

Long ago in the lovely garden of Eden when the youthful lovers first paired off they shared off the soul of love, the raptured hour. They were sweet on the fragrant flowery stretch of grass in the shaded bower.

Here is the author's footnote to this verse

[Footnote 1: The verse originally ran: "Lang syne, in Eden's happy scene When strappin Adam's days were green, And Eve was like my bonie Jean, My dearest part, A dancin, sweet, young handsome quean, O' guileless heart."]

Then you, ye auld, snick-drawing dog!

Ye cam to Paradise incog,

Then you came along, you old hatch-opening dog, you came to Paradise incognito (in disguise)

An' play'd on man a cursed brogue,
(Black be your fa'!)
And played a dirty trick on man. Black be your portion. = Damn you. I wish you bad luck.
An' gied the infant warld a shog,
'Maist rui'd a'.
And you gave the infant world a shock and almost ruined everything.

D'ye mind that day when in a bizz Wi' reekit duds, an' reestit gizz, Ye did present your smoutie phiz 'Mang better folk, An' sklented on the man of Uzz Your spitefu' joke?

The poet now continues with other biblical incidents that the devil is responsible for. Job was the man of Uz who had many possessions but he was faithful to the Lord. The Devil suggested to God that if Job lost everything he would be sure to lose his faith. God agreed to test Job's faith and so everything was taken from him, however he did not lose his faith. Do you remember that day when in a bustle with smoking clothes on and a scorched wig you presented your smutty face among better folk and slanted (played) your spiteful joke on the man of Uz?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
An' brak him out o' house an hal',
While scabs and botches did him gall,
Wi' bitter claw;
An' lows'd his ill-tongu'd wicked scaul',
Was warst ava?
Continues with the torments of Job.
And how you got him in your spell and broke him out of house and home (Burns house and

hall) while scabs and blotches did gall him. A scab = croûte sur une blessure et blothes = les rougeurs suite à une allérgie. To gall = to torment someone, to annoy very intensely

But a' your doings to rehearse, Your wily snares an' fechtin fierce, Sin' that day Michael^2 did you pierce, Down to this time, Wad ding a Lallan tounge, or Erse, In prose or rhyme.

However to rehearse = to go over all your doings (agissements) your wily snares (pièges) and fierce fighting since the day you pierced Michael (the good Archangel who defeated Lucifer) down to the present time there would not be enough words in lowland Scots or the Erse language for prose or rhyme.

An' now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin, A certain bardie's rantin, drinkin, Some luckless hour will send him linkin To your black pit; But faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin, An' cheat you yet.

And now old cloven feet, I know what you are thinking, a certain bard is drinking and ranting (speaking nonsense) and some unfortunate time will send him tripping (going) along to your black pit. But Faith! He'll dodge around a corner and cheat you yet! To cheat = to get the better of

But fare-you-weel, auld Nickie-ben! So farewell old Nick (in hell = his home possibly) O wad ye tak a thought an' men'! O if only you would think about men Ye aiblins might-I dinna ken-Stil hae a stake: You perhaps might, I do not know, still have a stake. Perhaps this means still have a chance or a claim?

I'm wae to think up' yon den, Ev'n for your sake! I am not very happy to think about yonder den= hell even for your sake!

4. Death And Doctor Hornbook 1785

First of all here is an extract from the Burn's site which tells you the background information. This poem has some footnotes by Burns so I've put them in as well because in my Penguin edition of the poems I have nothing except a glossary at the back.

Wilson, John (c. 1751 — 1839)

Burns's 'Dr Hornbook' was the son of a Glasgow weaver. He was at Glasgow University in 1769, taught first at Craigie Ayrshire, and in 1781 was appointed schoolmaster at Tarbolton. (A 'hornbook' - a sheet of paper carrying the alphabet, digits, the Lord's Prayer, and elements of spelling, mounted on wood and covered by a protective plate of transparent horn — was in common use in primary schools until the close of the eighteenth century.) Gilbert Burns recorded that to eke out a scanty living, Wilson opened up a grocers shop, where he also sold a few medicines, and offered advice 'in common disorders' gratis. It was this diversification of his interests, indeed, that ultimately led the parishioners to accuse him of neglect, and to demand his replacement. Because of this, and also because while Clerk to the Kirk Session he quarrelled with his superior, the Reverend Dr Patrick Wodrow, Wilson left Tarbolton in 1792. When Burns and his family moved to Lochlea in 1784, it was Wilson who, as Session Clerk, signed the 'certificate of character' required by the church law of the time. Burns obtained the inspiration for 'Death and Dr Hornbook' upon listening to Wilson airing his medical knowledge at a meeting of Tarbolton Masonic Lodge, of which Wilson was secretary from 1782 to 1787. The satire, however, was not written until after Burns had left Tarbolton. Though Wilson had no reason to feel kindly towards Burns, he seems to have borne the poet no ill-will. (Lockhart's story of the poem forcing Wilson to close his shop seems to be pure fiction!)

Some books are lies frae end to end, some books are lies from one end to the other And some great lies were never penn'd: and some huge lies have never been written (down) Ev'n ministers they hae been kenn'd, Even ministers (of the church not the government) they have been known In holy rapture, in a holy rapture (to be carried away probably by their sermon) A rousing whid at times to vend, to sell a rousing fib/lie at times. From the French verb to sell we have : vending machine (at railway stations) and vendor = a seller although this word is now very rarely used. And nail't wi' Scripture. and support it with references to the Scriptures. (the Bible) To nail something = clouer A fib is a less serious lie. It could be that when people get carried away they tend to embroider the truth.

But this that I am gaun to tell,
Which lately on a night befell,
But this that I am going to tell you about which happened lately one night. But what I'm going to tell you about happened lately one night.
Is just as true's the Deil's in hell
Or Dublin city:
Is just as true as the Devil is in hell or in Dublin city. Dublin had a particularly bad reputation

but the remark also reflects perhaps Scottish protestant distrust of Irish catholics. *That e'er he nearer comes oursel' 'S a muckle pity.* That if ever he (the Devil) comes nearer to ourselves it would be a great pity.

The clachan yill had made me canty, I was na fou, but just had plenty; The hamlet ale had made me merry I was not mad drunk but I had just had quite a bit/plenty I stacher'd whiles, but yet too tent aye To free the ditches; I was soon staggering but yet I always paid attention to avoid the ditches (fosses) An' hillocks, stanes, an' bushes, kenn'd eye Frae ghaists an' witches. I could still distinguish hillocks, stones and bushes from ghosts and witches. Kenned = knew

The rising moon began to glowre The distant Cunnock hills out-owre: The rising moon began to stare out over the distant hills of Cunnock To count her horns, wi' a my pow'r, I set mysel'; I set myself to/I started counting her horns (les cornes de la lune!) with all my power/might/strength But whether she had three or four, I cou'd na tell. But whether she had three or four I could not say. The poet is saying on the one hand that he

But whether she had three or four I could not say. The poet is saying on the one hand that he was not drunk but in telling us how he was walking and what he was doing we have a picture of someone who is very drunk!!

I was come round about the hill,

An' todlin down on Willie's mill,

I had come round the hill and I was toddling (when we use toddle for an adult it is more like walking casually at one's own speed. A synonym here could be strolling) down towards Willy's mill. Setting my staff wi' a' my skill, Setting my staff (down on the ground) with all my skill. A staff = crosse To keep me sicker; In order to keep myself steady Tho' leeward whiles, against my will, I took a bicker.

Although whilst leeward (sous le vent) I took a short run against my will.

I there wi' Something did forgather, It was there that I met up with something That pat me in an eerie swither; that put me in an eerie (sinister) hesitation/doubt An' awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouther, It had an awful scythe (fauche) (sticking) out over one shoulder Clear-dangling, hang; clearly dangling, it (the scythe) hang. To dangle = pendouiller surtout dans l'air A three-tae'd leister on the ither a three-toed (three-pronged; à trios dents) fish spear (trident) on the other (shoulder) Lay, large an' lang. lay/rested long and large. It is the trident which is long and large. Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,

It seemed to stand as tall as two Scotch ells. An ell was a Scottish measure of 37 inches. so that makes 72 inches. 12 inches is a foot so that makes 6 feet. 1m80 about. *The queerest shape that e'er I saw,* The queerest (strangest, oddest) shape that I have ever seen *For fient a wame it had ava;* For not a belly did it have at all *And then its shanks, They were as thin, as sharp an' sma'* And then its shanks (legs) were as thin, as sharp and small *As cheeks o' branks.* as cheeks of a kind of wooden curb for horses. Alors là mes amis je suis incapable de m'en faire une idée à quoi cela ressemble.

"Guid-een," quo' I; "Friend! hae ye been mawin,
Good evening quoth I/said I; "Friend have you been mowing" (to mow = tondre)
When ither folk are busy sawin!"
When other people/folk are busy sowing (this means they met when it is the time of year to sow seeds (semer les graines) which is why he asks the question
It seem'd to make a kind o' stan'
But naething spak;
It seemed to make a kind of stand but did not say anything
At length, says I, "Friend! whare ye gaun?
Will ye go back?"
At length I spoke, Friend! Where are you going? Will you go back.

But be na fley'd."
It spoke in a right hollow voice "My name is death but do not be scared/frightened -Quoth I, "Guid faith,
Ye're maybe come to stap my breath;
Said I, Good God, maybe you have come to stop me breathing
But tent me, billie;
But mark me, man/but listen carefully to me man
I red ye weel, tak care o' skaith
I advise you (well) to take care of (possible) damage (danger)
See, there's a gully!"
Look , there is a gulley

"Gudeman," quo' he, "put up your whittle,
I'm no designed to try its mettle;
Good man, quoth he put your knife away, I'm not conçu to try it's mettle/ardour (I suppose because it is not possible to kill death.)
But if I did, I wad be kittle
To be mislear'd;
But if I did (try its mettle I would be ticklish/sensitive to be unmannerly. I would be sensitive about being ill mannered
I wad na mind it, no that spittle
Out-owre my beard."
I would not mind it, not that spittle (saliva) out over my beard. I think, but I'm not sure, what

this means is that if the drunk tried to attack Death with the knife then the only result would be Death spitting saliva on his beard. Presumably death does not have any blood! Death does not really want to be rude. Spitting in public was of course ill-mannered. "Weel, weel!" says I, "a bargain be't;
Well, well, says I let that be a bargain Come, gie's your hand, an' sae we're gree't;
Come give me your hand and say we are agreed on it We'll ease our shanks an tak a seatWe'll rest our legs and take a seat/sit down Come, gie's your news;
Come on give me your news This while ye hae been mony a gate, At mony a house."
Lately you have been at many a gate and at many a house. (An epidemical fever was then raging in that country. - R.B.)

"Ay, ay!" quo' he, an' shook his head, "It's e'en a lang, lang time indeed Sin' I began to nick the thread, An' choke the breath:

Yes, yes quoth he and shook his head, "It's even a long, long time indeed since I began to sever the thread and choke the breath out (of people). This is an allusion to Greek mythology. (les, Morias ou Keras

filles de Zeus et Thémis : Clotho, Lachesis et Atropos (celle qui coupe le fil de la vie) *Folk maun do something for their bread,* People must do something to earn their living

An' sae maun Death.

And so must Death

"Sax thousand years are near-hand fled Sin' I was to the butching bred,

Nearly six thousand years have gone by (flee/fled/fled = fuir, s'enfuir) since I was trained in the butchery (trade). To butcher = charcuter. To be bred to something = raised, brought up to be

An' mony a scheme in vain's been laid,

To stap or scar me;

And many a scheme (plan) has been laid (tramé) in vain (to no avail, uselessly) to stop or scare me.

Till ane Hornbook's ta'en up the trade,

And faith! he'll waur me.

Until one Hornbrook has taken up (adopted) the trade, and my goodness he will get the better of me.

[This gentleman, Dr. Hornbook, is professionally a brother of the sovereign Order of the Ferula; but, by intuition and inspiration, is at once an apothecary, surgeon, and physician. - R.B.] Footnote by Robert Burns himself

"Ye ken Hornbook i' the clachan,

Deil mak his king's-hood in spleuchan!

You know Hornbrook in the hamlet. The Devil make his scrotum out of a tobacco pouch! Normally the king's-hood is the second stomach in a ruminant. spleuchan = blague à tabac *He's grown sae weel acquaint wi' Buchan And ither chaps*,

Footnote: Burchan's Domestic Medicine. - R.B. He has become so well acquainted with Buchan and other chaps. (men, fellows)

The weans haud out their fingers laughin, An' pouk my hips. The children hold out their fingers laughing and poke my hips.

"See, here's a scythe, an' there's dart, They hae pierc'd mony a gallant heart; Look at these: here's a scythe and there's a dart (flechette) and they have pierced many a gallant heart But Doctor Hornbook, wi' his art An' cursed skill, Has made them baith no worth a f-t, With his art (knowledge) and cursed (maudit) skill has made them both not worth a fart. (un pet)! This is the first time I have seen this word, apart from Chaucer in a poem. Damn'd haet they'll kill! Damned thing (nothing) they will kill. or Damn all they will kill now!

"'Twas but yestreen, nae farther gane,

I threw a noble throw at ane; It was only yesterday evening, no further gone. Why no sooner than yesterday evening. I threw a noble throw at one. I took a good shot at someone. Wi'less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain;

With less than that I'm sure I've killed hundreds. (to slay = to kill; slain is the past participle. *But deil-ma-care, It just play'd dirl on the bane,*

But did nae mair.

But devil may care, it just played a vibration on the bone but did no more. It had no more effect than a vibration on the bone.

"Hornbook was by, wi' ready art, An' had sae fortify'd the part, That when I looked to my dart, It was sae blunt, Fient haet o't wad hae pierc'd the heart Of a kail-runt.

Hornbrook was there with such skill at the ready and he had so fortified (made stronger) the part (the place where the dart had landed) that when I looked at my dart, it was blunt (émoussé, plus trenchant) not one of it (not a bit of it) would have pierced the heart of the stem of a colewort. A colewort is a cabbage which does not have a heart!) He probably means the heart of a cabbage stump in this instance. It is not that important.

"I drew my scythe in sic a fury, I near-hand cowpit wi' my hurry, But yet the bauld Apothecary Withstood the shock; I drew my scythe in such a fury that I almost tumbled (fell over) with/in my hurry/haste nevertheless the bold apothecary withstood (a tenu) the shock I might as weel hae tried a quarry O' hard whin rock.

I might as well have tried a cut ? out of hard furze (jonc) rock. I am far from sure of the exact sense here.

"Ev'n them he canna get attended, Even them (the people) he cannot attend to Altho' their face he ne'er had kenn'd it, although their face never had kenned it= although he has never seen their face before (asks the people to ...) Just sh-- in a kail-blade, an' send it, As soon's he smells 't, Baith their disease, and what will mend it, At once he tells 't. Just shit in a cabbage/colewort leaf and send it (to him) (And) as soon as he smells it, he at once can tell both their disease and what will cure it. (To mend/repair/fix/make better)

"And then, a' doctor's saws an' whittles, Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles, A' kind o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles, He's sure to hae; Their Latin names as fast he rattles as A B C.

And then all doctor's saws and knives of all dimensions, shapes, and metals, all kinds of boxes, mugs (chopes) and bottles he is sure to have. He rattles off (recite) their latin names as easily as ABC. Expression we use a lot is as easy as ABC.

"Calces o' fossils, earths, and trees; True sal-marinum o' the seas; The farina of beans an' pease, He has't in plenty; Aqua-fontis, what you please, He can content ye.

I cannot find calces so maybe Burns has invented this word as pseudo-scientific for fun. True sal-marinum = salt from the sea. Farina = ground powder of bean and peas he has (all of that) in plenty. Aqua-fontis spring or fountain water, whatever you want he can content/provide you with it

"Forbye some new, uncommon weapons, besides (etc.) Urinus spiritus of capons; essence d'urine des chapons Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings, Distill'd per se; or copeaux, limaille, raclures de la corne d'acarians distilled per se = essentially Sal-alkali o' midge-tail clippings, alkaline salt of les pelures de la queue de moucheron And mony mae." and much more

"Waes me for Johnie Ged's Hole now,"
Quoth I, "if that thae news be true!
I'm very sorrowful/sorry for Johnny Ged's Hole now, quoth I, "if (that) these (this) news be (is) true. Hole probably means Place in this context.
His braw calf-ward whare gowans grew,
Sae white and bonie,
His very fine calf enclosure where daisies grew so white and lovely
Nae doubt they'll rive it wi' the plew;
They'll ruin Johnie!"
No doubt they will destroy it/tear it up with the plough. They will ruin Johnny. Johnny's place is probably near the observed and if Horphook keeps killing nearly.

is probably near the churchyard and if Hornbook keeps killing people, more land will be needed to bury the dead so they will plough up Johnny's land and he will be ruined because he won't have any pasture for his calves. Johnny Ged is the gravedigger = fossoyeur

The creature grain'd an eldritch laugh,

The creature let out/emitted a strange laugh And says "Ye needna yoke the pleugh, Kirkyards will soon be till'd eneugh, And says, "You do not need to set the plough to work churchyards will be tilled (labouré) soon enough Tak ye nae fear: take you no fear = make no mistake about that They'll be trench'd wi' mony a sheugh, They will have trenches with many a ditch In twa-three year. in twice three years.

"Whare I kill'd ane, a fair strae-death,
Where I have killed one, a good natural (bed) death
By loss o' blood or want of breath
By loss of blood or lack of breath
This night I'm free to tak my aith,
That Hornbook's skill
This night I'm free to take my oath/to swear that H's skill
Has clad a score i' their last claith,
Has dressed (at least implicitly) twenty in their last cloth. (suaire = winding sheet or cloth)
By drops (gouttes) and pills

"An honest wabster to his trade, Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel-bred Gat tippence-worth to mend her head, An honest weaver in his trade, whose wife had two fists which were scarcely well-bred = a woman who was hitting her husband probably, got tuppence worth to mend/to cure her head *When it was sair;* when it was sore/hurting *The wife slade cannie to her bed,* She slid carefully into her bed *But ne'er spak mair.* but never spoke more = she never spoke another word The implication is that the weaver got rid of his aggressive wife by supplying her with one of Hornbook's 'remedies' for headaches.

"A country laird had ta'en the batts, A country lord got a bout of colic Or some curmuring in his guts, or some rumbling in his guts (tripes) His only son for Hornbook sets, Son fils unique s'en va chez Hornbook An' pays him well: The lad, for twa guid gimmer-pets, The lad for (the price of) two good two-year old ewes Was laird himsel'. was lord himself = had now himself become the lord. Implication is that the son got his father killed off in order to take his place!

"A bonie lass-ye kenn'dd her namea lovely girl – you knew her name Some ill-brewn drink had hov'd her wame; some badly brewed (brassé) drink had swollen her belly She trusts hersel', to hide the shame, In Hornbook's care; She trusts herself/places herself in Hornbook's care to hide the shame. This suggests that the girl was in fact pregnant. Horn sent her aff to her lang hame, To hide it there. Horn sent her off to her long home to hide it there. Her home in the after life therefore long and she was indeed able to hide her shame there!

"That's just a swatch o' Hornbook's way;
That's just a sample of H's manner
Thus goes he on from day to day,
Thus does he poison, kill, an' slay, an'= and
An's weel paid for't;
and he is well paid for that
Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey,
but he deprives me of my lawful prey (proie)
Wi' his damm'd dirt:
with his dammed dirt (filth). Dirt is referring to all the potions etc.

"But, hark! I'll tell you of a plot, Tho' dinna ye be speakin o't;
But listen! I'll tell you about a scheme, though do not you be speaking of it = don't you tell anyone about it I'll nail the self-conceited sot, As dead's a herrin;
I'll nail (coincer) the self-conceited idiot as dead as a herring Neist time we meet, I'll wad a groat, Next time we meet I'll bet you a groat (fourpence) He gets his fairin!"
that he gets his reward!

But just as he began to tell, The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell The old church hammer struck the bell Some wee short hour ayont the twal', some small short time beyond the twelve (So it is one o'clock in the morning) Which rais'd us baith: Which raised us both; which got us back up on our feet I took the way that pleas'd mysel', And sae did Death. And so did Death.

We do not get to hear the plan Death was going to employ to defeat his rival Dr Hornbook!

5. Holy Willie's Prayer 1785

You will find biographical information about this poem on the Burns site suggested on this forum. The Holy Willie who emerges in this monologue to God is very far from holy. Burns makes fun of the fundamental tenets of Calvinism : Original Sin, Predestination and Election. He also shows how Holy Willie is a man with the same temptations of the flesh as any other man; only in his case the recognition of his own weakness does not make him any more indulgent to the weakness of others. Towards the end of the poem he implores the "good" God to inflict all sorts of injury on his enemies. Forgiveness, compassion and empathy are not prominent in Willie's character!

stanza 1

dost dwell = do live wha = who thysel' = thyself = yourself ane = one (person is implicit)

A' = all

no = not guid or ill = good or bad deeds/acts is implicit

The first verse shows the idea of Predestination which means that God has already chosen even before, or as soon as a person is conceived, whether the person will be saved or condemned. The concept of Predestination developed by the Calvinists rejects the idea which remained prevalent in the Catholic tradition that one could do good works to earn one's place in Paradise.

stanza 2

matchless = who has no equal, no counterpart. To match a performance is to do as well as. He praises God for choosing him whilst thousands of others are left in the dark. He considers himself as one of the Chosen, the Elect.

Willie is ready to receive gifts and grace and compares himself to a burning and shining light to all this place. Place referring to his local community. We can say that humility and modesty are not exactly strong points.

stanza 3

generation = ancestors sic = such

wha = who

'fore = before

Here Willie makes an attempt at humility and refers to Original Sin. When God created Adam and Eve they were in the Garden of Eden and allowed to do whatever they wanted except eat from the Tree of Knowledge. One day a snake came by (Satan) and he tempted Eve to eat from the tree. She tempted Adam and so both were condemned by God to toil on the earth and for the woman to bear children in great suffering. God said he would send a Saviour in the form of his own son in order to redeem this sin and allow man to enter the kingdom of Heaven. One of the consequences of this doctrine was to believe that children were born bad. Rousseau created a bombshell effect when he declared that children were born naturally good. The battle is still waging between the two camps!!

stanza 4

frae my mither's womb = from my mother's womb

to gnash my gums = grincer mes gencives. Throughout the Bible one finds the phrase : gnashing of teeth. When people are very distressed and being punished they do this. Gnash means to snap the teeth together. Burns could be using gums here to imply that Willie no longer has teeth! I cannot swear to this though.

to wail = to cry in lamentation

burning lakes = reference to Hell

chain'd to their stakes = attachés à leur poteaux

stanza 5

But Willie is convinced that he belongs to 'a chosen sample'

Compares himself to a pillar (pilier) as strong as a rock in God's temple. He is a guide, a buckler = small shield from the French word bouclier and an example to all God's flock. God and especially Jesus is often compared to the shepherd and all the people he has in his care as his flock (les brebis). Remember flock is the collective noun for sheep and birds.

stanza 6

Willie now boasts about his religious zeal and strength which keep him from sin. He does not drink, swear (utiliser des gros mots), sing and dance with great and small. (Great and Small is an expression to designate the ranks of society.) Keepit = kept free frae = from them a' = all these sins by thy fear = through fear (of offending you). Offending is implied.

stanza 7

We now come to Willie's confession

At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust = I am sometimes bothered with the lusts of the flesh (la lubricité de la chair)

and as he is in the world the bad side expresses itself = the vile self gets in. I think the sense of remembers here is probably reminds. God reminds us that one is dust and defiled in sin.

stanza 8

Yestreen = yesterday evening, thou kens, you know; wi' Meg = with Meg

and Willie asks for pardon

may't ne'er be a livin' plague to my dishonour = may there never be a baby born (plague = peste) otherwise he will be dishonoured and lose his reputation.

An' I'll ne'er lift a lawless leg again upon her = I promise I will not have unlawful sex with her.

One vulgar expression for having sex still survives "to get one's leg over" is quite common. stanza 9

He has also sinned with Lizzie's lass (daughter).

I maun allow = I must admit

three times I trow-I confess

He excuses himself by saying that he was mad that day or otherwise thou kens = you know that your true servant

wad never steer her = would never stir her. To stir is to arouse in this context or to sexually excite.

stanza 10

Willie suggests that maybe God has given him sexual urges as a test in case Willie should become over high and proud of the fact that he is a chosen sample and therefore destined to go to Heaven! If this is the case Willie must endure the will of God until God decides otherwise.

e'en be borne = be endured

stanza 11

This leads Willie back to thinking about the chosen people of whom he is of course one. He starts to curse the people who attack the church elders.

To confound = here it is the meaning of curse their stubborn face and following on with blast confirms this idea. We say blast you! blast them! still today although it has lost its initial impact. Maudit soit le nom de ceux qui déshonorent tes prêtres (elders). To disgrace and to shame in public are synonymous. This repetition with synonyms is a typical feature of English in general and even more employed in poetry. Last will and testament, cold and chilly etc.

stanza 12

Willie takes this opportunity to remind God of just such a man who disgraces and shames and his name is Gawn = Gavin Hamilton. He asks the Lord to give some thought to this man's punishment. (just deserts = correct/right punishment). Willie describes the character of the man he is supposed to be condemning but of course Burns makes Willie say things about the man which are most appealing to the reader of the poem! He drinks, swears, and plays cards nevertheless he has so many winning ways with great and small that he has stolen the hearts of the people all away from God's own priest (i.e. Willie). Willie cannot understand why people should prefer Gavin to himself, a priest!

stanza 13

we chasten'd = chastened = to purify through punishment therefore = for all the above mentioned sins

he bred sic a splore = he created such an uproar/frolic

as set the world in a roar O laughin' at us = he made everybody in the world roar with laughing at us

So Willie asks God if he would curse his basket = panier! Probably means his wealth as it is followed by store = what he has in stock and his cabbage and his potatoes!

stanza 14

Willie has just revealed how petty-minded he is but now he is roused so he goes on to ask for divine punishment to be heaped upon the presbytery of Ayr. He asks God to bear his right hand upon the heads of the people in that parish. weigh it down = make it heavy and dinna spare = do not spare = ne pas épargner la force to punish them for their misdeeds. A misdeed = a wrong doing = a sin = a bad action etc.

stanza 15

Willie would especially like retribution to fall upon glib-tongued Aiken who is obviously a rival. To be glib-tongued is to find it easy to speak very well and fluently about something but it also the sense of 'smooth' so it is not quite a compliment. Just to think about how the elders were reduced to sweating, shaking, quaking and pissed with (vulgar = filled with) dread = fear whilst Aiken held up his head and spoke with words which made people listen and hang onto. However Willie calls Aiken 'snakin'" talking like a snake? The meaning is not exactly crystal clear in these lines.

stanza 16

He calls upon the Lord to employ vengeance against not only Aiken but also the people who employed him; to show no mercy; to ignore their prayers; and for the sake of the 'Chosen People' such as Willie to destroy them with no exceptions!!

stanza 17

After asking God to perform all these extremely kind acts upon others Willie remembers himself again and asks God to give him temporal and divine mercies. That I for gear and grace may shine. This line mirrors the one before gear = worldly or temporal wealth and grace = divine wealth. He would also like all this wealth to be excelled (surpassed) by nane = no other person. If God accepts then all the glory shall be his! Amen.

This last verse is also an attack on the Calvinist precept which claims that people who are blessed with wealth and material goods have been sent a sign of their "election" by God to Heaven!

"One of Burns's most telling poems, and perhaps the greatest satire in European literature. The model for the poet's godly hypocrite was William Fisher. *See* Fisher, William. It was first printed anonymously in an 8 page pamphlet in 1789, along with 'quotations from the Presbyterian Eloquence'. Burns uses a local character and a local incident — the affair of

Gavin Hamilton and the Presbytery of Ayr — to produce a poem universal in its implications."

Fisher, William (1737 — 1809)

Prototype of 'Holy Willie' was the son of Andrew Fisher, farmer at Montgarswood, Mauchline. William Fisher farmed with his father, and at the age of 35 was chosen elder of the parish. He was, it seems, assiduous in his duties so far as visiting the sick and the aged went, but he lacked what has been called 'a sense of Christian forbearance.' At any rate, it was thought to be on his instigation that the minister and kirk session of Mauchline instituted proceedings against Gavin Hamilton for an alleged failure to observe the Sabbath in what the kirk session deemed a proper manner. As Gavin Hamilton was a much valued friend of Burns, the poet turned his satirical powers against Fisher in 'Holy Willie's Prayer' and the 'Epitaph on Holy Willie' and 'the Kirk's Alarm'.

In a note which Burns later prefixed to 'Holy Willie's Prayer', for Glenriddell, the poet described him as 'a rather oldish bachelor elder in the parish of Mauchline, and much and justly famed for that polemical chattering which ends in tipplin orthodoxy, and for that spirtualised bawdry which refines to liquourish devotion.'

He was, in fact, husband to Jean Hewatson, who bore him several children. But of his narrowness, the persecution of the liberal minded Hamilton is abundant evidence. As Snyder puts it: 'When men like Fisher represented the temporal power of orthodox Calvinism, it was small wonder that rebels against the establishment were easy to find; or that a rebel like Burns, embittered by personal humiliation and the treatment of his friend Hamilton, should have broken forth in derisive mockery.'

In spite of Burns's feelings on the Hamilton case, however, the remarkable thing is that 'Holy Willie's Prayer' never descends to abuse, or softens to farce. The character drawing is firm and consistent, and the self important, insignificant little church elder of Mauchline becomes the prototype of hypocrisy itself in what is perhaps the greatest satire against that vice written in any European tongue.

Fisher himself, however, fell from grace. On 14th October 1790, he stood before the 81 year old 'Daddy' Auld to receive a rebuke for drunkenness, a harangue which the minister preserved in his book of rebukes, and which ended: 'Be upon your guard in all time coming against this bewitching sin, shun bad company, avoid taverns as much as possible, and abhor the character of a tippler. Abstain carefully from strong drink, and from everything that may intoxicate and injure you; and withal seek wisdom from heaven to guide you, and grace to enable you to walk steadfastly in ways of sobriety and holiness all your days.'

Posterity has doubted whether or not Fisher was, in fact, granted either of these lines of wisdom. In 'The Kirk's Alarm', which appeared in 1790, Burns makes a clear accusation of embezzlement:

"Holy Will, Holy Will, There was wit I' your skull, When ye pilfered the alms o' the poor; The timmer is scant, When ye're ta'en for a saunt, Wha should swing in a rape for an hour."

In 1834, when Fisher had been 21 years dead, the somewhat unreliable Allan Cunningham made a definite accusation of pilfering from an alms box out of Burns's stanza. Other

biographers, including Chambers, followed suit. No evidence to support such a charge has ever been found. However, Fisher froze to death in a ditch on a snowy night in February 1809."

Hamilton, Gavin (1751 — 1805)

The dedicatee of the Kilmarnock Edition was the 5th son of John Hamilton of Kype by his first wife, Jacobina Young. His father was a lawyer, clerk to the regality of Mauchline. He bought the tower known as the Castle of Mauchline, but later sold it and leased it back from the Earl of Loudon. Gavin entered his father's office, but soon set up in practice on his own. When, in 1771, the Kirk Session made a move to suppress begging by discontinuing the giving of alms to travelling professional beggars, they set up a special fund to relieve the genuine poor, which was to be a stent of a penny in the pound of the valued rent. 4 years later, Gavin Hamilton was appointed collector of stent. By 1778, however, Daddy Auld was finding it inconvenient to his Auld Licht conscience to have a New Licht official functioning for him, and there followed one of those sordid Kirk intrigues particularly rife in Scotland at this time. Auld persuaded the kirk session to stigmatise Hamilton as having been in default by £6 2 shillings and 2d halfpenny whilst stent collector. Hamilton ignored this move, so Auld stopped the parochial distribution of money to the poor on the grounds that the necessary money was being fraudulently retained by Hamilton. Hamilton's case was teat it had never been collected, because those from whom it was due could not pay. Legal action followed, and the Kirk Session apparently lost. So Auld altered the line of his attack. He convened the Kirk Session roll 2 weeks earlier than usual. The customary warning to non-attenders was issued, among others, to Hamilton. But the recorded minutes of the meeting show beyond doubt that Hamilton was the target of their aggression. He, however, got sight of the minutes, and struck back sharply with a protest. The row developed, and Hamilton appealed to the Presbytery of Ayr. He appeared before them on 25th June 1785, charged with:

- 1. Unnecessary absences from church two Sabbaths in December and three Sabbaths in January together.
- 2. Setting out on a journey to Carrick on the third Sabbath in January.
- 3. Habitual if not total neglect of family worship.
- 4. Abusive letter to session dated 13th November 1784.

The Presbyter found in Hamilton's favour, and Auld and his Session then appealed to the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. They, too, upheld Hamilton.

This was the dispute in which Burns is exulted, and which produced the dedicatory poem in the Kilmarnock Edition, 'Holy Willie's Prayer' and some smaller poems. Burns had been introduced to Hamilton by Aiken in the Autumn of 177783, when the Burns family was still at Lochlea. Hamilton's education, warmth and common sense endeared him to the poet, who set out his character in the 'Epistle to John M'Math'.

"There's Gau'n, misca'd waur than a beast, Wha has mair honor in his brest Than mony scores as guid's the priest Wha sae abus't him; An' may a bard no crack his jest What way they've use to him? See him, the poor man's friend in need, The gentleman in word an' deed — An' shall his fame an' honor bleed By worthless skellums, An' not a muse erect her head To cowe the belluins?" [*babblers*

Hamilton became factor to the Earl of Loudon, from whom he leased Mossgiel, intending to make it a place of summer retreat. But Hamilton's wife, Helen Kennedy, had other views, so Hamilton accepted Burns's offer to sub lease it from Martinmas, 1784.

Hamiloton interested himself enthusiastically in Burns's affairs, and disposed of quite a number of the proposals for the Kilmarnock Edition. When in August, 1787, Burns reached Harvieston, near Dollar, where Hamilton's half brothers and sisters were staying, he sent a detailed description of them back to Hamilton at Ayr, since he had been 'told you have not seen them these several years'.

About March 1788, however, Hamilton apparently suggested to Burns that he should become a guarantor to Gilbert Burns for a considerable sum. Burns replied: 'The language of refusal is to me the most difficult language on earth, and you are the man of the world... to whom it gives me the greatest pain to hold such language. My brother has already got money, and shall want nothing in my power to enable him fulfil his engagement with you; but to be security on so large a scale, even for a brother, is what I dare not do, except I were in such circumstances of life as that he worst that might happen could not greatly injure me. I never wrote a letter which gave me so much pain in my life, as I know the unhappy consequences: I shall incur the displeasure of a Gentleman for whom I have the highest respect, and to whom I am deeply obliged.'

The friendship survived, however, though not perhaps with quite its earlier ardour. The last letter Burns wrote to Hamilton, dated 16th July 1793, from Dumfries, invoked Hamilton's assistance on behalf of Mrs Muir, who was in trouble over the settlement of the affairs of her husband, William Muir, miller of Tarbolton. It contains some amusing reflections on marriage.

Gavin Hamilton lived in a house adjoining the Castle at Mauchline. He had 8 children. The poem 'The Calf' resulted from a wager between Burns and Hamilton.

Information from Burns Country website.

6. Scotch Drink 1786

This poem opens with a quotation from the Bible. Burns quotes it in dialect so here is the English translation and the French translation that I found on the internet.

6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.

7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

6 Que l'on donne plutôt les boissons enivrantes à celui qui va périr,

et du vin à qui a le cœur malheureux.

7 Qu'il boive et qu'il oublie sa misère,

qu'il ne se souvienne plus de son tourment!

In the classical tradition of writing it was very common for poets and indeed other writers of upper middle class or upper class origin to quote liberally from Greek and Latin. It was also widespread to write using Greek or Latin stories and mythology as an inspiration. We have seen that De Quincey often cites ancient authors. Other Romantics especially Keats and Shelley also follow this tradition. Burns who was the son of a poor rural farmer did not receive the same privileged education, however he rejected this habit preferring to speak in the every day language of every day people. Nevertheless you will find allusions to classical mythology from time to time. He calls his inspiration his Muse. Allusions to the Bible are far more frequent which is not surprising as at this time the first book anyone would have possessed would have been a Bible and long sermons and Bible reading were common practices.

stanza 1

Burns criticises the Poets who make such a fuss about wine as he considers that whisky or Scotch is far better. Bacchus was the god of wine. The grapes come from a vine and the vine is to be found in a vineyard. A fracas is an uproar but it can also mean a noisy quarrel. The word comes from old French. It is still sometimes used but perhaps more in written English. Crabbèd names. Here it means undecipherable. To wrack = here it means to punish because to grate our lug = it makes harsh or unpleasant sounds on our ears (du français grater). He ends by saying he prefers to sing the praise of Scotch liquor in glass or jug (pichet). stanza 2

whether thro' wimplin worms thou jink. J'en ai bavé pour trouver le sens mais le voilà. Wimpling here means rippling (onduler) because the alcohol is in a worm which is a spiral pipe for condensation in the distilling of alcohol. To jink is to dodge = faire une feinte. With the steam for the condensation the alcohol ripples and cannot always be seen clearly which is why the author speaks of 'dodge'. Oof! Or the alcohol can be a rich brown colour and 'ream owre the brink' = flow over the edge in a glorious foam (mousse). It is the good old Scotch Drink which he asks to inspire him until he can lisp and wink. To lisp normally means to speak with un cheveu sur la langue but here probably means to speak imperfectly and twinkle (étinceller) to sing your name. He may mean that drink although drink will affect his speech and sight he will also be enabled to invent his song! I am getting the distinct impression that to wink used by Burns does not have the exact same meaning as today but I cannot find it in the glossaries.

stanza 3

Husky wheat. When wheat is in the field it has an exterior envelope called a husk. Husky hear

means that the husk is thick. The haugh is thelow-lying land on the border of a river. To adorn = to grace/decorate

Aits set up their awnie horn = oats (avoine) grow their hard beards. The glossary might confuse you here because it speaks of barley (orge) beards so we must assume that when the oat grasses are fully grown they also have a beard. It could also be that the beard looks like or has the shape of a horn instead of the meaning hard.

Peas and beans at evening and morning perfume the plain (flat land used for cereal crops). But of all these crops Leeze me on = mine above all else or the one I prefer most of all is John Barleycorn = orge. It is with barley that alcohol is produced. The King of grain!

stanza 4

chows her cood = chews her cud = ruminates. This is used to describe the way cows eat. souple = supple but perhaps it would be best to say spongy as we are speaking of scones or barley cakes which are the wale = the choice of food or the choicest food. Or tumbling in the boiling flood with cabbage and beef. Barley was used a great deal in 'ragoût' and it still is in Irish stew. It is from the 'strong heart's blood' remember that barley is personified in John Barleyrcorn that the Scots make alcohol. This stanza explains the uses of barley in the diet but it is whisky which is the chief!

stanza 5

the wame = the belly/the stomach. Food keeps us living but living is not much of a gift when it is "heavy-dragg'd wi' pine an' grievin' = alourdi with pine = torture or punishment (be careful this meaning is now obsolete) and grieving = suffering pain etc. However alcohol comes to the rescue. Burns compares it to the oil which enables the wheels of a cart to go gliding swiftly downhill with rattling (the noise of the wheels) pleasure. So drinking gives us the same élan!

stanza 6

Alcohol also helps to sharpen the mental capacities : it clears "doited Lear" = stupefied learning/knowledge

It cheers the heart when we have drooping = heavy care = anxiety/burdens

It gives us strength to do hard physical labour = strings the nerves o' Labour sair = sore = pénible

At's = at its

It can even make despair brighten with a gloomy smile. Gloomy = dark. Despair is so bad we can hardly expect a radiant smile!

stanza 7

I'm not sure of the sense here : either it means that barley in the field has the aspect of being well-dressed in silver cloth and massy means thick or that when it appears as whisky it looks like that. A gentle was somebody of high-born rank. Let us say then that the whisky holds its head up with high born folk but also acts as the poor man's wine to strengthen his drop of porridge or bread. Thou kitchens fine = you cook well.

stanza 8

Here JB's capacity to liven social gatherings is praised. A haunt is a place which one goes to very frequently so here the haunts are not only the ale-houses but also fairs and rants = parties, social gatherings. Even Holy meetings (cf. The Holy Fair) when the saints are gaping = open-mouthed and they besiege the tents to get some drink after which they are redoubled in their religious fire thanks to the inspiration of JB!

stanza 9

Poet celebrates two great occasions where JB is also very welcome that is the Harvest celebration and on New Year morning. Thou reams the horn in. Horn here is probably the receptacle in which the whisky is frothing. On New Year morning it is probably served heated which explains the little drop of spiritual burn in. Cog and bicker = wooden dish and beaker.

Heated and gusty sucker is added = tasty sugar.

stanza 10

Begins with a mythological reference to Vulcan who was the god of the forge and who would use bellows = un soufflet to get the fire going, and ploughmen gather with their graith = equipment needed to harness the plough to the horses, these men rare = roar with pleasure to see the whisky fizz and freath = froth I' th' lugged caup! = in the eared bowl = tureen like receptacle the lugs = les anses.

Burnewin = the blacksmith comes on like death = he goes to work with great power at ev'ry chaup = every chop or every blow.

stanza 11

Continuing with the blacksmith and the swinging blows he shows no mercy to iron or steel. L.2. The brawny = muscular and strong, banie = boney, ploughman chiel = a young ploughman fellow

L.3 - 6 Swings the strong forehammer = une masse with a circular motion over his hip repeatedly until block (le support en metal sur lequel on travail) and studdie= stithy = anvil =l'enclume ring an' reel = two words synonymous here and mean = resonner, wi dinsome clamour = with a very noisy clamour = fracas.

stanza 12

whisky is also present at childbirth, well for the men not the women. So, when skirlin' weanies see the light = when screaming babies are born. That makes the gossips clatter bright = which gets all the gossips (cancannières) talking. How fumblin' cuifs their dearies slight = how fumbling/clumsy blockheads/ninnies/idiots (presumably the fathers) their dearies slight = offend their loved ones. Wae worth the name = woe befall/betide their reputation. Nae Howdie gets a social night or plack frae them = no midwife gets a social evening or a penny from them. The fathers are probably out drinking so the midwife does not get paid that night and this is embarrassing and causes offence. That said I am not 100% sure so when you study this with a teacher please send me other proposals.

stanza 13

Whisky helps in legal disputes because if the neighbours have a disagreement an'just as wud as wud can be = if they are as stubborn as stubborn can be. Do not forget that will/would had an original meaning of volition so sometimes I won't = I refuse. The barley tree i.e. the fruit of it which is whisky can cement the quarrel = can fix it and it's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee = and of course it costs less than paying a lawyer always!!

stanza 14

Alack if ever my Muse has reason to wyte= to reproach/to blame her countrymen with treason. But there are many who daily wet their weasan' = weasand = throat/windpipe/gullet and the two together mean drink wi' liquors nice, and hardly in a winter's season, e'er spier the price = with nice alcohol and scarcely ever ask about the price in a winter's season. I think this means that some are ready to drink if other people are paying. Probably in a winter's season is equivalent to rarely. Again I am not God so I do not know for sure.

stanza 15

He now moves on to criticise foreign drink. Curses on brandy which is burning trash! Fell source o' mony a pain an' brash = deadly source of many a pain and sudden short illness Twins mony a poor doylt, drucken hash = bereaves/takes away from many a poor, stupid, drunken useless fellow

of half his days = life. Besides that Scotland pays money and send it abroad to enemies (the French) to pay for it. This implies that the poem dates from 1790s when war with France had begun. Warst faes = worst enemies.

stanza 16

Burns addresses the Scots themselves in this stanza to warn them not to drink foreign

beverages.

Ye chief = you principally = chiefly to you Scots I tell my tale

Poor plackless devils = poor penniless devils like myself

it sets you ill wi', dearthful wines to mell, or foreign gill =it does not become you to meddle with expensive wines or foreign alcohol. (gill is strictly speaking a measure but here he uses the measure for the contents = metonymy.

stanza 17

He then curses people who do drink foreign alcohol

May gravels = gall stones wrench (hurt violently) round his blather = bladder

and gouts = la goutte torment him, inch by inch = little by little

What = anyone who twists his gruntle wi' a glunch o' sour disdain = countenace/face with a frown of sour condescension

Out owre a glass o' whisky punch wi' honest men = frown out over (over is sufficient here) stanza 18

Bard now explains how whisky inspires him as a poet. A play = a joke and a prank = une farce

When wanting thee = when there is a lack of whisky, what tuneless cranks are my poor verses = my verses are tuneless whims (caprices). Thou comes = but if I drink whisky – they (the verses) rattle I' their ranks at ither's arses = the verses come tumbling out easily one behind the other. (Arse = cul it is considered vulgar)

stanza 19

He laments the loss of Feriintosh = synonym for whisky (see note on Forbes below) Now colic-grips = colic disorders and barkin' hoast = barking cough may kill us a' = all. Whisky was often used as a medicine as it was thought to cure all kinds of things. At the time of writing the tax people were beginning to investigate stills. This explains the reference to Forbes of Ferintosh. I have taken the information from the Burns site.

The chartered boast = the charter he could claim to have is ta'en awa = has been taken away! Forbes of Culloden, Duncan (1644-1704)

In 1690, the Scottish Parliament passed an Act permitting Forbes perpetually to distil whisky free of duty on his estate of Ferintosh in Cromarty, in recognition of his services at the Revolution which expelled James V11 and II. As a result he accrued considerable wealth, and Ferintosh was used as a synonym for whisky.

In 1785 an Act was passed abolishing this right, and stating that the Forbes (the descendant of Duncan) of the day was to be compensated adequately. If he did not agree, the case was to be tried by jury before the Scottish Court of Exchequer. He did not agree, and the case duly came up. His defence proved that the privilege was justly his, and although it could have been made to yield \pounds 7,000 a year, in fact the profit was just over \pounds 1,000; and further that the late Lord President, Mr Duncan Forbes (1685 — 1747) had provided \pounds 20,000 of his own money in suppressing the 1745 Rebellion. The jury surprised their Lordships by awarding Forbes \pounds 21,580.

The Scottish distillers complained at the severity of the Excise laws, and many went out of business, with the result that the price of barley began to be affected. Also there was an increase in illicit distilling.

As a consequence of the outcry, the Government discontinued the tax on low wines and spirits, and an annual tax was put on the stills according to their size. Burns alluded to this act in a note to his poem 'The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer', which deals with the previous oppressive Excise laws.

stanza 20

Thae curst horse-leeches o' th' Excise wha mak the whisky stells their prize You cursed horse leeches (sangsues) of the Excise (taxes) who make whisky stills your prize Haud up thy hand, deil = The poet invokes the help of the Devil to 'seize the blinkers' to catch the excise men. The use of blinker here is obscure so it may have been an insult at the time and in the context I cannot see another explanation. He asks the devil to bake the excise men in a brimstone pie for the sake of poor damned drinkers! Another explanation could be that blinkers are the eyes of the excise men and if they are destroyed they will no longer be able to find the stills.

stanza 21

Poet now addresses Fortune and asks her to provide him with "hale breeks = healthy trousers, a bannock = an oatmeal cake and a gill. I suspect healthy trousers is referring to sexual potence or power. Remark impuissance chez un homme = sexual impotence.

An rowth o' rhyme to rave at will = an abundance of rhyme to create à volonté Tak a' the rest = you can keep the rest

An' deal'd about as thy blind skill directs thee best. Still addressing Fortune he tells her to distribute fortune as she thinks best. Fortune was often called blind because it could give riches and wealth to a bad man and hardship and sorrow to a good one. Fortune was another mystery.

7. The Cottar's Saturday Night 1785

Inscribed to R. Aiken, Esq., of Ayr. (notes on Aiken at the end of this study)

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil, Their homely joys, and destiny obscure; Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile, The short and simple annals of the Poor. Gray

The following poem consists of 21 nine-line stanzas with a regular rhyming scheme of ababbcbcc. The poem finds Burns in a more serious and reflective mood. The poem is sentimental and patriotic too. Rural life in Scotland was extremely harsh because of the harsh climate and the rugged landscape. The people had to work especially hard in tough conditions and the Winters were particularly trying. The traditional portrayal of Scottish character proud, sturdy, direct in manner and speech, stoic and parsimonious reflects the conditions of life prevalent at the time and even up to very recent times. The English like to joke about the proverbial meanness of the Scots but in fact they practised mutual aid and support in their communities throughout the land and hospitality is a national value. The mutual insurance societies were first created in Scotland. During the time of Mrs Thatcher Scottish people could not adhere to rampant individualism and in the successive elections support for her in Scotland diminished on a dramatic scale.

The inscription comes from Elegy written in a country churchyard by Thomas Gray (1716-1771) and it is one of the most frequently quoted poems in the English language. Thomas Gray was a Cambridge scholar and lived a rather secluded life. He was associated with other poets who also wrote contemplative poems about human mortality : Robert Blair, Thomas Parnell and Edward Young. The group was given the ironic name of the Graveyard Poets. Gray however is undoubtedly the most well-known and enduring. The stanza quoted is the eighth and celebrates the simple life and sincerity of the poor.

My lov'd, my honour'd, much respected friend!

No mercenary bard his homage pays;

With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end,

My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:

To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,

The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene,

The native feelings strong, the guileless ways, What Aiken in a cottage would have been:

Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there I ween!

Although Burns dedicates this poem to a friend he praises, he makes it quite clear that he is not a sycophant or flatterer. His dearest reward is esteem and praise. Lays are verses. The lowly train = is the humble way of life. He suggests that if Aiken had lived there, even though his worth, would be unknown he would have been far happier. I ween = I imagine, think.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;

The short'ning winter-day is near a close;

The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;

The poet sets the scene in a particularly difficult month : November when the cold winds blow with angry sigh and the shortening winter day is nearly over. The use of –ing instead of short makes the idea more immediate. The muddy beasts are being unhitched from the plough. The gerundif is used without 'are' for the same reason.

The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:

The crows are flying home to rest which makes black streaks in the sky.

The toil-worn Cotter frae his labour goes, -

All nature must now rest and it is time for the Cotter worn out from working to leave his labour. Labour usually implies heavy, physical and manual work.

This night his weekly moil is at an end,

moil is very hard work : synonym = drudgery

Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,

He gathers his spades, pick (pioche) and hoes (house)

Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,

And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

This is Saturday night so he can look forward to spending the following morning resting in ease. Hoping gives the idea that he can not be absolutely sure of this. He follows the road home over the moor. He bends home = gives the idea that he is so tired that he is bent over while walking. Weary = exhausted, spent

At length his lonely cot appears in view, Beneath the shelter of an aged tree; Th' appearant was things toddling stacker three

Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher through

To meet their dad, wi' flichterin noise and glee.

The little children are excited to see their father come home and arrive toddling (this is a verb to describe how very young kids who have just learnt to walk, move. A toddler is a child from about 1-3 years old. They stagger through to meet their dad with fluttering noise and delight. His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonilie,

His tiny little fireside is blinking (could probably say crackling to give the idea of the fire burning) beautifully

His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,

His clean hearth-stone and his thrifty wife's smile. Thrift is savings so thrifty is économe. The hearth is the 'âtre' and there is a stone in front of the fire as a protection.

The lisping infant, prattling on his knee,

Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,

A child who cannot yet pronounce words properly 'lisps' but some people never lose it : cheveu sur la langue. To prattle is to talk about nothing in particular. This domestic and innocent happiness makes him forget all his tiresome anxiety and care.

And makes him quite forget his labour and his toil.

And makes him forget labour and work. To toil is to work very hard.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,

At service out, among the farmers roun';

By and by the older children come home ; they are in service/working for farmers around the region

Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin

A cannie errand to a neibor town:

Some of them drive a plough, some look after a herd and some run (paying attention=tentie) attentively on important errands

Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,

In youthfu' bloom-love sparkling in her e'e-

Their eldest Jenny, who has grown to be a woman is full of the flower of youth and there is love sparkling in her eyes

Comes hame, perhaps to shew a braw new gown,

Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,

comes home perhaps to show a beautiful new dress or deposit/give her hard won wages of a penny

To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

To help her parents if they are in need.

With joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet, And each for other's weelfare kindly speirs: With unfeigned/unpretended joy the brothers and sisters meet up with each other and inquire kindly about each other's well-being. *The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet:* Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears. The social moments they spend together are so pleasant they do not notice that time (with fast wings) flies by. They tell each other about all the unusual things they see or hear. The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years; Anticipation forward points the view; The parents with a partial (biased) love look at the hope in the young and how they look forward to the future with anticipation. The mother, wi' her needle and her shears, Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new: The mother with her needle and scissors makes old clothes look almost as good as new. The father mixes a' wi' admonition due. The father mixes all with due (appropriate) admonition (gentle rebuke). The father's role is to supervise discipline. Their master's and their mistress' command, The younkers a' are warned to obey;

The younkers a' are warned to obey;
The children are all warned to obey their masters and mistresses' orders
And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
And ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play;
and to do their work with a diligent/assiduous hand and even if they are out of sight never to
trifle around and play.
"And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
And O always be sure to fear the Lord alway,
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night;
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Pay careful attention to one's duty night and day
to avoid falling into the path of temptation and go astray. (errer du droit chemin)
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright."
To beg advice from the Lord and his helpful power:
If one seeks the Lord correctly one never seeks in vain.(for nothing)

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door; Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same, Tells how a neibor lad came o'er the moor, To do some errands, and convoy her hame.

What do we hear? A gentle knock at the door and Jenny, who knows the meaning of this knock tells them all how a young man and neighbour who was crossing the moor on some errands had seen/accompanied her home.

The wily mother sees the conscious flame

Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;

With heart-struck anxious care, enquires his name,

The mother understands very quickly when she sees Jenny go red so she asks her his name. (She is of course extremely anxious that her daughter should not meet a blackguard or a worthless seducer). Wily means sly but here it does not have a perjorative overtone. (malin, ruse)

While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak; Weel-pleased the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake. While Jenny is partly afraid to speak, her mother is well pleased when she finds out it is no wild, worthless man. (rake = scélerat)

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;

A strappin youth, he takes the mother's eye;

With a kind welcome Jenny invites him into the inside parlour. He's a strapping (strong and healthy) young man and Jenny's mother likes his appearance

Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;

Jenny is delighted to see that the young man's visit has not been taken badly. (unwelcome) *The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.*

The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,

The father talks merrily of horses, ploughs and cows so that the innocent youngster's heart overflows with happiness

But blate an' laithfu', scarce can weel behave;

However he's so shamefaced and shy that he can hardly behave well. (This probably means he is finding it hard to talk and show social graces not that he is badly behaved)

The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy

What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave,

a woman's wiles (the knowingness of women, their intuition). Wiles are always attributed to women not to men. She knows what is making the boy so bashful and so serious.

Weel-pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

So she is very happy to think that Jenny is respected like the rest.

O happy love! where love like this is found:

O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!

I've paced much this weary, mortal round,

And sage experience bids me this declare, -

"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare-

One cordial in this melancholy vale,

Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair

In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale, Penagth the milk white them that agents the queni

Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale."

The poet leaves the painting of the domestic scene to contemplate happy, young love. The mortal round = life and sage= wise bids me = commands me. A draught = a measure. Spare = has to spare (à donner). Vale = valley and a cordial = a drink. The thorn = épine A highly sentimental and idealised vision of love and how a loving young couple is like a heaven sent gift in a world which is often melancholy.

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart, A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth! That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art, Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth? Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth! Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd? Is there no pity, no relenting ruth, Points to the parents fondling o'er their child? Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

This verse wonders how any man with a heart could possibly take advantage of Jenny's innocence by using perjured arts = false pretences or dissembling = pretending to be what one is not. Ruth is a synonym of compassion or pity. A ruined maid is an unmarried girl who loses her virginity. At this time and indeed for many centuries the major concern of parents was to keep their daughter a virgin until her wedding night. A girl who became pregnant was considered as a terrible disgrace and would have made her parents wild with distraction. Distraction here means distress. To relent is to soften. For example if you give the children a hard punishment but then you relax the sentence through pity, you relent. Considering the record of Burns in the seduction department we can say he is speaking from experience!

But now the supper crowns their simple board,

The halesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food;

The sowp their only hawkie does afford,

That, 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood:

Back to the story : the supper is the crowning glory of their simple table it is wholesome (health-giving) porridge, the best of Scotland's food. The spoonfuls of which are provided by their one white-faced cow that is beyond the wall of the cottage snugly chewing on the cud. To chew on the cud is to ruminate.

To chew on the cud is to ruminate.

The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,

To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell;

As the boy is a guest the mistress of the house in a mood for compliments and to honour the boy brings out her well-saved cheese.

And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it guid:

The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell

How t'was a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

He's pressed many times and many times he calls it good. (la patronne s'empresse pour qu'il en mange). The frugal woman becomes talkative and is proud to say that it's been twelve months since flax was in the bell. Alors là; je pense que le fromage est affiné dans un torchon en lin et il se peut que the bell soit l'endroit où on le laisse mûrir. Mais ici je suis dans la supposition. Flax est le lin.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,

They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;

Once the cheerful supper is over they form a circle around the fireside with serious faces. (solemn?)

The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,

The big ha'bible, ance his father's pride:

The father of the family now turns over the pages of the big half bible (once his father's pride) with patriarchal grace.

His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,

His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;

His bonnet has been reverently laid to one side revealing his greying temples.

Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,

He wales a portion with judicious care;

And "Let us worship God!" he says with solemn air.

Those strains = airs en musique, that were once heard in Zion (Israel). and he chooses with judicious care a portion to read aloud and says solemnly "Let us....."

They chant their artless notes in simple guise,

They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;

Perhaps Dundee's wild-warbling measures rise;

Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name;

Or noble Elgin beets the heaven-ward flame;

The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:

Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;

The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;

Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

I'm not sure if I have understood this verse completely. I think the main idea is that these simple country people sing to God in the simplest manner and that the heart in the tune and the success of the singing is in the deep sincerity of their belief in God. If one compares this singing to Italian trills (tunes, notes) the ears would be just tickled, stimulated gently but one would not be able to 'raise' = evoke and feel the rapture of singing from the heart which comes from the desire to praise the Creator. Italian songs do not have unison (is not at one) with this praise. The most noble aim then is to sing from the heart. The Scottish holy lays are therefore more effective. I have had no success in locating Elgin the composer although we know about Elgin the man who carried out archaeological trips in the Ottoman empire and

brought the Elgin marbles to England. To warble is to sing like a bird = chanter avec les trilles. Plaintive = melancholic. Guise here means fashion, way, manner. I do not know which martyrs he is referring to. heaven-ward = going towards heaven.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page, How Abram was the friend of God on high; Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage With Amalek's ungracious progeny;

The father reads favourite passages from the Bible to his family; sometimes it is about how Abraham was the friend of God or how Moses endured lasting warfare waged on Amalek's descendants. Amalek was the grandson of Esau whose brother Jacob had supplanted his birthright as Esau was the oldest twin. Amalek was the leader of a tribe and attacked the Hebrews led by Moses as they were fleeing from Eygpt in Exodus. The rivalry between the Hebrews and the descendants of Amalek continues until the Book of Solomon.

Or how the royal bard did groaning lie

Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;

I do know which royal poet he is referring to unless it is Solomon himself. Solomon wrote the psalms. He may also have incurred the anger (ire) of Heaven for some reason. To avenge = to take revenge.

Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;

Job is also known as the Man of Uz. He was extremely devoted to God and a faithful servant. The devil suggested to God that if the man lost everything he would of course lose his faith. Job was stripped of all his wealth, his possessions and so on but he survived the test and remained faithful to his God. Plaint = complaint and to wail is to cry with a loud high sound. *Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;*

rapt = enraptured probably beat. Seraphic like a seraphim which is an angel. Angels could appear in fire. Isaiah was a prophet in the Old Testament.

Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

A seer (pronounced like rear, near) at the beginning comes from see and is a noun 'one who sees'. The nuance is that a seer sees the future or has visions. A seer is a prophet.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,

How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;

The Christian volume is undoubtedly the New Testament as it is Jesus Christ who gives his guiltless blood in order to save man who is guilty. Man is guilty of original sin because he ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. To shed blood = verser du sang

How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,

Had not on earth whereon to lay His head:

Jesus is the second person of the Trinity. God the father, God the son and God the Holy Ghost or Spirit. The man who bore the name (portait le nom) of God the son had no place on earth where he could put his head down for the night. When Jesus began to preach he gave up all his possessions and so had no house or bed.

How His first followers and servants sped;

The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:

Here he describes how the apostles and first Christians spread the gospel with its wise precepts to many a land. This is a reference to the Acts of the Apostles.

How he, who lone in Patmos banished,

Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,

And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd by Heaven's command.

This is a reference to the book of Revelation which was written by the apostle John. Whilst John was on the Island of Patmos he had a vision. In his vision he saw a powerful angel standing in the sun and heard the destruction of Babylon pronounced by the order of Heaven. The book refers to the whore of Bablyon and various interpretations are proffered. Some

American fundamentalists think the whore of Babylon is the pope and the catholic church!!

Then, kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King, The saint, the father, and the husband prays: Promotion indeed in the last stanza the father was a priest he is now a saint! Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing," this is a quotation from Alexander Pope, an Augustan poet. That thus they all shall meet in future days, There, ever bask in uncreated rays, That they shall all meet in the future in the same way to bask=lay back in the rays of light that have not yet been created No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear, No more sighing or reason to cry bitter tears Together hymning their Creator's praise, all singing hymns in praise of God In such society, yet still more dear; While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere Time will then be eternity....Burns is painting here a highly idealized portrait of Christianity and faith.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride, In all the pomp of method, and of art; When men display to congregations wide Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!

The real aim of the stanza before is to now attack the prevalent hypocrisy of some men who call themselves Christians and who use pomp in their methods and display every grace in their practise of devotion EXCEPT the essential, which is the heart. The pride of Religion is very poor and weak compared to the religion we have just seen in the poor cotter's house. *The Power, incens'd, the pageant will desert,*

The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;

I think he means that the Power is in fact God here and that when He sees the hypocritical display He is incensed = made very angry so He leaves the pageant (parade) and the pompous music and the sacerdotal stole = étole (worn by the priests)?

But haply, in some cottage far apart,

May hear, well-pleas'd, the language of the soul;

And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enroll.

But happily he may hear, well-pleased the genuine language of the soul and enrol these people in His Book of Life. This probably refers to the Book of Eternal Life which will be the reward for devout followers on Judgement Day! To enrol = to put on a list and by extension s'inscrire. The roll was used in shipping to write the names of the sailors. A copy of the roll was kept on land and when the ships came back there was a comparison between the roll and the counter roll. This is where the word control comes from!

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;

The youngling cottagers retire to rest:

Then everybody goes his or her separate way and the very young children who live in the cottage go to bed.

The parent-pair their secret homage pay,

And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,

That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,

And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,

The parents then pray their secret homage and implore/ask Heaven if God who calms the nest of the ravenous/very hungry ravens (corneille); and who dresses (to deck out = to dress with) the fair lilies in their beautiful flowers

Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best, For them and for their little ones provide;

If God would in whatever way His wisdom thinks best, provide for them and their children. (to provide = fournir) This is an allusion to the saying : God will provide.

But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

And would allow divine grace to preside in their hearts. Wow! This poem is not what we are used to from Burns! He wrote it before becoming well-known however. He was only 26 when he wrote it. The poet now moves on to his conclusion.

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!

For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent,

Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil

Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!

And O! may Heaven their simple lives prevent

From luxury's contagion, weak and vile! Then howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,

A virtuous populace may rise the while,

And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd isle.

Hardy = strong. Blest is often used in classical poetry instead of Blessed and we sometimes meet blessèd. It is to respect the syllable count in regular verse. Burns was a great patriot and considered England as the enemy to Scottish interests. Luxury represents weakness and vileness so he does not want to see simple people contaminated with it. A coronet is a crown also. I think dukes wear coronets. To rent = to destroy. No matter how lords and the upper classes are destroyed the populace = the common people will stand like a wall of fire around the isle to protect it. The rich cannot be trusted.

O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide,

That stream'd thro' Wallace's undaunted heart,

Burns is addressing God directly and says that he made the patriotic tide (marée) stream through (ruisseler) in that undaunted = that cannot be discouraged

Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,

Or nobly die, the second glorious part:

Who dared to stem = prevent/stop tyrannical pride (of the English) nobly or to die nobly. The second part is to die and the first part is to fight.

(The patriot's God peculiarly thou art,

His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)

You are especially the God of the patriot.

O never, never Scotia's realm desert;

But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard

In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

The patriot Wallace must always be remembered and Burns is the patriotic bard who also intends to be an ornament and a guard to Scotland.

WALLACE 1270 - 1304

Wallace is one of the greatest patriots of Scotland. He was born in about 1270 and at this time the Scottish succession was soon to be in great danger. The king died with only a little daughter to succeed him. When she died the direct line was ended and the contenders for the succession were invited to England to allow King Edward 1 to decide which of the thirteen was to be chosen as king. However he demanded in return the submission of Scotland to England. Wallace's father was himself a firm opponent to the English and so Wallace had been removed as a boy from Renfrewshire to Dundee. By 1292 Wallace began attacks on the English presence in Scotland. As an adolescent one of his skirmishes with the son of the English commandeer of a garrison ended in death for his opponent. He was now dubbed an outlaw by the English. In 1297 his wife was killed in Lanark for having helped Wallace to escape. Wallace later caught up with his mortal enemy and killed him. He exacted revenge at Ayr when he set fire to a place where the English were because they had hung Scotsmen by luring them into a trap. One of his greatest successes was the Battle of Forth Bridge when he defeated the English. He became Guardian of Scotland. Unfortunately his low birth, he was only the son of a knight and not a great aristocrat meant that he would not be able to hold real power as the three contenders for the throne were still struggling for the throne : Comyn, Bruce and Balliol. In 1298 Edward led a massive army for the time on Scotland and inflicted a crushing defeat on Wallace's army. One of the reasons being that he did not have the support of the aristocrats who would have been able to afford the armed cavalry. Wallace resigned as Guardian but he continued to actively resist the English in guerrilla attacks. In 1304 whilst in hiding at Ralph Rae he was betrayed by Menreith for 151 pounds and arrested on the 5th August and taken to Westminster for execution. He was not put on trial. Edward ordered a slow and painful death for the man the English called 'the robber' and his remains were sent back to Scotland to be placed on public view as a warning. He was assassinated by the English on 28th August. Burns felt such anger about this story that he said it could never feel better until he was dead himself.

This poem is written in far more formal language which is appropriate to the content. He uses fewer colloquial abbreviations and strong dialect especially in the concluding stanzas. He praises the 'nobility' of the common people which at this time was quite rare. From this point of view he belongs to the coming Romantic period. Wordsworth and Blake also believed in the value of the ordinary man.

from Scottish history website

Aiken, Robert (1739-1807)

The son of an Ayr sea-captain, John Aiken, Robert Aiken (Orator Bob) became a prosperous and convivial lawyer in his native town. After meeting Burns about 1783, Aiken became impressed by the merit of the poet's work. Burns himself later declared that he had never fully appreciated his own work until Aiken read it aloud. The poet described Aiken as his 'first poetic patron' in a letter to John Ballantine of 20th November 1786, and a few weeks later in another letter to Ballantine dated 13th December, as his 'first kind Patron'. A similar reference occurs in a letter to Gavin Hamilton of 7th December 1786 and in a further letter to Ballantine written in January 1788. Aiken collected the names of a hundred and forty-five subscribers for the Kilmarnock Edition, almost a quarter of the total. Burns dedicated 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' to Aiken, and wrote the 'Epistle to a Young Friend' to the lawyer's son, Andrew Hunter Aiken. Robert Aiken successfully defended Gavin Hamilton before the Presbytery of Ayr in the summer of 1785, as a result of which Burns conceived the idea of 'Holy Willie's Prayer'.

Robert Aiken was the recipient of many letters from Burns. One, dated 16th December 1786 begins: 'Dear Patron of my Virgin Muse'. Another placed by Ferguson about 8th October 1786 is the famous letter which mentions the poet's first thoughts on the possibility of entertaining the Excise service, and contains the confession that 'even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner.' The note of hysteria, and the suggestion that it might be best for him to go abroad, have led to some biographers to connect this letter with remorse over the death of 'Highland Mary'. It was probably Aiden - his part in the affair has never been proved - who mutilated the promissory paper Burns gave to Jean Armour, by cutting out their names, possibly to placate James Armour. This led to a temporary coolness between the lawyer and the poet.

Burns's letter to Aiken were probably among the most revealing he ever wrote. Unfortunately, most of them have been destroyed; according to Aiken's daughter, through the dishonesty of a clerk in his father's office, though possibly just through sheer carelessness.

Information from Burns Country website

8. To A Mouse 1785

To A Mouse, On Turning Her Up In Her Nest With The Plough, November, 1785

stanza 1

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,

Small, sleek, cowering, timorous little creature

Sleek =glossy, smooth, shiny looking especially for 'pelage ou cheveux', to cower is to make a movement of fear = reculer de peur, and timorous = timoré. In general when Burns adds 'ie' to a word it gives the sense of small. Another common way of doing this is by adding 'let' *O what a panic's in they breastie!* (small breast)

Thou need na start awa sae hasty

You do not have to run away so quickly

Wi' bickering brattle!

As if running all of a quiver (tremblement) in a shore race. (Je ne suis pas sûre du sens ici, estce qu'il y avait des courses sur la côte en Ecosse ou bien est-ce les vagues qui reviennent

comme une course ?)

I wad be laith, to rin an' chase thee Wi' murd'ring prattle!

I would be loath to run and chase you = I would not like to run after and chase you with a murdering plough spade (pelle)!

stanza 2

je pense que ce vers est clair. Dominion = mastery, domination. Ill here means very bad. To startle = to make somebody jump with fright

stanza 3

I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve

I have no doubt that very soon you may steal

What then? Poor beastie, thou maun live!

Well what of it! Poor little thing you must/have to live

A daimen-icker in a thrave

'S a sma' request

An occasional ear of corn (épi de maïs) from a stack of 24 sheaves is not much to ask.

I'll get a blessing wi' the lave

And never miss it.

I'll never miss it as I'll be well off enough with the rest.

stanza 4

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!

Your tiny bit of a house is in ruins too.

Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!

The winds are dispersing the silly walls

An' naething, now to big a new ane,

O' foggage green!

And there's left now of the green grass for you to build a new one (house)

Foggage = deuxième croissance d'herbe

An' bleak December's winds ensuin'

Baith snell and keen

And the bleak December winds are following both acute and keen. (adj. sharp, acute)

stanza 5

You saw the fields all empty and the tiring winter coming very quickly and you thought you would live here all cozy underneath the blast, until crash! The cruel blade (coulter) cut right through your cell. (habitation)

stanza 6

That tiny little heap of leaves and stubble (voir avant) cost you many a tiring nibble (grignotage!) And now in spite of all your trouble you have been turned out of house and hald

(= abiding place or abode = habitation) to thole (= to endure, to suffer) the cold snowy rain of the Winter and crancreuch (hoar frost) frosty cold.

stanza 7

But little mouse you are not alone, in proving that foresight may be vain (useless): *The best laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft a-gley* Even the most well prepared schemes/plans of mice and men often go wrong *An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain*

For promis'd joy.

And instead of bringing the hoped for joy leave us only with nothing but grief and pain. p.s. the line 'the best laid schemes of mice and men' is one of the most quoted lines in English. Steinbeck called one of his books Of Mice and Men.

stanza 8

Still thou art blest compar'd wi' me Nevertheless you are lucky in comparison with me The present only toucheth thee You are only affected by the present But Oh! I backward cast my e'e On prospects drear I can look backward e'e = eyes see also een And see dreary prospects An' forward tho' I canna see, I guess an' fear Although I cannot foresee the future, I can guess and fear it.

9. The Holy Fair 1785

A robe of seeming truth and trust Hid crafty Observation; And secret hung, with poison'd crust, The dirk of Defamation:

A mask that like the gorget show'd, Dye-varying on the pigeon; And for a mantle large and broad, He wrapt him in Religion.

Hypocrisy A-La-Mode

Holy Fair was a phrase common for a sacramental occasion. Note by Burns himself.

Upon a simmer Sunday morn When Nature's face is fair, I walked forth to view the corn, An' snuff the caller air. simmer =summer an' snuff = and sniff the caller air = the fresh air The rising sun owre Galston muirs Wi' glorious light was glintin; owre = over ; wi' = with The hares were hirplin down the furrs, The lav'rocks they were chantin' The hares were limping down the furrows (sillons) and the larks they were singing Fu' sweet that day. fu' = full

As lightsomely I glowr'd abroad, (as cheerfully I stared about me) To see a scene sae gay, (sae = so) Three hizzies, early at the road, Cam skelpin up the way. three girls up early on the road came running up the way Twa had manteeles o" dolefu' black, But ane wi' lyart lining; two of them had mantles (capes) of sad/sorrowful black but one of them had grey lining. (doublure) The third, that gaed a wee a-back, Was in the fashion shining The third girl that was going a little bit further back was shining in the fashion (dressed fashionably) Fu' gay that day.

The twa appear'd like sisters twin, In feature, form, an' claes; Their visage wither'd, lang an' thin, An' sour as ony slaes: The two (in black) seemed to be like twin sister in the form of their features and clothes. Their faces were withered, long and thin and as sour (aigre) as any sloes (prunelles) The third cam up, hap-stap-an'-lowp, As light as ony lambie, the third one came up with a hop, skip and jump as light as any little lamb *An' wi'a curchie low did stoop, As soon as e'er she saw me,* and with a low curtsey she did stoop (se baisser) as soon as ever she saw me. *Fu' kind that day.*

Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I, "Sweet lass, (with bonnet off) It was customary in the past for men to take off their hat to greet a woman, in church and to lift their hat to salute men. Lass = girl I think ve seem to ken me: I'm sure I've seen that bonie face But yet I canna name ye." I think you seem to know me; I'm sure I've seen that lovely face but still I cannot name you. I cannot remember/place your name Quo' she, an' laughin as she spak, An' taks me by the han's, quoth she and laughing as she spoke and takes me by the hands "Ye, for my sake, hae gien the feck *Of a' the ten comman's* You, for my sake have given the greatest portion of all the ten commandments A screed some day." a tear some day. This means that for her sake he has not always obeyed 100percent the commandments "My name is Fun-your cronie dear, The nearest friend ye hae; *My name is fun – your dear crony* (intimate friend) An' this is Superstition here, An' that's Hypocrisy. and this is superstition here and that is Hypocrisy I'm gaun to Mauchline Holy Fair, To spend an hour in daffin: Gin ye'll go there, yon runkl'd pair, We will get famous laughin At them this day." I'm going to the Holy Fair in Mauchline to spend an hour in merriment. If you will go there the wrinkled pair (the other two sisters). We will get some great laughing at them this day. At the Holy Fair they will be able to see a lot of hypocrisy and superstition and that will give them a lot to laugh about. Quoth I, "Wi' a' my heart, I'll do't; (with all my heart I'll do it) I'll get my Sunday's sark on, (I'll put my Sunday shirt on) An' meet you on the holy spot; Faith, we'se hae fine remarkin!" goodness we will have fine remarking. (probably we'll have a lot to observe but here I am not 100% sure) Then I gaed hame at crowdie-time, then I went home at breakfast time An' soon I made me ready; For roads were clad, frae side to side, Wi' mony a weary body for the roads were packed from side to side with many a weary person. In droves that day. In droves = par nuées

Here farmers gash, in ridin graith,

Here self-complacent (implication of prosperity) in riding gear (dress)

Gaed hoddin by their cotters; Went jogging by their cotters. (In Scotland the peasants who worked on the land could occupy a cottage in exchange for their labour) There swankies young, in braw braid-claith, There strapping/strong fellows in fine broad-cloth (type of woollen cloth) Are springing owre the gutters. are jumping over the gutters (in Scottish at the time = mud and dirt) The lasses, skelpin barefit, thrang, In silks an' scarlets glitter; the young girls running barefoot began to throng (form a crowd) and glitter/shine in silks and scarlets = in silk and fine cloth not necessarily red. This is the modern use of the word as an adjective. Wi' sweet-milk cheese, in mony a whang, in many a slice = many slices of sweet-milk cheese An' farls, bak'd wi' butter, and biscuits baked with butter *Fu' crump that day.* (full crispy that day)

When by the plate we set our nose, Weel heaped up wi' ha'pence, A greedy glowr black-bonnet throws,

When we stop in front of the plate (where they have to put their entrance fee) well heaped up with halfpennies, we get a greedy stare from Black Bonnet. (metonymy as black bonnet is a part of the whole : the person collecting the money and this expresses the religious aspect of the person.

An' we maun draw our tippence. and we must cough up (take out/pay up) our tuppence Then in we go to see the show: On ev'ry side they're gath'rin; Some carrying dails, some chairs an' stools, on every side they are gathering, some carrying planks (planches de bois pour en faire un banc probablement), some chairs and stools An' some are busy bleth'rin Right loud that day. and some of them are busy talking nonsense very loudly that day

Here stands a shed to fend the show'rs, An' screen our countra gentry; Here stands a shelter to keep off the showers and screen/protect our country gentry (gentry = notables) There Racer Jess. an' twa-three whores. Footnote 2: Racer Jess (d. 1813) was a half-witted daughter of Possie Nansie. She was a great pedestrian. This is a footnote by Burns himself. and two or three whores. (putains) Are blinkin at the entry. probably blinking = glancing looking at the entry *Here sits a raw o' tittlin jads.* Wi' heaving breast an' bare neck; Here sits a row of whispering jades (ill-natured, perverse women) An' there a batch o' wabster lads, and there a bunch of weaver boys (probably apprentices) Blackguarding frae Kilmarnock, playing the blackguard (up to tricks and/or no good) from Kilmarnock. For fun this day.

Here, some are thinkin on their sins,
An' some upo' their claes;
thinking on their sins and some upon their clothes
Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins,
one curses feet that dirtied his shins.
Anither sighs an' prays: (another)
On this hand sits a chosen swatch, (swatch = sample)
Wi' screwed-up, grace-proud faces;
with screwed up and faces proud of their religious grace.
On that a set o' chaps, at watch,
Thrang winkin on the lasses
on that (the other side) a group of men at watch/watching and busy winking at the girls to come and sit on chairs
To chairs that day.

O happy is that man, an' blest! (and)
Nae wonder that it pride him! (no)
Whase ain dear lass, that he likes best,
whose own dear girl that he likes best. The man who has his own girl is very proud and blessed
Comes clinkin down beside him! comes in one smart move/motion beside him
Wi' arms repos'd on the chair back,
He sweetly does compose him;
He settles himself sweetly with his arms resting on the back of the chair
Which, by degrees, slips round her neck,
An's loof upon her bosom,
Unkend that day.
which little by little he slipsand the palm of his hand onto her breast unknown that day. (II la pelote en douce)

Now a' the congregation o'er Is silent expectation; For Moodie speels the holy door, Wi' tidings o' damnation: Now all the congregation over (has fallen into) silent expectation for Moodie is climbing the holy door with tidings of damnation. (An image of rousing the congregation by his words)

Should Hornie, as in ancient days, 'Mang sons o' God present him, The vera sight o' Moodie's face, To 's ain het hame had sent him Wi' fright that day.

If ever the Devil, as in the old days, among the sons of God were to present himself/turn up, the very sight of Moodie's face to his own hot home had sent him/would have sent him back with/in fright. The Devil would have been terrified of Moody!

Hear how he clears the point o' faith

Wi' rattlin and wi' thumpin!

the point of faith with rattling and with thumping. (He is probably thumping on a bible with his fist and making a lot of noise to drive home his explanation of the scriptures.)

Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,

He's stampin, an' he's jumpin! (stamping (his feet) and jumping! His lengthen'd chin, his turned-up snout, His lengthened/long chin and his turned up snout (nez en trompette) His eldritch squeel an' gestures, O how they fire the heart devout,

His weird squeals and gestures how they stimulate devout hearts

Like cantharidian plaisters

like plasters (coated with) the active ingredient of blistering flies

On sic a day! (on such a day)

The humour here is extremely cutting the reverend minister is portrayed as quite ugly and the hyperbole is superb; one can almost hear the terrifying sermon.

It is now the turn of a reverend who belongs to the New Lights to speak. This causes protestation from the traditionalists. Smith, The Reverend George (1748 - 1823) Minister at Galston from 1778 until his death. In 'The Holy Fair', Burns apparently meant to compliment him for the rationalism of his preaching though his friends regarded the lines in question as having injured his popularity:

But hark! the tent has chang'd its voice, (changed)

There's peace an' rest nae langer; (no longer)

For a' the real judges rise, (a'=all) real is ironic here Burns means the opposite

They canna sit for anger, (cannot sit for anger/because they are so angry)

Smith opens out his cauld harangues, (cold harangues = reasoned address)

On practice and on morals;

An' aff the godly pour in thrangs,

And off the godly pour in throngs. The intelligent, reasoned approach is not a good emotional show so 'the godly' again Burns is being ironic go out to get a drink

To gie the jars an' barrels

A lift that day.

To give the jars and barrels a load that day = to load jars and barrels of alcohol

What signifies his barren shine,

Of moral powers an' reason?

What does his sterile brilliance of moral powers and reason mean?

His English style, an' gesture fine (and)

Are a' clean out o' season.

are all clean out of season = clean out of fashion

Like Socrates or Antonine,

Or some auld pagan heathen,

tautology pagan is a synonym of heathen! A knowledge of Socratic reasoning implies that the others are ignorant. [Antonine : either of the Roman emperors Antoninus Pius (reigned AD 138–161) and his adopted heir Marcus Aurelius (161–180). The term Antonines also usually includes Lucius Verus (161–169), another adopted heir of Antoninus Pius and co-emperor with Marcus Aurelius, as well as Commodus (176–192), son of Marcus Aurelius and co-emperor and then sole emperor. The Antonine period 138–180 was one of great internal peace and prosperity. Encyclopaedia Britannica on-line]

The moral man he does define,

But ne'er a word o' faith in

That's right that day.

He defines the moral man but there is never a word of faith in it that's right. Burns is pretending to condemn Smith in order to praise him.

In guid time comes an antidote

Against sic poison'd nostrum;

in good time comes an antidote against such a poisoned quack medicine (remède de charlatan) *For Peebles, frae the water-fit,*

Ascends the holy rostrum:

from the water-fit and gets up on the platform. I can only guess here that maybe it means from the drink he has just finished or from a water-fountain. Alors, Peebles was not popular with

Burns.

The Reverend William Peebles, of Newton-upon-Ayr. (1753 - 1826)

Born at Inchture and educated at Edinburgh, he became minister at Newton-upon-Ayr in 1778, and clerk of the Ayr Presbytery in 1782. A rigid supporter of the 'Auld Lichts', he denounced M'Gill's Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ, which led to M'Gill's case being taken up by the General Assembly, and prompted Burns to write 'The Kirk's Alarm'. In the poem, Peebles figures as 'Poet Willie': Peebles had attracted some ridicule by a line in a poem of his own on the Centenary of the Revolution of 1688: "And bound in Liberty's endearing chain". In 'The Twa Herds' he is described as 'Peebles shaul' (shallow). He was the author of several works on religious topics of interest in his own day, and of a poem, The Crisis, published in 1803.

In his entertaining yet profound study of Burns, the Christian Rebel, Bawdy Burns, Cyril Pearl writes: 'From time to time, of course, ministers of the kirk, still smarting under the lashes of Burns's satire, repeated their denunciations of the irreverent sinner who had dared to laugh at their imbecilities. In 1811, the Rev. William Peebles... showed his real Christian spirit by attacking the dead poet - anonymously - in a turgid work titled Burnomania; the celebrity of Robert Burns considered in a Discourse addressed to all real Christians of every Denomination. 'In this, Peebles called Burns an 'irreligious profligate' who wrote 'vile scraps of indecent ribaldry'. This comes from the Burns Encyclopaedia on-line. Burns Country site

See, up he's got, the word o' God, An' meek an' mim has view'd it, And meek and prim (doux et guindé/compassé) While Common-sense has taen the road, (taken) An' aff, an' up the Cowgate

And off and up at the Cowgate = a street so called which faces the tent in Mauchline. Maybe this is a tent where one can drink or it could be an allusion to a conversation club which held meetings to discuss things like the French Revolution etc. of which Robert Burns' brother was a member?

Fast, fast that day.

Wee Miller neist the guard relieves, An' Orthodoxy raibles, Tho' in his heart he weel believes, An' thinks it auld wives' fables:

Little Miller next relieves the guard and rattles (another hell-fire speaker) off Orthodox beliefs although in his heart he well believes and thinks it is all old wives' tales/stories.

Miller, the Rev Alexander (d. 1804)

Minister of Kilmaurs parish church, where he was ordained in 1788, much against his parishioners' wishes. According to Burns Miller professed Auld Licht sentiments, but in reality had leanings the other way. He is the 'Wee Miller' of 'the Holy Fair'.

Miller later alleged that these derogatory lines had retarded his advancement.

But faith! the birkie wants a Manse,

So, cannilie he hums them;

the lively young fellow wants an ecclesiastical house (appointment) so cleverly he makes the orthodox beliefs he is talking about froth! (mousser) This is a rare use of the verb to hum but I think it is correct here as the author has been talking about drink. Beer froths. It would fit better with the following lines also.

Altho' his carnal wit an' sense

Like hafflins-wise o'ercomes him

Although his carnal wit and sense alike partly overcome him at times that day. The suggestion

implied is that the minister is thinking about sex. Many of the hell-fire sermons insisted quite a lot on the subject of damnation through 'fornication'! *At times that day.*

Now, butt an' ben, the change-house fills,
Wi' yill-caup commentators;
Now kitchen and parlour fills the Change-house= a small inn or alehouse with ale-cup Commentators. A commentator made critical or explanatory notes.
Here 's cryin out for bakes and gills,
An' there the pint-stowp clatters;
Here is crying out for biscuits and drinks (a gill (obs) = a measure used for liquids)
While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang,
Wi' logic an' wi' scripture,
While packed and thronging and loud and long with logic and with scripture
They raise a din, that in the end
Is like to breed a rupture
they raise such a noise that eventually is likely to lead to an eruption of wrath/anger that day.
So maybe the Cowgate tent is in fact the alehouse?

Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair Blessings on drink! it gives us more Than either school or college; It kindles wit, it waukens lair, it kindles (stimulates the brain) wit and it wakens learning It pangs us fou o' knowledge: It crams (bourre) us full of knowledge Be't whisky-gill or penny wheep, be it a gill of whiskey or a small beer (which probably cost a penny) Or ony stronger potion, or any stronger potion It never fails, on drinkin deep, (drinking a lot) To kittle up our notion, (to sharpen our ideas) By night or day.

Black Bonnet

A nickname for the elder stationed beside the collection plate at the church door to receive the congregation's offering. In the 'Epistle to John M'Math' Burns refers to his muse being "... tir'd wi' mony a sonnet, On gown an' ban' an' douce black bonnet" Burns Country website

The lads an' lasses, blythely bent To mind baith saul an' body, Sit round the table, weel content, An' steer about the toddy: the boys and girls happily intending to pay attention to both soul and body sit round the table well content and stir about the drink. (Toddy is alcohol mixed with water, sugar and spices)

On this ane's dress, an' that ane's leuk, They're makin observations; They are making remarks on this one's dress (un tel) and that one's look While some are cozie i' the neuk, while some are cosy in the nook (corner) An' forming assignations and making arrangements To meet some day.

But now the Lord's ain trumpet touts, the Lord's own trumpet sounds *Till a' the hills are rairin, (roaring)* And echoes back return the shouts; Black Russell is na sparin: His piercin words, like Highlan' swords, Black Russel is not sparing his piercing words which are like Highland swords Divide the joints an' marrow; divide the joints and marrow. moelle His talk o' Hell, whare devils dwell, Our vera "sauls does harrow" our very souls does harrow = traumatiser/descendre aux enfers comme adjectif = terrifying Wi' fright that day! with fright/fear Russell, The Reverend John (1740 -1817) A native of Moray, who, after a period of teaching in the Parish School at Cromarty, was ordained minister of the High Church in Kilmarnock in 1744. He was called to Stirling in 1800. He was a staunch supporter of the Auld Licht teaching, and a powerful preacher of the roaring hellfire-threatening sort. Burns was vigorously opposed to his teaching. Russell figures as 'Black Russell' in 'The Holy Fair', and 'wordy Russell' in 'The Twa Herds'. There is a reference to him in 'The Ordination', as being opposed to the common-sense view of the 'New Licht' party: 'An' Russell sair misca'd her'. He also appeared as 'Rumble John' in 'The Kirk's Alarm': "Rumble John, Rumble John, mount the steps with a groan,

Cry, '., The Book is with heresy cramm'd;

Then lug out your ladle, deal brimstone like aidle, And roar every note o' the Damn'd,

Rumble John, and roar every note o' the Damn'd."

The author of several books and pamphlets on religion no doubt of interest in his own day, he became involved in a wordy doctrinal battle with a fellow 'Auld Licht' Minister, the Reverend Alexander Moodie of Riccarton. It was the undignified spectacle of two members of the 'unco guid' fighting between themselves that inspired Burns to write 'The Twa Herds'.

Hugh Miller, the geologist and writer, was one of Russell's pupils at Cromarty. Miller recalled Russell as being 'a large, robust, dark-complexioned man — imperturbably grave, and with a sullen expression seated in the deep folds of his forehead'. Miller tells the story of a lady, years after she had left school, who suddenly saw Russell in a pulpit, and was 'so overcome with terror that she fainted away'. (The site Burns Country on line)

A vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit, (bottomless) Fill'd fou o' lowin brunstane,

filled full of lowing=blazing brimstone = salpêtre

Whase raging flame, an' scorching heat,

whose and

Wad melt the hardest whun-stane!

would melt. Whun-stane ou whunstone ou whinstane or whinstone. (J'ai cherché mes enfants) C'est une roche très compact et dure comme le basalt ou un morceau de ce type de roche.

Everyone hears a terrible roaring in the bar...

The half-asleep start up wi' fear, (with)

An' think they hear it roarin; (and.....roaring) *When presently it does appear*, 'Twas but some neibor snorin It was only neighbour snoring Asleep that day. in his sleep

'Twad be owre lang a tale to tell, it would be over long =too long *How mony stories past*; (many) An' how they crouded to the yill, crowded to the ale When they were a' dismist; (all dismissed/sent away/went home) How drink gaed round, in cogs an' caups, how drink went round in wooden dishes (coupelles) and cups Amang the furms an' benches; among the forms (a type of bench) and benches An' cheese an' bread, frae women's laps, (from) When you sit down your lap is the upper part of your legs. We put a child on our lap and the French put the child on their knees! Was dealt about in lunches dealt/dealt/dealt = distributed/handed out An' dawds that day. dawd = large piece/hunk/chunk

In comes a gawsie, gash guidwife, a jolly, sagacious/wise good woman (bonne femme) An' sits down by the fire, Syne draws her kebbuck an' her knife; then takes out her cheese and her knife The lasses they are shyer: the unmarried girls are more timid *The auld guidmen, about the grace* (old goodmen = bonshommes) Frae side to side they bother; (from) *Till some ane by his bonnet lays*, (some one; lays by = takes off) An' gies them't like a tether, and gives it to them like a chain grace = la benediction said before a meal. If I understand this correctly everyone is hungry but some of the 'holy' people are bothering everyone with the need to say grace and the man who finally does so, makes it a long drawn-out business! Fu' lang that day.

Waesucks! for him that gets nae lass,
Or lasses that hae naething!
Alas! for the man that does not get a woman or girls that have nothing
Sma' need has he to say a grace,
small need has he to say a grace. What has he got to be thankful for
Or melvie his braw claithing!
or to soil with mud his fine clothing. Maybe this means that the man who says the grace will
dirty his clothes by kneeling down?
O wives, be mindfu' ance yoursel'
o married women remember how you yourselves once
How bonie lads ye wanted;
desired fine boys
An' dinna for a kebbuck-heel
Let lasses be affronted

and do not let lasses be affronted/insulted for the last crust of cheese on such a day. *On sic a day!*

Now Clinkumbell, wi' rattlin tow, Begins to jow an' croon; Now the beadle (le bedeau) with rattling noise begins to swing and sound the bell and toll. To jow = includes the swinging motion of a bell and the noise it makes To croon = in this context it means toll = to sound the bell Some swagger hame the best they dow, some swagger home the best they can/are able Some wait the afternoon. At slaps the billies halt a blink, at breaches in the hedges the men stop a fraction of a second *Till lasses strip their shoon:* until the girls have taken off their shoes Wi' faith an' hope, an' love an' drink, (and) *They're a' in famous tune* (all) For crack that day. They are all in perfect harmony because of the chatting/talk/amusement of that day *How mony hearts this day* converts (many) O' sinners and o' lasses! Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane As saft as ony flesh is: their hearts of stone, come night time are gone as soft as any flesh There's some are fou o' love divine; There's some are fou o' brandy; some are full of divine love and some are full of brandy An' mony jobs that day begin, May end in houghmagandie and many jobs that begin that day may end in fornication Some ither day. some other day.

In the Holy Fair a reference is made to Racer Jess so I have found out about her from the Burns site.

Poosie Nansie

Wife of George Gibson, and the owner of a Mauchline tavern much frequented by beggars and 'gangrel bodies'. It was this Inn in the Cowgate which Burns visited, and where the revels which inspired 'The Jolly Beggars' took place. Agnes Wilson was employed as a servant by them. They had a son, Jock, and a half-witted daughter, known as 'Racer Jess', because of her speed in running errands..

10. The Epistle to John Lapraik 1785

One day or rather one night Burns hears a poem by John Lapraik and he decides to write him an epistle or letter in verse form.

While (the next sentences form the subject of the sentence)

briers = briars = églantier and woodbines = chèvrefeuille (are = ellipsed) budding green = to bud = bourgeonner

And partricks = partridges = perdrix (are = ellipsed) scraichin' loud at e'en = are screeching loudly in the evening

And morning poussie whiddin' seen = and the hares are running in the morning inspire my muse (the predicate of the opening sentence)

This freedom, in an unknown frien', I pray excuse = please excuse me for taking a liberty with an unknown friend.

To take a liberty with someone = exagérer. We still use the expression : "What a liberty!" whereas in French you would say "il/elle exagère!"

Fasten-een = the last evening before the beginning of Lent. In England it was called Shrove Tuesday which comes from shrive = to hear a confession and give absolution. Lent starts on Ash Wednesday and lasts until Easter Sunday. It was a time of abstinence from over indulgence in food and drink (though I do not know if Burns respected this!). To fast is to refrain from eating. That is why we have break + fast. Burns was at a social gathering on this occasion = a rockin' to ca' the crack = to give the news and gossip and weave the stocking = to knit our stockings. (the art of knitting was not originally only a female occupation). muckle fun and joking = a lot of fun etc. At length we had a hearty yokin' at sang about. A gaelic tradition apart from hours of talking is to have a bout of singing where each person has a turn to sing a song.

(My family still do this sometimes in Ireland especially at funerals : well as my mother came from a huge family and age is setting in funerals are more frequent than weddings now!) Back to Burns.

yokin' = a spell, a period of

Stanza three is quite straightforward. There was one song above all the others which pleased the poet the most and it was about some kind husband addressing his sweet wife. It thirl'd the heart-strings to the breast. It thrilled him right through the heart to his very soul.

Bosom means the chest of a woman : in general an opera singer has a generous bosom. However, it also means heart, intimate and close. If you are someone's bosom friend or pal you are a very close and intimate friend.

I've scarcely heard ought describ'd sae weel,

What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel

I've hardly ever heard what (ce que ressentent) generous, manly hearts feel described so well. He then wonders who could have written it Pope, Steele or Beattie.

They taud me 'twas an odd kind chiel about Muirkirk. They (the company) told me it was (by) an odd, kind fellow from the region of Muirkirk.

A very brief biography of Alexander Pope

Pope was born 21 May, 1688, in London. His father was a cloth merchant living in the City (a part of London); both his parents were Catholic. It was a period of intense anti-Catholic sentiment in England, and at some point (ca. 1700) in Alexander's childhood, the Pope family

was forced to relocate to be in compliance with a statute forbidding Catholics from living within ten miles of London or Westminster. They moved to Binfield (Berkshire).

Pope's early education was affected by his Catholicism: Catholic schools, although illegal, were allowed to survive in some places. Prior to the move to Binfield Pope spent a year at Twyford, where he wrote "a satire on some faults of his master," which led to his being "whipped and ill-used...and taken from thence on that account." (Spence). From Twyford Alexander went to study with Thomas Deane, a convert to Catholicism (who lost his position at Oxford as a result of his religious beliefs). After the Pope family moved to Binfield Alexander became self-taught.

Pope's disease--apparently tuberculosis of the bone--became evident when he was about twelve. Later in Pope's life, Sir Joshua Reynolds described him as "about four feet six high; very humpbacked and deformed." A more recent biographer (Maynard Mack 155-6) has written that Pope was "afflicted with constant headaches, sometimes so severe that he could barely see the paper he wrote upon, frequent violent pain at bone and muscle joints...shortness of breath, increasing inability to ride horseback or even walk for exercise...."

William Wycherley, impressed by some of Pope's early poetry, introduced him into fashionable London literary circles (in 1704). Public attention came with the publication of *Pastorals* in 1709. *The Rape of the Lock* helped secure Pope's reputation as a leading poet of the age.

Pope moved to his villa in Twickenham in 1717. While there he received visitors (just about everyone), attacked his literary contemporaries (just about eveyone, although notable exceptions were Swift and Gay, with whom he had close friendships), and continued to publish poetry. He died on 21 May, 1744, at Twickenham. (Internet)

Beattie, Dr James (1735-1803)

Born at Laurencekirk, Kincardinshire, Beattie was educated at the parish school, and at Marischal College, Aberdeen, where he was the best scholar in the Greek class. For five years he was a schoolmaster in Aberdeen Grammar School. In 1760, the year he published his *Original Poems and Translations*, he became Professor of Moral Philosophy in Marischal College. He achieved his literary reputation with his poem 'The Minstrel', published in two parts in 1771 and 1774 and much admired in his day. In May 1770, Beattie published his *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism*, which was an attempted efutation of Hume's doctrines. Beattie was one of a group of late 18th Century Scots who deliberately strove to rid their speech of Scotticisms.

Burns made several references to Beattie and his work. He told Dr Moor in January 1787: 'I am very willing to admit that I have some poetical abilities; and as few, if any writers, either moral or poetical are intimately acquainted with the classes of Mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis, which may assist originality of thought. Still I know very well, the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately got; and in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear; where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landskip, and Littleton and Collings described the heart; I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished Poetic fame.'

Telling his friends about Johnson's *Museum* Burns explained that 'Drs Beattie and Blacklock are lending a hand. 'Thomson also sought, on Burns's recommendation , to get Beattie to

devote some time 'in extending a little and adapting for our purpose the observations on Scottish pastoral music, contained in the third section of your Essay on Music and Poetry'. By 1792, however, when Thomson wrote, Beattie's health was failing and nothing came of this suggestion. (Burns site)

stanza 5

It pat me fidgin' fain to hear't And sae about him there I spier'd It got me fidgeting with excitement to hear it (that he lived near Muirkirk) and so I inquired about him there (in the company) Then a' that kenn'd him round declar'd He had ingine Then all those who knew him round the company declared that he had genius. *That nane excelled it, few cam near't, It was sae fine* That his genius was so fine that no-one excelled (dépasser) it or came anywhere near it.

stanza 6

That, set him to a pint o' ale An' either douce or merry tale, Or rhymes an' sangs he'd made himself, Or witty catches..

And that if he sat himself down with a pint of ale for either a serious or merry story or rhymes and songs he'd invented himself or witty catches = witty phrases

'Tween Inverness and Teviotdale,

He had few matches

Very few people could equal him between one side of the country to the next.

A catch-phrase is one which becomes fashionable and that everyone repeats : "C'est cela oui" A catchy tune is one which people can remember easily and sing. To match someone is to do something as well as him or her. To meet one's match = is to meet someone with exactly the same capacities.

stanza 7

Then up I gat, an' swoor an aith

Tho' I should pawn my pleugh and graith,

Then I stood up and swore an oath (faire un serment)

Even if I should have to pawn (mettre au clou) my plow and harnessing equipment Or die a cadger pownie's death

until I die (dying) the death of a pedlar's pony (presumably the pony is so often weighed down from carrying the merchandise that it eventually drops dead from exhaustion?!)

To cadge is still used in English for someone who asks for things all the time (taxer). Such a person is a cadger.

At some dyke-back

A pint an gill I'd gie them baith

To hear your crack

He would give both a pint and a gill to hear Lapraik's witty talk.

Good example of hyperbole here by the way as it would probably not necessary for Burns to exchange all his wealth just to buy the poet a few drinks!!! The implication is that Burns is drunk.

stanza 8

Burns recounts how he started as a poet

Amaist as soon as I could spell,

I to the crambo-jingle fell Almost as soon as he could spell (orthographier) he started making up rhymes. A jingle was a rough and uneven rhyme. It now means a short sung phrase to accompany a commercial on

t.v. Crambo = doggerel. Doggerel or doggerel verse (John Dryden is a fine example in English literature) is a synonym for crambo-jingle.

Tho' rude an' rough, Yet crooning to a body's sel,

Does weel enough

Although the rhymes were crude and rough, they did well enough/sufficed for someone humming them to himself.

stanza 9

Burns displays a modest attitude to his own poetic powers in this verse. He calls himself a 'rhymer' and not a poet and that he has no pretence to learning (education) but he says it does not really matter. Whenever his Muse looks at him/glances at him he rhymes at her.

stanza 10

Your critic-folk may cock their nose

To stick one's nose up at something = to disdain, to scorn something, to think oneself to superior for etc.

You wha ken hardly verse frae prose = you, who hardly knows the difference between verse and prose.

But by your leaves = begging your pardon (here used ironically to make fun of the critics) normally the expression is by your leave. The addition of the 's' makes the expression funnier.

my learnèd foes = my educated enemies. This is a word play on the cliché : my learnèd friends which used to be used so much in rhetoric and court rooms among 'educated' people. *Ye're maybe wrang* = you might be wrong/mistaken. Burns is very direct in his use of language even today in semi formal or formal situations one would never say to anyone (unless the person was a close friend or family member), "you are wrong" but "there seems to be a mistake" or "something is wrong here" etc.

stanza 11

What's a' your jargon o' your schools, Your Latin names for horns and stools; If honest Nature made you fools

What is the use of all your jargon from all your schools, your latin names for horns and stools (cornes et tabourets) if you are idiots from birth (if Nature has made you be born an idiot). I have the impression I'm listening to my mother talking about me again!! Back to Burns

What sairs your grammars?

Ye'd better ta'en up spades and shools,

Or knappin'-hammers.

What do your grammar books know? You would be better off picking up a spade and shovel or a stone-breaking hammer. (une masse)

stanza 12

A set o' dull conceited hashes

Confuse their brains in college classes!

A set of dull conceited (full of oneself = suffisant) brainless fellows confuse their brains in college classes. (Do you think Burns means people like us?)

They gang in stirks, and come out asses, Plain truth to speak; An' syne they think to climb Parnassus By dint o' Greek

They go in as one to two year old bullocks (a castrated or gelded male calf) and they come out as asses (donkeys = \hat{a} nes) and to speak the plain truth (to speak plainly the truth) plain = clear. And then they think they can climb to Parnassus (the mountain of the gods in Greek Literature) by using Greek words. To climb Parnassus is to reach the height of excellence in the figurative sense. It is not because one can say a few Greek words that one necessarily is excellent. By dint of = \hat{a} force de

stanza 13

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire, That's a' the learning I desire; Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire At pleugh or cart,

Just give me one spark (une étincelle) of Nature's fire (intelligence) and that is all the learning I desire. Then although I wade laboriously through puddles and mud with my plough or cart *My Muse, though hamely in attire,*

May touch the heart

My Muse, although dressed in a homely manner, she may touch the heart/have an effect.

stanza 14

O for a spunk o' Allan's glee, Or Fergusson's the bauld an' slee

O for a minute particle/spark of Allan's glee (glee is mirth and it is only really used in poetry) or Fergusson's (glee) the bold and sly (malin)

Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be,

If I can hit it!

Or bright Lapraik's who I hope will be my friend if I can pull it off/manage it. Burns hopes the poem will get a reply from Lapraik and that they will meet.

That would be lear enough for me.

That would be all the learning I would need. As long as he has these men as his mentors he does not need school learning.

Fergusson, Robert (1750-74)

2nd son of William Fergusson, accountant in the British Linen Company's Bank, Edinburgh, and his wife Margaret Forbes, like her husband, of Aberdeenshire descent. Robert was born in the Cap and Feather Close, Edinburgh, now partly occupied by North Bridge Street. He was educated at the High School, from where he went on a bursary to the Grammar School at Dundee. 2 years later, he proceeded, on a Fergusson bursary to the University of St Andrews, where his career was cut short by his father's death. He returned to Edinburgh and took an illpaid job as a copyist in a legal office. His first Scots poem to be published appeared on 2nd January 1772, in Ruddiman's *Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement*, where the majority of his best poems thereafter first appeared, until his early death in a mad house less than 3 years later. From the press of Walter and Thomas Ruddiman, in 1773, came *Poems* by Robert Fergusson.

Although Fergusson's prentice pieces were in somewhat stilted English, in 'the Daft Days', his first Scots piece, he showed himself the fitting recipient of the vernacular mantle laid aside by Allan Ramsay 14 years before. In quickmoving Scots, Fergusson wrote of Edinburgh scenes

and Edinburgh people. Even more than his predecessor, Ramsay, he had a considerable influence on his successor, Robert Burns.

Burns used several of the staves adapted to Scots use by Ramsay and Fergusson. He inherited the form of the Verse Epistle, popularised, but not actually 'invented', by Ramsay. Most important of all, Burns developed the temper of Fergusson's colloquial comment, vastly increasing its range and pointedness. From the number of stanza and subject matter parallels, it is quite obvious that Burns, before writing his won satires and epistles, had deeply steeped himself in Fergusson's work. Thus, Fergusson's 'Caller Water' was the starting point for Burns's 'Scotch Drink': Fergusson's 'Mutual Complaint of Plainstanes and Causey', the model for 'The Twa Dogs': 'Leith Races' for the 'The Holy Fair', and so on. Without in any way disparaging Fergusson's achievements, it would be true to say that Burns, with one exception, usually far out-stripped Fergusson in range and power. The exception is Fergusson's 'Farmer's Ingle', which is, as David Daiches says, 'both in inspiration and in integrity of feeling superior to Burns's 'Cotter's Saturday Night'.

But Burns was uncommonly generous in acknowledging his debts, both in prose and in verse. In the 'Epistle to William Simson', for instance he said:

"My senses wad be in a creel, [*my head would be turned* Should I dare a hope to speel, [*climb* Wi' Allan, or wi' Gilbertfield The braes o' fame; Or Fergusson, the writer-chiel, A deathless name."

'Allan' was, of course, Allan Ramsay, and 'Gilbertfield' William Hamilton of Gilbertfield. Burns then went on:

"O Fergusson! Thy glorious parts Ill suited law's dry, musty arts! My curse upon your whunstane hearts, Ye Enburgh Gentry [*Edinburgh* The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes Wad stow'd his pantry!" [*would have filled*

There is also the 'Aprostrophe to Fergusson, Inscribed Above and Below his Portrait':

"Curse on ungrateful man, that can be pleas'd And yet can starve the author of the pleasure O thou, my elder brother in misfortune, By far my elder brother in the muse, With tears I pity thy unhappy fate! Why is the Bard unfitted for the world, Yet has so keen a relish of its pleasures?"

These lines were inscribed in Burns's hand in a copy of the Second Edition of Fergusson's *Poems*, 1782, given by Burns to Rebekah Carmichael, on 19th March 1787. (in the dedication Burns describes her as a poetess. She published a book of verse in 1790). Henley and Henderson consider the dedication to have been written later than the lines of verse, the inference being that Burns gave Miss Carmichael his own copy. Edinburgh Central Library posses Burns's copy of the 1785 edition of Fergusson, with Burn's signature and a 3 stanza

poem, the first of which also appears on the headstone over Fergusson's grave in the Canongate Kirk.

On 6^{th} Febrary 1787, Burns wrote to the Baillies of the Canongate — who passed on his request to the authorities in charge of the Cemetry — for permission to put a stone on Fergusson's unmarked grave. Permission given, Burns commissioned an architect Robert Burn, to erect the stone, on which appeared the lines:

"No sculptur'd Marble her, nor pompous lay, No storied Urn nor animated Bust; This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way To pour her sorrow o'er the Poet's dust."

The 2 additional stanzas were written in the Second Commonplace Book.

5 years later, Burns paid the bill. Enclosing the money to Hill, Burns wrote on 5th February 1792: 'I send by the bearer, Mr Clarke, a particular friend of mine... £5 10 per acct. I owe to Mr Robt Burn, Architect, for erecting the stone over poor Fergusson. He was 2 years in erecting it, after I commission him for it; and I have been 2 years paying him, after he sent me his account; so he and I are quits. He had the hardiesse to ask me interest on the sum; but considering that the money was due by one Poet, for putting a tombstone over another, he may, with grateful surprise, thank Heaven that ever he saw a farthing of it.'

Ramsay, Allan (1686-1758)

Son of John Ramsay, superintendent of Lord Hopetoun's lead-mines at Leadhills, Lanarkshire, and his wife, Alice Bower, a native of Derbyshire. The poet's fanciful biographer, George Chalmers, claimed Ramsay's descent from the Ramsays of Cockpen, a younger branch of the Ramsays of Dalhousie; but Burns Martin, in his *Allan Ramsay: A Study of his Life and Works*, has shown this to be quite untrue. Ramsay's father died either just before the poet was born, or very soon after. His mother married again, her second husband being a smallholder called Andrew Crichton. The poet was educated at the parish school of Crawfordmuir. About 1700, his mother died, and his stepfather married again. Following in his elder brother's footsteps, Ramsay went to Edinburgh, where he was apprenticed to a wigmaker. On 19th July 1710, he was admitted a burgess, and soon after he set up his own shop as a master wigmaker. In 1712, he married Christian Ross, the daughter of a deceased lawyer, by whom he had six children, the oldest of whom, born in 1713, became Allan Ramsay, the painter.

It was as a member of the Easy Club that Ramsay seems to have found the first audience for his verse. His first published poem, *A Poem to the Memory of the Famous Archibald Pitcairn, M.D.,* appeared under their patronage. His poems thereafter appeared frequently, among them *Scots Songs* in 1718 and 1719. The quarto edition of his *Poems*, published in 1721, established his reputation throughout literary Scotland. Late in 1722, or early the following year. Ramsay abandoned wigmaking for bookselling, setting up his shop in the High Street, 'on the Southside of the Cross-well', but moving about 1726 to the east end of the Luckenbooths, where he abandoned his old sign of the 'Mercury' in favour of 'Hawthornden's and Ben Johnson's *[sic]* Heads'. His pastoral opera, *The Gentle Shepherd*, was first published in 1725. Between 1724 and 1737, Ramsay brought out the four volumes of *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, a collection of Scots songs, in Scots and English, made or amended by himself and his friends, including versions of traditional pieces. These anthologies achieved enormous popularity, and ran to many editions. The songs were originally published without the airs, but Ramsay named the airs for which the words were intended, and in 1726, under the editorship of Alexander Stuart, issued *Musick for Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs*. Other arrangers soon followed Stuart's example.

Another task which Ramsay set himself was to publish modern editions of the Scots Makars (as the 'Scottish Chaucerians' are, more properly, called by the Scots). Two of the four volumes of *The Ever Green* — the last two never appeared —came out in 1724. For all their editorial crudities, they performed a valuable service in keeping the poems of the Makars before a new public.

Ramsay was also interested in the theatre. He may have had a financial interest in the Edinburgh Company of Players, performing between 1733 and 1735: tickets for their performances were certainly sold at his shop. He was undoubtedly managing a Company in the New Theatre in Carrubbers Close in 1736. But the following year, the Edinburgh bailies, under Church pressure, misused the newly passed Licence Act, designed to prevent stage attacks on Walpole, and forced the closure of Ramsay's theatre, at some financial loss to the poet.

In 1733, Ramsay acquired land at Castle Hill, Edinburgh, and, helped by his son, designed and built the grey house (nicknamed 'The Goosedub', or 'Goose Pie', by his contemporaries) which then looked over fields, but now looks out over Princes Street to the north from Ramsay Gardens. There, he retired in 1740, prosperous, loved and respected. His wife predeceased him in 1743. A Jacobite in sentiment, Ramsay nevertheless found it convenient to be at Penicuik when his Prince sent for him to decorate him. The Jacobites seized his house in his absence for use as a vantagepoint for firing at the Castle sentries. He died of what was called 'scurvy of the gums', and was buried in Greyfriars' Cemetery. His statue stands at the foot of the mound in Princes Street Gardens, its base housing the works of the cuckoo clock!

Although Ramsay did not actually found the eighteenth century revival in Scots literature — the first brick was laid by James Watson's *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems*, published in Edinburgh between 1706-11 - he added to it and popularised it in such a manner as to ensure its success. If Burns drew more from Fergusson in his satires and epistles, where song-work was concerned, Ramsay was his model — Fergusson hardly wrote any songs in his brief life.

As with Fergusson, Burns more than acknowledged his debt to Ramsay, a much less direct one. But he was also aware of the older poet's limitations, referring in a letter of 3rd April 1786, to 'the famous Ramsay of jingling memory'. On 4th June 1789, Burns hoped that John M'Auley, Town clerk of Dumbarton, was, 'in immortal Allan's language', 'Hale, and weel and living.'

In his first *Commonplace Book*, Burns recorded his pleasure in 'the works of our Scotch Poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Ferguson *[sic]*'. In his rhyming letter to William Simson of Ochiltree, Burns's modesty makes us smile now:

"My senses wad be in a creel, Should I but dare a hope to speel, Wi' Allan, or wi' Gilbertfield, The braes o' fame...."

'Allan', of course, was Allan Ramsay. And it was, in part at least, the local patriotism of Ramsay and Fergusson. which stimulated Burns's desire to write about his own part of the country:

"Ramsay an' famous Fergusson Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon, Yarrow an' Tweed, to monie a tune. Owre Scotland rings, While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr an' Doon Naebody sings." -

a position Burns more than remedied!

Information from the Burns site

stanza 15

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,
Tho' real friends, I b'lieve are few,
Yet, if your catalogue be fou,
I'se no insist
Now sir if you have enough friends, although real friends, I believe are few; nevertheless, if
your catalogue (of friends) is full then I will not insist
But gif ye want ae friend that's true
I'm on your list.
But if you do want one friend who is true I am on your list (synonym for catalogue)

stanza 16

I winna blaw about myself, As ill I like my fauts to tell I will not boast (brag/show off) about myself as I do not really like talking about my faults; But friends, an' folks that wish me well, They sometimes roose me; Tho' I maun own, as mony still, As far abuse me However, friends and people who wish me well they sometimes praise me; although I must confess just as many people insult me. (do not speak well of me)

stanza 17

There's ae wee faut they whiles lay to me, I like the lasses – Gude forgie me! For mony a plack they wheedle frae me, At dance or fair,

There is one little fault they often accuse me of, I like the girls. God forgive me. On account of that (weakness) they (the girls) wheedle money from me (to wheedle someone out of something is to persuade someone to give one something when the person does not really want to. Children often wheedle things out of their parents.)

Maybe some ither thing they gie me They weel can spare.

They give me some other thing perhaps that they can well spare. (they have to give) and it could also mean that the girls can choose to give it or not. The implicit meaning is of course that they may sleep with him or not, probably.

stanza 18

The first two lines offer a meeting place. We'se gie ae night's discharge to care, If we forgather An' hae a swap o' rhymin'-ware wi' ane anither We will give up one night fro the burden of care and have a sample/bout of rhyme-making with one another.

stanza 19

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter, An kirsen him wi' reekin water

The four-gill chap = the pint shop. Four gills made one imperial pint in old measures. They will go to the tavern and we will make him noisy. The tavern is personified here by pronouns 'him' and 'he'.

And we will christen/baptise him with smoking water = probably strong liquor. Syne we'll sit down an' tak our whiter

And then we'll sit down and take a hearty draught of liquor to cheer our heart, and by God, we will be acquainted better before we part. (leave each other)

stanza 20

Awa, ye selfish warly race, Wha think that havins, sense, an' grace, Ev'n love an' friendship, should give place To catch-the-plack

Be off/Go away you selfish, worldly race who think that manners, sense and grace even love and friendship should be replaced by money-grubbing! (running after money)

I dinna like to see your face,

Nor hear your crack

I do not like to see your face or hear your talk.

stanza 21

But ye whom social pleasure charms, Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms, Who hold your being on the terms, 'Each aid the others,'

But to all you who are charmed by social pleasure and whose hearts are warmed by the tide of kindness (tide = marée) and who hold = tient pour précepte : Aidez les autres. Come to my bowl = come and sit at my table or eat with me.

stanza 22

First line is clear. As my auld pen's worn to the gristle; Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle

As my old pen is worn to the bone (pens would be made of quills at this time, I suppose). Two lines from you would make me fidget (rustle or make a noise like a mouse running, here it is used figuratively to mean very excited and happy).

11. The Epistle to James Smith 1786

stanza 1

To James Smith the sleeest pawkie thief That e'er attempted stealth or rief Ye surely hae some warlock-breef Owre human hearts; For ne'er a bosom yet was prief

Against your arts.

the slyest crafty (malin, rusé) thief who ever attempted stealth or thieving; you must have some power of a warlock (male witch) over human hearts because no bosom/human heart has ever yet been able to resist your skill. Notice proof which has the meaning of resistance cf. water-proof; rust-proof = impermeable, anti-rouille.

stanza 2

Burns swears by the sun, moon and the stars which twinkle above that you have cost me twenty pairs of shoes from going to visit you and for every other pair that has been worn out from visiting you I'm more fond of you. To be taken by someone = entiché de qqn.

stanza 3

The old capricious, bad-tempered woman called Nature in order to make amends for (your) inadequate stature (size) has made you into a human creature on her first plan (of her best design) and in her freaks (caprices/whims) she has written on you 'The Man'. A freak of nature is still employed either for someone who is handicapped or for an extreme climactic event like the recent heat wave in France of 2003.

stanza 4

For the moment my brain has taken a fit of inspiration and it's working at top speed. My imagination is tied up/occupied sublimely with hasty summoning= convocation ce qui veut dire que son inspiration l'appelle et il ne peut pas resister. Do you have a moment of leisure time to hear what is coming ?

stanza 5

some rhyme to make fun of/criticise a neighbour and some write verses (that will be the day) for money they need; and some write poetry to court (courtiser) the gossip of the country and raise a fuss/noise.

As far as I'm concerned I do not bother about an objective I make verses for fun/amusement.

stanza 6

The star (of fortune) that looks over my luckless = unfortunate/unhappy lot = fortune has destined me to wear a coat of coarse woollen cloth and condemned me to be a a man paid a groat (=fourpence) a day man. This means he is paid fourpence a day for labouring. However, as a favour to him, his star of fortune has given him a random gift of country intelligence.

stanza 7

All of this at the same time as my mind has taken a notion/fancy/idea to try my luck at good, black print/getting published. Yet the more I'm inclined to do this something tells me : "Hold on there"/stop a moment, I advise you my honest man to pay attention/take heed or you will show/reveal your madness.

stanza 8

There are other poets, far better than you because they studied Greek widely and were men of letters and they thought that they had written for posterity (insured their debtors a' future ages) but now the moths (papillon de nuit) eat their unknown pages into shapeless (formless) tatters (haillons mais ici figurative).

stanza 9

His train of thought continues in this stanza : well if I cannot be remembered by posterity let me say goodbye to a crown of laurels. Une couronne de lauriers was given to the winners of races in ancient Greece. To garland is to adorn. Brow means les tempes. To rove is to wander, roam. He will rove wherever the plough is busy functioning/working. He says he will sing his rhymes to the lonely heights and hollows.

stanza 10

The verse opens with a contradiction 'tentless heed' = unheeding heed. To unheed is to not pay attention or listen to attention how time flies by, never-ending and with great speed. We know time is passing but there is nothing we can do about it, so we have to go on living until fate (allusion to the mythological sisters who cut the thread of life) shall snap = break off the brittle= easily shattered (we use this adjective a great deal for glass or similar material) thread (fil). Then he will lay down and be buried, forgotten and gone with the inglorious dead!

stanza 11

The poet changes track and moves from death to life. He develops the metaphor of a ship to illustrate life. Everyone should crowd on to the ship of life and climb to the very top and maintop and open out the sail (voile) so that the ship can take the large propelled by the gale (which is enjoyment). At the same time one should throw care overboard and not take it on the voyage. To heave o'er side = to throw over the side of the ship. To heave is used when the object to be thrown is extremely heavy. At present we are sound and hale = healthy.

stanza 12

To wield is to hold and use and originally it was when the object was heavy and/or dangerous. We can say to wield an axe. The verb is used figuratively to describe abstract burdens which are considered heavy and dangerous. For example : to wield power. This verse uses a new comparison for life; it is an enchanted fairy land and the magic wand (la baguette magique of a fairy) is pleasure so if you use it correctly then time goes by 'full light' which means pleasurably but also quickly.

stanza 13

The poet moves from the idea of pleasure to the inevitable arrival of old age. He urges us on to use the magic wand because once you have climbed to/reached/attained the age of 45 then look crazy, weary and miserable Age with its wrinkled face comes coughing and limping over the field with creeping pace. To creep = ramper, move very slowly.

stanza 14

He now thinks of all the things one will regret once one is old. To draw near the gloaming = to approach the twilight (crepuscule) metaphor for old age. Then farewell, goodbye to vacant(empty) carefree roaming; and goodbye to cheerful tankards foaming (chopes qui débordent de la mousse) and social events and dear deluding (tricking, deceitful) woman; the best of all joy.

stanza 15

From thinking of what one misses with age he thinks of how we do not see this when we are young. Life is compared to a day and the morning represents youth. The beams of light from youthful imagination light up the hills. Being so full of joy and life youth does not stop and consider the lesson of Caution but frisks away just like schoolboys from the expected warning (reprimand) to joke and play.

stanza 16

We wander here and there and look at the rose upon the eglantine and forget that the thorn (épine) is very near among the leaves.

And tho' the puny wound appear

Short while it grieves.

And even if we get stung by the thorn and have a small wound (blessure) we do not cry about it for very long.

Puny is still used for a small, weak child or animal. A puny boy, pup. If it is used for a man it can also imply a weak character as well.

stanza 17

The poet now considers how some people seem to be blessed by fortune. They find a flowery spot (a nice life) for which they never had to work or sweat. They drink the sweet and eat the fat. This is a very Biblical allusion : "to live off the fat of the land". To have enough to eat and drink. But = away from, sheltered from care or pain. And they can luckily for them look with disdain on the barren hut = on the house where there is nothing.

stanza 18

Some people chase after Fortune with every muscle and sinew braced (tight/tensed for action). Through foul and fair (phrase made popular by Shakespeare but today we would say through thick and thin = no matter what the circumstances) they spur on during the hunt and seize their prey (proie). Then softly in some quiet place they close the day = they end their days/they die. The poet is conscious perhaps that one can change one's fortunes through determination.

stanza 19

However he now describes how things are for him. Your humble servant = bibi/ma pomme! Poor men who do not observe/respect rules or straight roads but swerve eternally from right to left and proceed zigzagging until cursed with age, obscurity (unknown) and starving they often groan. The groan here could refer to the noise made when people are on their death bed.

stanza 20

The poet continues in this mood in the first sentence but breaks off suddenly to change mood again. To strain means to make a very strenuous effort.

But truce wi' peevish, poor complaining

truce = trêve with peevish/grognon complaining = se plaindre.

Is Fortune's fickle Luna waning?

Is the moon of fickle = changeable/capricious Fortune declining. To wane is used for fortune as well as influence, popularity etc. When one wishes to describe the full moon cycle one often speaks of the waxing and waning of the moon. Fortune is often associated with the Moon which traditionally in Greek mythology is a feminine entity and the cycle of the moon is compared with the menstrual cycle. This is why fortune is changeable in mood and

capricious. The poet then says that whatever light remains of the declining moon he will use to sing his song.

stanza 21

In thinking on rhymes the poet now prays the Powers that be to always provide him with an abundance (rowth) of rhymes. To fling = to throw something away violently. "Warm implores" = to beg with all his heart, ardently.

That even if he wanders over the whole earth and through all her climates he will ask for nothing more than to always have an abundance of rhymes.

stanza 22

He would prefer that to anything else and gives some examples of what could be happiness for others.

Give dripping roasts (juicy meat) to country lords until icicles hang from their beards (all their life)

Give beautiful, fine clothes to life-guards and maids of honour

And give ale and whisky to tinkers (gypsies) until they are sick

stanza 23

Dempster deserves a title (implicitly give him one)

Give William Pitt a garter.

The Order of the Garter was and still is an honour bestowed/given by the sovereign.

Give wealth to some be-ledger'd cit

and increase it one hundredfold. (x100) We still sometimes say twofold or threefold but this is generally confined now to written English.

The sense is not very clear as cit can be the abbreviation of citizen or city and the word beledgered I cannot find. A ledger is an account book. One possible meaning of the beledger'd cit would be a tradesman or merchant. This reading would makes sense in the context too.

Dempster, George (1732 — 1818)

A parliamentary orator famous in his day, and a Scottish patrot who was known as 'Honest George'. His parliamentary career as a member for Forfar burghs lasted from 1761 — 90. Burns makes several references to him; one in the 'Epistle to James Smith' ("A title, Dempster merits it"); another in 'The Vision' ("Hence, Dempster's zeal — inspired tongue"); and a third in 'The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer' ("Dempster, a true blue Scot I'se warran").

Dempster was a native of Dundee where his father and grandfather amassed considerable wealth by trading, and which he inherited while still young. He was educated at Dundee Grammar School, St Andrews University and Edinburgh where he became a member of the Faculty of Advocates. While in Parliament he supported the Rockingham Party and Pitt's financial plans. He also supported Fox's India Bill.

In 1786 he purchased the estate of Skibo in Sutherland, where he turned his attention to Scottish fishing and agriculture. He promoted the formation of a Society for the extension and protection of Scottish Fisheries. The Company bought large acres of land and built harbours, quays and storehouses, but was ruined by the outbreak of war with France in 1793. Dempster taught his countrymen how to pack their salmon in ice for transit to London and other large cities. He was a model landlord, resigning most of his feudal rights, and draining and improving the land and conditions of the peasantry. He spent the latter part of his life at his

estate of Dunichen, near St Andrews, where his old friend Dr Adam Ferguson, founder of the Poker Club, lived.

Information from the Burns site.

Pitt, William the Younger (1759-1806)

In 'The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer', Burns called him 'Yon Premier youth'. He became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1784 at the age of twenty-three. (The Government's first minister did not regularly assume the title of Prime Minister until Walpole's day.)

He was the second son of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, himself a distinguished statesman, who, because of his criticisms of the public school system, educated his son at home under the tutorship of the Reverend Edward Wilson, of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. This form of education developed the intellectual abilities of the already precocious child. At the age of ten, William Pitt, junior, was a proficient classical scholar, and when he was thirteen he wrote a political tragedy called *Laurentino, King of Chersonese*.

Pitt went to Cambridge, where his tutor was Dr George Pretyman (later he changed his name to Tomline), to whom Pitt afterwards gave the bishopric of Lincoln, and also bequeathed his papers. Pretyman became Pitt's first biographer.

The young Pitt first entered Parliament as member for the pocket borough of Appleby, although he afterwards always represented Cambridge University. His maiden speech was described by his rival, Lord North, as the best first speech he had ever heard, and Burke went even further by declaring him to be 'not a chip off the old block but the old block itself'. He supported Shelburne's party, and became Chancellor of the Exchequer under his administration.

Pitt's career in Parliament was distinguished by his untiring political warfare with Fox, whom he fought on the Irish question, the India Bill, the Regency question and on France.

On the home front, a Bill he brought forward in April 1785 to suppress thirty-six pocket boroughs, and to transfer their members to increase the representation of certain towns and counties, was defeated. Pitt did not again try to bring in a Reform Bill, though after 1792, when Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* was published, the demand for reform grew. But, alarmed by the turn the French Revolution had taken, Pitt had the *Habeas Corpus Act* suspended, in 1793, and again from 1795 to 1801 There were also the trials of the Friends of the People leaders, Skirving, Margarot, Gerrald and Muir, savagely sentenced for advocating nothing more treasonable than constitutional reform and universal suffrage. To Burns, with his radical sympathies, Pitt thus seemed the tyrannical defender of privilege against reform, a conception, however, which history has hardly sustained.

Because of his Irish policy, Pitt's resignation was at last forced in February 1801, but he returned in 1804, as Chancellor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury.

He was never really a popular statesman, being considered cold and aloof, though clearly he was an inspired leader.

He was, in a sense, the bridge between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and responsible for the origin of modern financial theory. He approved of the abolition of the slave trade, but did little to advance the social conditions of his workers at home. To quote one biographer, he was 'revered but not loved'.

stanza 24

The poet again rejoices in having poetic talent and tells us that he is prepared to suffer any hardship to retain it.

As long as you Powers (God) see fit to keep me in good health, I will sit down with a cheerful face over my meagre/not copious meal whether it be meal and water (very thin porridge as the best porridge is made with milk) or thin broth (a very watery soup probably made with a few cabbage leaves). As long as the Muses do not fail to say the grace. (la benediction)

stanza 25

He celebrates the present moment.

I never throw an anxious look to the past (behind my ear) or to the future (in front of my nose). I duxk (sse baisser en essayant d'éviter qqch.) beneath the blows (les coups) of Misfortune as well as I can. I rhyme away/I continue making poems and I am the sworn enemy to sorrow, care and prose.

stanza 26

The following verses are probably among his most effective criticism of the "Righteous". O you sober people who live strictly by the rules

He then calls them "tideless-blooded". A tide = la marée so hear the changing floods of strong emotions do not run through the blood of these people. So compared with you, this fool (Burns himself) I am so unlike you.

Your hearts are just a standing pool = a stagnant pond where the water provides no life any more = un étang d'eau morte.

Your lives are a dyke = The image is superb. The dykes or dikes were long trenches dug out to leave a mound of earth on the side to help prevent flooding or inundation. These people will not take the risk of being 'flooded' with sentiment or feeling.

stanza 27

No hare-brain'd sentimental traces

hare-brained means idiotic and it is still used today especially in partnership with scheme or idea. In your unletter'd, nameless faces. It was a common image to speak of a person's life being written on his face but these are unlettered = nothing is written there because they have not lived emotionally. They never stray = get lost in arioso trills = in high exhilarating music but prefer to stay in solemn, gravissimo basses and sing that.

stanza 28

Ye are sae grave, nae doubt ye're wise Nae ferly tho' ye do despise The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys

You are so serious, and no doubt you are very wise, so it is no wonder then that you despise the harum-scarum = rash/acting without thinking first and you will still find this expression in English; ramstam has more or less the same meaning = headlong/rash but it is a Scottish word.

The rattlin' squad = the people who act like this I see you upward cast your eyes— Ye ken the road.

These people would raise their eyes to heaven at the behaviour of the 'weak' humans and Burns ironically uses the expression to mean they know the road to Heaven literally, however their lack of compassion for others means they do not know the road.

stanza 29

Burns comes back to himself and remembers he is writing a letter to his friend *Whilst I – but I shall haud me there* He breaks off his sentence which was continuing his train of thought from the last verse to 'hold' = stop. *Wi' you I'll scarce gang ony where* = With you (the righteous) I'll hardly be going anywhere *Then, Jamie, I shall say nae mair, But quat my sang Content with You to mak a pair, Where'er I gang.*

I shan't say anymore but leave my song. I'll be happy to pair up with you wherever I go.

Smith, James (1765-c. 1823)

The son of a Mauchline merchant who was killed in an accident when the boy was ten years old. Smith was brother to one of 'the Mauchline belles', Jean. He was strictly brought up by a step-father, a Mr Lamie, but revolted against his upbringing when a youth. Snyder describes Richmond, Smith and Burns as 'forming a happy triumvirate in village revelry', which, in view of the fact that two of them were responsible for putting local unmarried girls in the family way, is perhaps something of an understatement. *See* 'Court of Equity'.

Smith had a draper's shop in Mauchline, almost opposite Nanse Tinnock's, but he later went into partnership with a Linlithgow calico-printer. When this business failed, Smith emigrated to St Louis, Jamaica, and died there at an early age. (Cromek speaks of him as being dead in 1808.)

Burns favoured Smith with a number of letters revealing his unguarded thoughts on sex and marriage. When the poet was distracted on the supposed desertion of Jean, it was through Smith, in a letter tentatively dated by Ferguson 1st August 1786, that Burns indicated he would meet her: 'So help me Heaven in my hour of need.' It was to Smith, too, that, on 30th June the following year, Burns gloated on his skill as a seducer: 'I am an old hawk at the sport, and wrote her such a cool, deliberate, prudent reply, as brought my bird from her aerial towerings, pop, down at my foot, like Corporal Trim's hat.'

It was also to Smith, in a letter of 28th April 1788, that Burns first announced unequivocally that he had married Jean: 'There is, you must know, a certain clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance, to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title to my corpus.... I intend to present Mrs Burns with a printed shawl, in article of which I daresay you have variety: 'tis my first present to her since 1 have *irrevocably* called her mine...'

Smith was also the recipient of the 'Epistle to James Smith' in which Burns calls him: 'the slee'st, pawkie thief, That e'er attempted stealth or rief'. It is in this poem that Burns works up to his glorious denunciation of hypocritical, censorious, and cold-blooded people in the powerful closing stanzas, beginning:

"O ye douce folk that live by rule, Grave, tideless - blooded, calm an' cool Compar'd wi' you - O fool! fool! Fool! How much unlike! Your hearts are just a standing pool, Your lives, a dyke!..."

12. The Epistle to A Young Friend 1786

I Lang hae thought, my youthfu' friend, A something to have sent you, Tho' it should serve nae ither end Than just a kind memento: But how the subject-theme may gang, Let time and chance determine; Perhaps it may turn out a sang: Perhaps turn out a sermon.

He has often thought about sending his youthful friend something, even if it should serve no other purpose than that of being a momento = reminder/souvenir. He does not know what the theme will be; time and chance will determine whether it turns out to be a song or a sermon.

Ye'll try the world soon, my lad; And, Andrew dear, believe me, Ye'll find mankind an unco squad, And muckle they may grieve ye: For care and trouble set your thought, Ev'n when your end's attained; And a' your views may come to nought, Where ev'ry nerve is strained.

He says that Andrew will very soon be working in the world and that he will find mankind an unusual bunch of people and that they will grieve him a lot. He warns him to be prepared for care and trouble and that even when he thinks he has obtained his goal to be prepared to see everything come to nothing after having exercised considerable effort to obtain the goal.

I'll no say, men are villains a'; The real, harden'd wicked, Wha hae nae check but human law, Are to a few restricked; But, Och! mankind are unco weak, An' little to be trusted; If self the wavering balance shake, It's rarely right adjusted!

I will not say that all men are villains (bad men) or that the hardened are wicked and those who have no other limit but the law of man (who do not believe in God presumably) are restricted to very few/a handful. However men are extremely weak and you must not trust them. If one is weighing up the for and against of an action, selfish interest will often make the scales unbalanced (in favour of selfishness).

Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife, Their fate we shouldna censure; For still, th' important end of life They equally may answer; A man may hae an honest heart, Tho' poortith hourly stare him; A man may tak a neibor's part, Yet hae nae cash to spare him.

Nevertheless we should not censure those who fall foul of fortune or get themselves into trouble because at the end of their life they still have to answer for it (before God). A man can have an honest heart even if poverty is hounding him by the hour and a man may defend his neighbour even if he has no money to give him.

Aye free, aff-han', your story tell, When wi' a bosom crony; But still keep something to yoursel', Ye scarcely tell to ony: Conceal yoursel' as weel's ye can Frae critical dissection; But keek thro' ev'ry other man, Wi' sharpen'd, sly inspection.

When you are with your bosom friend always tell your private thoughts freely and spontaneously but even so always keep something back to yourself that you hardly confide to anybody. Hide or conceal yourself from the critical regard of other people but try to peep through every other man (observe others) with sharpened (perspicacious) and sly (malin) inspection.

The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love, Luxuriantly indulge it; But never tempt th' illicit rove, Tho' naething should divulge it: I waive the quantum o' the sin, The hazard of concealing; But, Och! it hardens a' within, And petrifies the feeling!

Indulge the sacred glow of truly placed (bien place) love luxuriantly but do not tempt the illicit roam even if nobody should reveal/make it known (do not be unfaithful to the woman you love). What is worse than the amount of the sin itself is the hazardous process of concealing it, because it makes one feel so hard within/inside and makes the feeling lile stone. To waive = to pass over

To catch dame Fortune's golden smile, Assiduous wait upon her; And gather gear by ev'ry wile That's justified by honour; Not for to hide it in a hedge, Nor for a train attendant; But for the glorious privilege Of being independent.

Wait for the golden smile of Fortune assiduously = make an effort to make your fortune. And by all means increase your worldly wealth by any means as long as they are justified by honour. Do not make money for the pleasure of being a miser (hiding it in a hedge) or to have servants but for the great privilege of being independent.

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip, To haud the wretch in order; But where ye feel your honour grip, Let that aye be your border; Its slightest touches, instant pause-Debar a' side-pretences; And resolutely keep its laws, Uncaring consequences. The fear of hell is like the whip of the hangman to keep the wretch in order (deter him from crime) but where you feel that your honour is in danger let that limit be your border. An intelligent man must examine his conscience. If you feel the slightest twinge (pincement) of conscience then pause for a while and forbid all side-pretences = excuses that one could invent to pretend to oneself; and keep the laws of honour resolutely whatever the consequences may be. Uncaring = not to pay attention to.

The great Creator to revere, Must sure become the creature; But still the preaching cant forbear, And ev'n the rigid feature: Yet ne'er with wits profane to range, Be complaisance extended; An atheist-laugh's a poor exchange For Deity offended!

It becomes the man to revere his Creator, but man must refrain from preaching cant (hypocritical talk) and even the rigid character. Nevertheless, do not become so complaisant that you use your profane wits to disrespect God. The atheist's joke is a very poor exchange for the offence that you may cause to God.

When ranting round in pleasure's ring, Religion may be blinded; Or if she gie a random sting, It may be little minded; But when on life we're tempest driv'n-A conscience but a canker-A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n, Is sure a noble anchor!

When one is having a pleasurable time one may forget all about religion and if she (religion) does give you a pang of conscience at these moments it may be ignored; however, when our life is more like a driving tempest an unburdened/a clean conscience and a fixed correspondence with Heaven is surely a noble anchor.

Adieu, dear, amiable youth! Your heart can ne'er be wanting! May prudence, fortitude, and truth, Erect your brow undaunting! In ploughman phrase, "God send you speed," Still daily to grow wiser; And may ye better reck the rede, Then ever did th' adviser!

He signs off and then hopes that prudence, fortitude and truth will allow him to hold his head up high without fear. God send you speed to grow wiser every day and may you pay better attention to the advice (I am giving you) than the adviser ever did!!

13. A BARD'S EPITAPH 1786

Burns imagines himself buried in the grave and invites passers-by to weep for him.

Is there a whim-inspired fool, Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule, Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool, Let him draw near; And owre this grassy heap sing dool, And drap a tear.

Is there an idiot who acts on the inspiration of caprice

Who acts before he thinks and is too hot-headed or stubborn to be ruled; who is to bashful/shy to seek/inquire or ask others probably and too proud to creep (be obsequious)? Let him draw near (qu'il approche) and over this grassy heap/mound (often used to describe the burial place) and sing dolefully (sadly) and drop a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song, Who, noteless, steals the crowds among, That weekly this area throng, O, pass not by! Is there a poet who creates rustic songs and who unknown is passing among the crowds that usually gather weekly in this area? Do not go by (my grave without stopping) But, with a frater-feeling strong, Here, heave a sigh. But with strong brotherly feeling come and heave a sigh.

Is there a man, whose judgment clear Can others teach the course to steer, Yet runs, himself, life's mad career, Wild as the wave, Is there a man whose clear judgement can teach other people how to take the right course but for himself is unable to do this and instead runs as wild as the waves in his own path in life? Here pause-and, thro' the starting tear, Survey this grave. If you are like that man, then pause and from incipient fear inspect this grave

The poor inhabitant below Was quick to learn the wise to know, The poor inhabitant below = Burns himself was very quick to know how to teach wise people knowledge And keenly felt the friendly glow, And softer flame; And he deeply appreciated the warmth of friendship and the softer flame of love But thoughtless follies laid him low, And stain'd his name! But his own thoughtless madness got him into trouble and stained (tarnir) his reputation

Reader, attend! whether thy soul Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole, Or darkling grubs this earthly hole, In low pursuit:

Reader listen to me! Whether your soul soars your flights of imagination beyond the North Pole or whether your soul digs about half-concealed in this hole in the ground looking for light (inspiration, knowledge)

Know, prudent, cautious, self-control Is wisdom's root. Know that the root of wisdom is prudent, cautious self-control.

14. TO A HAGGIS 1786

Burns wrote this poem to celebrate the Scottish character and qualities. The Haggis as a national dish represents this. The Haggis is thus personified as if it were a man. The images used relate to different parts of the body and titles. The song is accompanied by gestures . poems.

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
fa'= portion sonsie= pleasant
Your good-sized portion is your honest, pleasant face
Great chieftain o' the pudding-race!
The haggis is personified as the Creat chieftain. There is a double-meaning here as a pudding is a dull person as well as a pudding.
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
above them all you take precedent
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
paunch, tripe = entrails, small guts = petits intestines?
Weel are ye wordy o'a grace
As lang's my arm.
Well are you worthy of all grace (benediction) as long as is my arm. It is not a problem to say a long grace for a haggis as it is good to eat and one can wait.

The groaning trencher there ye fill, Your hurdies like a distant hill,

You fill the groaning dish (groaning because the haggis is heavy and takes up all the space) your buttocks like a distant hill. The haggis is very rounded so Burns uses the image of a rounded backside and a hill.

Your pin was help to mend a mill

In time o'need,

I had a discussion with a couple of Scottish friends about this and it seems there may be two possibilities pin could be a leg and therefore the strength of the legs might be needed to help to repair a mill or pin could be a device which one would need to help get the mill going as well as the object which fastens the haggis together when it is cooked *While thro' your pores the dews distil*

Like amber bead.

while through your pores the dews (poetic for juices) distil like amber bead =whisky amber is the colour of whisky

His knife see rustic Labour dight, An' cut you up wi' ready sleight,

His knife see (addressing the people who are watching) rustic Labour wipe. The knife is cleaned by running it down the sleeve of one's jacket. And cut you up with ready dexterity. *Trenching your gushing entrails bright, Like ony ditch;*

slicing open your bright, gushing= flowing entrails= insides like any ditch And then, O what a glorious sight, Warm-reekin', rich!

warm, smoking rich! (refers to the steam rising)

Then, horn for horn, they stretch an' strive:

then spoon for spoon they (everybody) stretch and struggle. (spoons could be make of horn like combs)

Deil tak the hindmost! on they drive,

Devil take the last one = it's every man for himself *Till a' their weel-swall'd kytes belyve* until all their well swollen bellies by and by *Are bent like drums;* are as taut as drum skins *Then auld Guidman, maist like to rive,* then old goodmen almost fit to burst say thanks to it by humming. The next line could be a reference to burping/belching or even farting! I'm not sure *Bethankit! hums.*

Is there that owre his French ragout Or olio that wad staw a sow, Is there any one who would over a French ragout or olio (another foreign dish) that would sicken a sow = a female pig Or fricassee wad make her spew Wi' perfect sconner, or fricassee that would make her spew/vomit/throw up/be sick with perfect disgust Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view On sic a dinner? looks down with sneering and scornful facial expression on such a dinner? (Qui pourrait dédaigner un tel plat?)

Poor devil! see him owre his trash, As feckles as wither'd rash, see him over his trash (referring to the other dishes which are rubbish) as feckless = powerless/ineffective as withered rash (un Roseau flétri) His spindle shank, a guid whip-lash; His skinny legs, a good whip-lash (= as thin as the whip. A lash is a synonym for whip but the two words were joined into whiplash = cravache His nieve a nit; his fist a nut = as small as a nut Thro' blody flood or field to dash, O how unfit! through bloody flood or field to dash . O how unfit. Only a haggis will make a man big and strong enough to ride through harsh or difficult terrain.

But mark the Rustic, haggis-fed, The trembling earth resounds his tread. Clap in his walie nieve a blade, He'll mak it whissle;

But observe the rustic man who has been fed on haggis. The earth trembles with his every step. A blade (synechdoche le lame = le couteau) clapped/held in his large fist, he will make it whistle.

An' legs an' arms, an' hands will sned, Like taps o' trissle. and legs and arms and hands will lop/prune (tailler) such tops of thistles

Ye Pow'rs, wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
You Powers (the powers of heaven) who look after mankind and dish them out their bill of fare = menu, food
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware
That jaups in luggies;
Old Scotland wants no liquid food that splashes about in small wooden dishes with straight handles.

But, if ye wish her gratefu' prayer Gie her a haggis! but if you want her grateful prayer give her a haggis.

15. ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID 1786

Address To The Unco Guid, Or The Rigidly Righteous

My Son, these maxims make a rule, An' lump them aye thegither; The Rigid Righteous is a fool, The Rigid Wise anither: The cleanest corn that ere was dight May hae some pyles o' caff in; So ne'er a fellow-creature slight For random fits o' daffin. Solomon.-Eccles. ch. vii. verse 16.

This opening quotation is in fact a comment in verse by Burns on the actual quotation from Ecclesiastes : « Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise, why destroy yourself. » The quotation is to remind one that being too rigid in one's goodness or wisdom leads to the destruction of humility. Burns uses an analogy with corn to explain that even the very best corn may have blemishes and so it is with men.

The best corn that was ever sifted/winnowed may have some grains of chaff (useless substance) and so there never was a fellow creature however small who does not have an occasional bout of weakness.

O ye wha are sae guid yoursel', Sae pious and sae holy, Ye've nought to do but mark and tell Your neibours' fauts and folly! Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill, Supplied wi' store o' water; The heaped happer's ebbing still, An' still the clap plays clatter.

All you who are so good and yourselves, so pious and so holy you have nothing else to do but observe and reveal your neighbours' faults and folly! Whose life is like a well-going (efficient) mill supplied with a store of water the loaded grain basket is still ebbing/floating, but still the clapper (le battant du Moulin) makes a clatter (noise).

Hear me, ye venerable core, As counsel for poor mortals That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door For glaikit Folly's portals: I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes, Would here propone defences-Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes, Their failings and mischances.

Listen to me you venerable people as advice for poor mortals who frequently pass by (in the sense ignore) the sober door of Wisdom and (go through) the doors/portals of thoughtless folly; I, for their sakes would here propose defences (for) their vicious tricks, their black mistakes etc. A failing is a weakness especially of character.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compared, And shudder at the niffer; But cast a moment's fair regard, What maks the mighty differ; Discount what scant occasion gave, That purity ye pride in; And (what's aft mair than a' the lave), Your better art o' hidin. You see your state compared with theirs and shudder at the badly or unevenly spun yarn (les fils mal tissés) but cast/throw a look on what makes the mighty/powerful different. If you subtract the rare occasions for sin which allows you to have the purity you are so proud of and (that is often more than all the rest (of them). What he means here is that the poor men the righteous are so ready to condemn are far more exposed to occasions where they might sin compared with these privileged people.

Think, when your castigated pulse
Gies now and then a wallop!
What ragings must his veins convulse,
That still eternal gallop!
He asks them to consider how they feel when their punished impulse gives an occasional thump and to understand what ragings go through the veins of ordinary men. It is like a convulsion which gallops.
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
Right on ye scud your sea-way;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail,
It maks a unco lee-way.
With wind and tide fair behind you, you can trace your path through the sea with no problem but if you have to drive through both pushing against you then it is an uncommon/difficult path to follow.

See Social Life and Glee sit down, All joyous and unthinking, Till, quite transmugrified, they're grown Debauchery and Drinking: O would they stay to calculate Th' eternal consequences; Or your more dreaded hell to state, Damnation of expenses!

When you see social life and glee sit down together all joyous and unthinking until they are transformed and have grown into debauchery and drinking. If only they would stop a little to calculate the eternal consequences (= punishment in the life after death) before your more dreaded hell you talk about, damnation of usages/customs

Ye high, exalted, virtuous dames, Tied up in godly laces, Before ye gie poor Frailty names, Suppose a change o' cases;

You high and exalted, virtuous ladies tied up in godly laces (guindé) before you start calling weakness names why don't you imagine yourself in the other man's shoes

A dear-lov'd lad, convenience snug,

A treach'rous inclination-

A dearly loved boy, smooth in congruity (may yield to ?) a treacherous inclination. I think this means that if they changed places with an ordinary person they would not be able to keep up their smooth congruence with purity.

But let me whisper i' your lug,

Ye're aiblins nae temptation.

Let me whisper in your ear, you perhaps are not temptation. This may mean that they would not be temptation for others! I really am not sure of the sense of this verse.

Then gently scan your brother man, Still gentler sister woman; Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang, *To step aside is human:* Then look kindly on your brother, man and even more so your sister, woman. Although they may go a little wrong, to step aside (to err/sin) is human *One point must still be greatly dark, -The moving Why they do it; And just as lamely can ye mark, How far perhaps they rue it.* One point must still be very hard to understand, the reason/the motive for why they do it. And

just as difficult for you to understand is to observe how far they perhaps regret what they have done.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone Decidedly can try us; He knows each chord, its various tone, Each spring, its various bias: Then at the balance let's be mute, We never can adjust it; What's done we partly may compute, But know not what's resisted.

Burns reminds the righteous that only God who has made the heart of man and he alone can judge us. He knows each chord and every tone, every spring and its inclination. So for us mortals let us be quiet/silent about the balance because we can never change it. We can partly judge deeds by what has been done but what we cannot know is how many deeds have been resisted by a person who was tempted to commit them.

16. ON A SCOTCH BARD 1786

On A Scotch Bard, Gone To The West Indies

A' ye wha live by sowps o' drink, A' ye wha live by crambo-clink, A' ye wha live and never think, Come, mourn wi' me! Our billie 's gien us a' a jink, An' owre the sea!

All you who live by spoonfuls of drink (alcohol), doggerel verses, (crude poetry not refined and sophisticated), and never think come cry with me. Our comrade has given us a jink = has done a dodge = trick and has gone over the sea.

Lament him a' ye rantin core, Wha dearly like a random splore; Nae mair he'll join the merry roar; In social key; For now he's taen anither shore. An' owre the sea!

Lament for him all you ranting core = roaring people who dearly like an occasional frolic; no more he will join the merry roar in social key for now he has taken another shore and gone over the sea.

The bonie lasses weel may wiss him, And in their dear petitions place him: The widows, wives, an' a' may bless him Wi' tearfu' e'e; For weel I wat they'll sairly miss him That's owre the sea! The lovely girls may wish him we

The lovely girls may wish him well and in think of him in their prayers : the widows, wives and all may bless him with tears in their eyes; for well I know they will sorely miss him that has gone over the sea

O Fortune, they hae room to grumble! Hadst thou taen aff some drowsy bummle, Wha can do nought but fyke an' fumble, 'Twad been nae plea; But he was gleg as ony wumble, That's owre the sea!

O Fortune, they have room to grumble (raler) had you taken off some drowsy (sleepy) blunderer, that can do nothing but fuss and fumble there would have been no plea (begging for the person to stay) but he was sharp as any gimlet (an instrument used for making holes in soft ground) that is over the sea. blunderer = gaffeur : to fumble : bredouiller mais mal adroit lorsqu'il s'agit de gestes

Auld, cantie Kyle may weepers wear, An' stain them wi' the saut, saut tear; 'Twill mak her poor auld heart, I fear, In flinders flee: He was her Laureat mony a year, That's owre the sea! Old_iolly Kyle may wear mourt

Old, jolly Kyle may wear mourning ribbons on its hats and stain them (the ribbons) with the salt, salt tear; it will her poor old heart, I'm afraid flee in pieces (=grosso modo briser le Coeur en morceaux). He was her poet laureate for many a year who is over the sea!

He saw Misfortune's cauld nor-west Lang mustering up a bitter blast; A jillet brak his heart at last, Ill may she be! So, took a berth afore the mast, An' owre the sea.

He saw Misfortune's cold northwest wind long mustering up a bitter blast; a rupture broke his heart at the end, ill may she be (his heart) so he took a berth (a cabin on board ship) before the mast (le mât) and over the sea.

To tremble under Fortune's cummock, On a scarce a bellyfu' o' drummock, Wi' his proud, independent stomach, Could ill agree; So, row'd his hurdies in a hammock, An' owre the sea.

To tremble under Fortune's cummock (=crosse) on a scarce (guère) a bellyful of raw meal and water mixed (meal in Scotland was grain reduced to powder for example oatmeal= flacons d'avoine) with his proud, independent stomach could not agree very well so rowed (rolled) his buttocks in a hammock and went over the sea. Fortune had treated the poet badly so he decides to try his fortune overseas.

He ne'er was gien to great misguidin, Yet coin his pouches wad na bide in; Wi' him it ne'er was under hiding; He dealt it free: The Muse was a' that he took pride in, That's owre the sea.

He never was given to great misguiding (Scottish meaning of the time = mistreatment (probably of his money)) Because coins in his pockets would not stay in. He could not keep money in his pockets, with him it never was under hiding; he dealt it free/he distributed it freely. The muse was all that he took pride in/that he was proud of that is over the sea.

Jamaica bodies, use him weel, An' hap him in cozie biel: Ye'll find him aye a dainty chiel, An' fou o' glee: He wad na wrang'd the vera deil, That's owre the sea.

Jamaican people be good to him and shelter him in a cozy sheltered place (haven). You will always find him a dainty/fastidious child and full of glee (happiness). He would not have wronged (done something wrong against) the very Devil (the devil himself) that is over the sea.

Farewell, my rhyme-composing billie! Your native soil was right ill-willie; But may ye flourish like a lily, Now bonilie! I'll toast you in my hindmost gillie, Tho' owre the sea!

Farewell, my rhyme composing comrade! Your native soil was very ill-natured but may you flourish like a lilly now and beautifully! I will toast you in my very last little gill (measure of alcohol) that is over the sea!

This poem was written because Robert had got his future wife pregnant but he wanted to make his fortune first before marrying her. He in fact stayed in Scotland and married her. Jean

bore him nine children only three of whom survived.

17. THE AULD FARMER'S NEW-YEAR SALUTATION 1786

The Auld farmer's New year Morning Salutation to his auld mare Maggie On giving her the accustomed ripp of corn to hansel in the New Year.

a hansel was a gift given on New Year's Day = étrennes. A ripp = a handful. The poet's horse was once a very fine mare but today she is old and getting weaker and weaker. The poet reflects upon her glorious past and the passage of time and compares himself to the mare as one who is getting older too.

A Guid New-year I wish thee, Maggie!

Hae, there's a ripp to thy auld baggie:

Have, there is a handful to your old stomach.

Tho' thou's howe-backit now, an' knaggie,

Though you are sunk in the back now and like points of rock = her bones are probably sticking up like crags of rock because she has lost the firm flesh of youth *I've seen the day Thou could hae gaen like ony staggie*,

that you could have gone like any staggie= diminutive of staig = 2 year old horse

Out-owre the lay.

out over the lay. I suspect this means the field or race course I cannot find it defined anywhere as such.

Tho' now thou's dowie, stiff, an' crazy,
An' thy auld hide as white's a daisie,
though now you are drooping, stiff (raide) and frail
and your old hide is as white as a daisy. (Hide is the skin that covers an animal)
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek an' glaizie,
A bonie gray:
dappled = for a horse which is spotted with grey spots, sleek and glossy
a beautiful grey
He should been tight that daur't to raize thee,
Ance in a day.
He had to be prepared the one that would dare to anger you once upon a time

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank, A filly buirdly, steeve, an' swank; you were once in the foremost rank = in the top class A strong filly (young female horse; a young male is a colt; the adults are the mare and the stallion) firm and vigorous/agile

An' set weel down a shapely shank, As e'er tread yird; and well set off (mise en valeur) by shapely legs as ever trod/stepped/walked the earth An' could hae flown out-owre a stank, Like ony bird. and you could have flown out over a pool of stagnant water like any bird

It's now some nine-an'-twenty year, Sin' thou was my guid-father's mear;

It has now been some twenty-nine years since you were my good father-in-law's mare *He gied me thee, o' tocher clear, An' fifty mark;*

he gave you to me of dowry clear and fifty marks = the mare was given to the farmer as a dowry when he married and fifty marks. A mark was an old Scottish coin.

Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear, An' thou was stark. Although it was small (the dowry) it was well-won wealth and you were strong/hardy

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny, Ye then was trotting wi' your minnie: when I first went to woo= courtiser Minnie = mother Tho' ye was trickie, slee, an' funnie, Ye ne'er was donsie; although you were tricky, sly/clever and funny you were never unmanageable/stupid But hamely, tawie, quiet, an' cannie, An' unco sonsie. but homely, tawie = that allows itself to be peacefully handled = malleable, quiet and canny = clever and uncommonly/exceptionally pleasant

That day, ye pranc'd wi' muckle pride, (pranced; much pride = proudly) When ye bure hame my bonie bride: when you brought home my lovely bride An' sweet an' gracefu' she did ride, Wi' maiden air! maiden air = virginal/innocent Kyle-Stewart I could bragged wide For sic a pair. bragged = boasted because of the two of them.

Tho' now ye dow but hoyte and hobble, though now you are only able to move clumsily and hobble (walk as if limping) *An' wintle like a saumont coble,* and so somersaults like a salmon fishing boat *That day, ye was a jinker noble, For heels an' win'!* you were a noble steed/goer because of your heels and wing (figurative of course). jinker could be racer also in this context.

An' ran them till they a' did wauble, Far, far, behin'!

And outran them until they all did wobble far, far behind. The other horses were all 'bancal' behind tired with running

When thou an' I were young an' skeigh, An' stable-meals at fairs were dreigh, skeigh = high spirited dreigh = dull, tedious. How thou wad prance, and snore, an' skreigh An' tak the road! how you would prance and snore and scream and take the road

Town's-bodies ran, an' stood abeigh, An' ca't thee mad. townspeople ran and stood aloof (kept their distance) and called you mad.

When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow, We took the road aye like a swallow: At brooses thou had ne'er a fellow, For pith an' speed; But ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow Whare'er thou gaed.

Corn't = corned = fed with oats and I was mellow = this probably means he had had a drink and his mood was sentimental and gentle

We aye took the road like a swallow = hirondelle. Aye = always

At brooses thou had ne'er a fellow

At races you had never a fellow.

A broose was a race at a country wedding to see who could get to the bridegroom's house the first on returning from the church. She was so fast that no other horse was beside her. Fellow here is in the sense of companion.

For pith and speed = heart and speed

But ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow Where'er thou gaed, thous went

But every tail you paid them hollow wherever you went. Any horse that was behind you (to tail = to follow) you beat them hollow (entirely)

The sma', droop-rumpl't, hunter cattle

Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle;

The small droop-rumpled = that droops at the crupper = buttocks hunter cattle might perhaps worsted you for a shore race. This probably means the horse did worse against this type of horse on this surface. I'm a bit confused by the word cattle. A hunter is a horse used for the hunt normally.

But sax Scotch mile, thou try't their mettle, An' gar't them whaizle:

But six Scottish miles you tried their spirit/worth and made them wheeze (you wheeze when you are finding it difficult to breathe)

Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle

O' saugh or hazel.

No whip nor spur but just a stick of willow or hazel (saule ou noisetier)

Thou was a noble fittie-lan',

As e'er in tug or tow was drawn!

You were a noble fittie-long = the near horse of the hindermost pair in the plough. We can presume that this is the position of a very strong horse. Two pairs of horses were used for the plough.

Aft thee an' I, in aught hours' gaun, In guid March-weather, Off you and I in good March weather were going for eight hours Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han', For days thegither. Have turned six roods (= a measure of land perhaps a quarter of an acre. Je ne sais pas ce que

cela fait en hectares) for days together

Thou never braing't, an' fetch't, an' fliskit;

But thy auld tail thou wad hae whiskit,

You never rushed forward, and pulled by fits and starts (inconsistently) and fretted and capered An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket, And spread abroad your well filled lower chest of a quadruped Wi' with an' nowar

Wi' pith an' power;

With heart (in the work) and strength

Till sprittie knowes wad rair't an' riskit

Until knolls full of rushes or reed grasses roared and made a noise like the tearing of roots *An' slypet owre.*

And fell over slowly.

When frosts lay lang, an' snaws were deep,
An' threaten'd labour back to keep,
When frosts lay on the ground for a long time and the snow was very deep and threatened to keep us back from working
I gied thy cog a wee bit heap
Aboon the timmer:
I kenn'd my Maggie wad na sleep
For that, or simmer.
I gave your wooden dish a little bit heap above the timber. I think he means that he heaped up

her feeding trough a wee bit more up to the rafter (poutre=timmer) because I knew my Maggie would not become drowsy and sluggish on account of that (the extra food) before summer. Which means that she would stay in an alert condition through the winter whilst waiting for summer when she will be out in the fields working again!

Just shows you with Burns you have to rethink the meaning of every word even ones like but, for, and or which seem obvious but which in fact have other meanings!

In cart or car thou never reestit;

The steyest brae thou wad hae fac't it;

In cart or chariot you never stood restive = impatient and you would have faced the steepest hillslope

Thou never lap, an' sten't, and breastit,

Then stood to blaw;

You never leapt and bounded (bondir) and sprang forward then stood to blow *But just thy step a wee thing hastit,*

Thou snoov't awa.

But just hurried your step a wee bit and went slowly away

My pleugh is now thy bairn-time a',

Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw;

My plough is now your baby-time all; four gallant brutes as ever did draw. I think this means she is the mother of the four plough horses that now pull his plough. *Forbye sax mae I've sell't awa*,

That thou hast nurst:

Besides six mares I have sold away that you have nursed.

They drew me thretteen pund an' twa,

The vera warst.

I sold them for thirteen pounds and I got two pounds for the very worst one. Horses were generally sold at auction and I suspect that even two pounds was not so bad.

Mony a sair darg we twa hae wrought, An' wi' the weary warl' fought! Many a sore day's work we two have done and with the weary world fought

An' mony an anxious day, I thought
We wad be beat!
And many is the anxious/worrying day when I thought we would be beaten
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
Wi' something yet.
But here to frail age we have arrived with something still

An' think na', my auld trusty servan',

That now perhaps thou's less deservin,

And do not think my old trusty servant that now you are perhaps less deserving (méritoire)

An' thy auld days may end in starvin;
For my last fow,
And that your old age may end in starving for my last rope A heapit stimpart, I'll reserve ane
A heaped peck (a measure for hay) I'll reserve one
Laid by for you.
Laid by/saved up for you

We've worn to crazy years thegither;
We have lasted to frail/weak years together
We'll toyte about wi' ane anither;
We will totter about with one another (stroll)
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether
With careful/heedful attention I'll move your rein (attaches)
To some hain'd rig,
to some saved ridge
Whare ye may nobly rax your leather,
Wi' sma' fatigue.
Where you may nobly stretch your hide with little fatigue.

I'm not sure of the business with the reins and so on, but I know he wants his horse to be safe and able to do a little exercise without getting herself tired out.

18. TO A LOUSE 1786

A louse = un pou and the plural is lice. If you have this subject in the faits de langue : mouse, mice; die, dice; louse, lice....A louse is used to describe a man who is no good. The expression is still currently used. If you want to show off you can also say that in the distant past 'hice' was the plural of 'house'! Fleas live anywhere on the body, but lice especially like hair. At school children often catch 'head lice'. If anyone said they had lice we would automatically assume the lice were on the head.

ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH.

Ha! wh'are ye gaun, ye crowlin ferlie?

Where do you think you are going, you crawling wonder? The word wonder is ironic here. *Your impudence protects you sairly;* Your impudence/impertinence protects you sorely = extremely *I canna say but ye strunt rarely,* I can only say that you are strutting skilfully. To strut is to walk in a very proud way in order to show off. *Owre gauze and lace;* over gauze and lace (dentelle). gauze = la gaze *Tho', faith! I fear ye dine but sparely* Although ma foi! I fear that you will not eat very much *On sic a place.* In such a place.

A spare build = someone who is very lean or thin. Sparely = frugally Notice how the poet uses 'ye' instead of 'thou' to the louse which would be more appropriate. He creates a comic tone of respect for this tiny pestilential creature.

Ye ugly, creepin, blastit wonner,

you ugly, creeping, blasted wonder. Notice the use of the pronoun immediately followed by the insult. The verb and article "are a" have vanished through ellipsis.

Detested, shunn'd by saunt an' sinner,

hated, shunned by saint and sinner. To be shunned is to be avoided. Shunned has a stronger emotional impact than avoided as you might avoid someone from a momentary feeling of not wishing to speak or have dealings with someone, however to shun is far more to avoid out of a strong feeling such as hatred, disgust etc. The line is alliterative with shun, saint, sinner. *How daur ye set your fit upon her-*

How dare you set foot on her

Sae fine a lady?

So fine a lady. The use of the question mark is to create some doubt about the lady being so fine!

Gae somewhere else and seek your dinner

On some poor body.

Go somewhere else to look for your dinner, some poor person.

Swith! in some beggar's haffet squattle;

Swiftly/Quickly go and sprawl (se vautrer) on the temple of some beggar. The temple(s) = forehead where we may suppose the hair is hanging down.

There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle,

You will be able to creep and sprawl and struggle. Alliteration squattle, sprawl, sprattle. *Wi' ither kindred, jumping cattle,*

With other jumping cattle (figurative use of the word= troupeau) of the same kind *In shoals and nations;*

Metaphorical use of the word shoal = collective noun for fish = banc de poisson and nation. Whaur horn nor bane ne'er daur unsettle

Where horn nor bone = combs were often made of écaille or bone. Synechdochal use of the word comb, as the material it is made of stands for or signifies the whole. These combs will never dare to unsettle/disturb. The negligence of personal hygiene is implied. *Your thick plantations.*

Now haud you there, ye're out o' sight, Now hold on there, you are out of sight Below the fatt'rels, snug and tight; under the ends of the ribbons safe and snug (cosy) Na, faith ye yet! ye'll no be right, Till ye've got on it-No, by goodness! you will not be satisfied until you have got on it The very tapmost, tow'rin height the very top, the towering height of the young lady's bonnet. Alliteration with 't'. We may assume that the bonnet is perhaps overly ostentatious by the word 'towering' but also in comparison to the size of a louse it is a great height to climb. O' Miss' bonnet.

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out,

As plump an' grey as ony groset:

Upon my word! (sooth = true, so we could say truly too) how boldly you show the end of your nose as plump and grey as any gooseberry (groseille).

O for some rank, mercurial rozet,

Or fell, red smeddum,

The poet thinks that he should find a poison to punish the louse for its presumption. If only I had some bad smelling, resin of mercury or some deadly, red powder

I'd gie you sic a hearty dose o't,

Wad dress your droddum.

I would give you such a good dose of it that correct your breech (of good manners.) The end of the line is elliptic you have to supply good manners or decorum.

I wad na been surpris'd to spy

You on an auld wife's flannen toy;

I would not have been surprised to spot/see you on some old women's flannel headdress *Or aiblins some bit duddie boy*,

On's wyliecoat;

Or perhaps on some little ragged boy on his undervest (maillot de corps).

But Miss' fine Lunardi! fie!

How daur ye do't?

But on Miss's fine Lunardi bonnet. Fi ! How dare you do such a thing ! This bonnet was named after an aeronaut (oui je sais, je ne savais pas qu'il y avait des aeronauts à l'époque). It was fashionable at the time. The young lady is wearing the latest fashion at church.

O Jenny, dinna toss your head, An' set your beauties a' abread! Addresses the young lady by name. O Jenny do not toss your head and throw your beauties all abroad (out of place) Ye little ken what cursed speed The blastie's makin: You have little idea the cursed speed that blasted louse is making Thae winks an' finger-ends, I dread, Are notice takin. Those winks and finger ends I fear are attracting attention. I'm not sure of the sense here. He probably means that Jenny is drawing attention to herself by winking, making gestures and moving her head around. While she is busy showing off the louse is making his way into her bonnet!

O wad some Power the giftie gie us

To see oursels as ithers see us!

If only some Power would give us the gift (don) to see ourselves as others see us! *It wad frae mony a blunder free us,*

An' foolish notion:

We would then be saved from many a blunder (mistake) and foolish ideas *What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,*

We would be freed from the airs (minauderies) we assume in dress and demeanour. Gait is an archaic way of talking about the way in which one walks or moves.

An' ev'n devotion! And even devotion!

And even devotion!

The syntax implies that airs in dress and gait and even devotion would leave us. If one is in church one should be in a state of devotion, but to God and not to one's appearance.

19. TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY 1786

Wee modest crimson-tippèd flow'r Small modest flower with tips of crimson Thou's met me in an evil hour You've met me at a bad time For I maun crush amang the stoure Thy slender ster Because I must crush your slender stem among the dust To spare thee now is past my pow'r It's beyond my power to spare you now (épargner) Thou bonnie gem You beautiful gem (precious stone, jewel)

Alas! It's no thy neibor sweet,
Hélas! It's not your sweet neighbour
The bonnie lark, companion meet
The beautiful lark(alouette), a fitting companion (meet = adjective = convenable)
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet
Bending you amongst the dewy wet (dew = la rosée)
Wi' spreckl'd breast,
With its breast (vieilli = poitrine) Spreckled may mean 'tacheté' mais je ne suis pas sûre
When upward springing, blithe to greet
Soaring upward happy to greet
The purpling east
The east becoming purple.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north The cold bitter and biting North wind blew Upon thy early humble birth On your early humble birth Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth Amid the storm Nevertheless you shone out in the middle of the storm, Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth Thy tender form. Hardly above the earth your parent, you reared (raised) your tender form (shape)

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield

High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield

High sheltering woods and walls must shield (protect) the flaunting (remuer doucement dans le vent et aussi se montrer d'une manière ostentoire) flowers which our gardens yield/give. A yield is the result of what has been grown so it can be translated by récolte. In finance it is the money made on an investment = retour sur l'investissesment. To yield also means to give in = céder.

But thou, beneath the random bield *O*' clod or stane

But you under a random or chance shelter of a clod (motte de terre) or a stone *Adorns the histie stibble-field*,

Unseen, alane.

Decorates the barren/dry field of stubble (ce qui reste lorsqu'on coupe le blé ou autre avec la charrue) unseen and alone.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,

There dressed in your flimsy (qui n'est pas épais en parlant d'un vêtement voire qui couvre à

Thy snawy bosom sun-ward spread Your snow white breast opened out towards the sun Thou lifts thy unassuming head In humble guise; You lift your unassuming head in humble costume (guise from old French = costume déguisé) But now the share uptears thy bed And low thou lies But now the plough (=ploughshare is more precisely the blade which cuts the crop) tears up (uproots) your bed and you are lying low on the ground. (cf flower bed = plate bande) Such is the fate of artless maid, It is like the destiny of an innocent maiden (young girl and a virgin). Artful = malin, ruse is the opposite of artless. Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade, By love's simplicity betray'd The sweet little flower of the rural shade who is betrayed through the simplicity of her love. And guileless trust Guile = duplicity, tricks. Her trust is innocent with no duplicity. Till she like thee, all soil'd, is laid Low I' the dust.

peine) coat. Mantle comes from old French mantel; it was a sort of cloak or cape.

If an innocent virgin is tricked by a man into loving him and thereby getting pregnant her reputation is soiled (maculée) and it is as low as is the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,

On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd

It is like the destiny of the simple poet who is riding on the rough ocean with no lucky star to help him.

Unskilful he to note the card of prudent lore,

Too incompetent to pay attention to the paper (probably here he means map) on which are written prudent lessons and/or traditional knowledge

Till billows rage, and gales blow hard

And whelm him o'er!

Until great surges of water rage and great winds blow and turn him upside down.

Such fate to suffering worth is giv'n, Who long with wants and woes has striv'n One accords value to such a fate of suffering to whoever has had to struggle for a long time with need and grief By human pride or cunning driv'n To mis'ry's brink Driven to the edge of misery from human pride or cunning (obsolete : magic ?) Till wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n, He. ruin'd. sink. Until he is torn from anywhere else to stay but Heaven he sinks in ruin. To wrench = arracher Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate, Even you who are grieving/mourning at the fate of the Daisy *That fate is thine—no distant date* It is your fate too not so very far from now Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives elate The blades of the plough of Ruin (la ruine personnifiée) drive on happily Full on thy bloom Straight for your bloom Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight

Until, what shall be your doom (destiny) being crushed beneath the weight of the furrow (sillon) Shall be thy doom!

20. THE TWA DOGS 1786,

'Twas in that place o' Scotland's isle, That bears the name o' auld King Coil, Upon a bonie day in June, When wearin' thro' the afternoon, Twa dogs, that were na **thrang** at hame, (busy, thronging) Forgather'd ance upon a time.

This poem is more of a discussion as you will see later. The first stanza gives us the setting and the season. He also sets the poem in the past but it is very much a contemporary reflection of life. This is a device to give a sense of objectivity and distance. By using a discussion between two dogs he also makes the criticism of class distinction a comic affair and just as it is absurd to have two dogs having a conversation so it is absurd to have people starving to death and others eating themselves to death!

The first I'll name, they ca'd him Caesar, Was keepit for His Honor's pleasure: His hair, his size, his mouth, his **lugs**, (ears) Shew'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs; But **whalpit** some place far abroad, (whelped, came from) Whare sailors gang to fish for cod. Description of Caesar, again this dog comes from far away so he can have a distant observer's eye on the country he is now living in.

His locked, letter'd, braw brass collar Shew'd him the gentleman an' scholar; But though he was o' high degree, **The fient a pride**, nae pride had he; (not a devil) But wad hae spent an hour caressin, Ev'n wi' al tinkler-gipsy's messin: At kirk or market, mill or **smiddie**, (smith = forgereon) Nae **tawted** tyke, tho' e'er sae **duddie**, (matted; ragged) But he wad stan't, as glad to see him, An' stroan't on stanes an' hillocks wi' him.

Here the noble appearance of Caesar as well as his 'human' qualities are described. He does not make social distinctions as he quite ready to accept being caressed by a gypsy. Tinker is another word for gypsy. He will also play with any dog no matter what his outward appearance.

The tither was a ploughman's collie-A rhyming, ranting, raving billie, Wha for his friend an' comrade had him, And in freak had Luath ca'd him, After some dog in Highland Sang,(2) Was made lang syne,-Lord knows how lang.

Burns is in fact describing his own dog. He makes fun of himself by calling himself a rhyming and half mad man. The name and the origin of the dog is pure Scots; the dog knows no other life.

He was a **gash** an' faithfu' tyke, (wise, complacent) As ever lap a **sheugh** or dyke. (leapt: ditch, furrow) His honest, **sonsie**, **baws'nt** face (pleasant; white-streaked) Aye gat him friends in ilka place; His breast was white, his touzie back Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black; His **gawsie** tail, wi' upward curl, (buxom, jolly) Hung owre his **hurdie's** wi' a swirl. (buttocks)

A description of Luath: his physical appearance and qualities. Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither, (fond of each other) And unco pack an' thick thegither; (confidential, intimate) Wi' social nose whiles snuff'd an' snowkit; (snuffled) Whiles mice an' moudieworts they howkit; (moles; dug up) Whiles scour'd awa' in lang excursion, An' worry'd ither in diversion; Until wi' daffin' weary grown (larking, playing around) Upon a knowe they set them down. (knoll: sat) An' there began a lang digression. About the "lords o' the creation."

The two dogs are great friends and like to go off hunting out moles and mice together or play fighting. One day when they are worn out with their usual amusements they sit down on a knoll and begin a long conversation about the ways of the world.

Caesar

I've aften wonder'd, honest Luath, What sort o' life poor dogs like you have; An' when the gentry's life I saw, What way poor bodies liv'd ava.

I've often wondered how poor people lived yonder and what sort of life poor dogs like you have. Of course Caesar lives with the gentry.

Our laird gets in his racked rents, His coals, his kane, an' a' his stents: He rises when he likes himsel'; His flunkies answer at the bell; He ca's his coach; he ca's his horse; He draws a bonie silken purse, As lang's my tail, where, thro' the steeks, The yellow letter'd Geordie keeks.

Our Lord gets in/receives his exhorbitant rents, his coal, his rents in kind (paiements en nature) and all his dues (ce qui lui est dû). He gets up when it pleases him and flunkies (larbins) answer his bell (used to summon a servant). He drives a coach and horse; he takes out a fine, silk purse which is as long as my tail and where you can see through the stitches (les mailles) the yellow lettered Geordies (guineas = one pound and one shilling) peeping.

Frae morn to e'en, it's nought but toiling At baking, roasting, frying, boiling; An' tho' the gentry first are stechin, Yet ev'n the ha' folk fill their pechan Wi' sauce, ragouts, an' sic like trashtrie, That's little short o' downright wastrie. Our whipper-in, wee, blasted wonner, Poor, worthless elf, it eats a dinner, Better than ony tenant-man His Honour has in a' the lan': An' what poor cot-folk pit their painch in, I own it's past my comprehension.

From morning to evening it's nothing but work at baking, roasting, frying and boiling and although the gentry are the first to eat nevertheless the hall folk (the servants) get their belly filled with sauce, ragouts and such like trash which is little short of downright waste. Our little servant boy, the small blasted wonder, poor worthless elf (lutin) gets a dinner better than the dinner of any tenant farmer that the Lord has in all the land and better than what poor cottage folk put in their stomachs. I confess it is beyond my understanding.

Luath

Trowth, Caesar, whiles they're fash't eneugh: A cottar howkin in a sheugh, Wi' dirty stanes biggin a dyke, Baring a quarry, an' sic like; Himsel', a wife, he thus sustains, A smytrie o' wee duddie weans, An' nought but his han'-daurk, to keep Them right an' tight in thack an' rape.

True enough Caesar sometimes they are bothered a lot : a cottage labourer digging up a ditch or building a dyke with dirty stones or laying bare a stone pit (quarrying = travail de carrière) and such like; he maintains a wife like that and a bunch of ragged children. And he only has his hand dagger to keep them prepared/provided with the bare essentials.

An' when they meet wi' sair disasters, Like loss o' health or want o' masters, Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer, An' they maun starve o' cauld an' hunger: But how it comes, I never kent yet, They're maistly wonderfu' contented; An' buirdly chiels, an' clever hizzies, Are bred in sic a way as this is.

And when they meet sore disasters such as the loss of health or a shortage of masters (to work for/employers) you would surely think that just a little more (of this kind of hardship) and they must starve of cold and hunger. But how it comes about I have never known how yet, they are mostly wonderfully contented and sturdy young men and clever young women are bred in such a way as this is. Caesar

But then to see how ye're negleckit, How huff'd, an' cuff'd, an' disrespeckit! Lord man, our gentry care as little For delvers, ditchers, an' sic cattle; They gang as saucy by poor folk, As I wad by a stinkin brock.

But then to see how you are neglected, treated with indignity, abused and disrespected. Our gentry do not care at all for delvers (diggers) ditchers and such cattle = people. They walk past poor people as arrogantly as I would a stinking badger (blaireau) I've notic'd, on our laird's court-day, -An' mony a time my heart's been wae, -Poor tenant bodies, scant o'cash, How they maun thole a factor's snash; He'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear He'll apprehend them, poind their gear; While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble, An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble!

The laird's court-day was the day the tenants had to pay their dues. And many a time my heart has bled for the tenant people who being short of money, how they must endure a factor's harsh words. The factor was the man appointed to collect the rents and dues. The factor will stamp his feet and threaten them and swear and curse at them. He'll arrest them and impound their goods while they have to stand by with a humble air and listen to it all in fear and trembling.

I see how folk live that hae riches; But surely poor-folk maun be wretches!

I see how people live who are rich so surely poor folk have got to be wretches!

Luath

They're no sae wretched's ane wad think. Tho' constantly on poortith's brink, They're sae accustom'd wi' the sight, The view o't gives them little fright.

They are not as wretched as one might think although they are constantly on the brink (edge) of poverty. They are so used to the sight of it that the prospect of it does not frighten them very much.

Then chance and fortune are sae guided, They're aye in less or mair provided: An' tho' fatigued wi' close employment, A blink o' rest's a sweet enjoyment.

Chance and fortune are so directed/led that they are always more or less provided for and although they are exhausted from over work, a moment of rest is a sweet enjoyment.

The dearest comfort o' their lives, Their grushie weans an' faithfu' wives; The prattling things are just their pride, That sweetens a' their fire-side.

The greatest comfort of their lives are their thriving/fast-growing children and faithful wives. The chattering things (wives and kids) are their only pride and they sweeten the whole fire side.

An' whiles twalpennie worth o' nappy Can mak the bodies unco happy: They lay aside their private cares, To mind the Kirk and State affairs; They'll talk o' patronage an' priests, Wi' kindling fury i' their breasts, Or tell what new taxation's comin, An' ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.

And sometimes twelvepence worth of drink can make these people uncommonly happy because they forget about their private worries and pay attention to the Church and State affairs. They will talk of patronage and priests with kindling (rising) fury in their hearts or talk about what new taxation is coming and wonder at the people in London.

As bleak-fac'd Hallowmass returns, They get the jovial, rantin kirns, When rural life, of ev'ry station, Unite in common recreation; Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.

And as bleak-faced = dreary weather All Saints returns (Ier novembre) they get the jovial, social churns (figurative meaning here for stirring/movement because a churn was used for making butter). The scots celebrate Halloween. At this time every body in the country side from every social class unites in common recreation. Love twinkles, wit abounds and social merriment makes us forget there is care upon the earth.

That merry day the year begins, They bar the door on frosty win's; The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream, An' sheds a heart-inspiring steam; The luntin pipe, an' sneeshin mill, Are handed round wi' right guid will; The cantie auld folks crackin crouse, The young anes rantin thro' the house-My heart has been sae fain to see them, That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.

When the New Year arrives (again Hogmanay is perhaps the biggest feast day in Scotland) they close up the door to keep out the frosty winds. The alcohol smokes with rising froth and gives off a heart-inspiring vapour. The smoking pipe and snuffboxes are handed around with right good will. The merry old folk chatter merrily; the youngsters go running noisily through the house. My heart has been so fond to see them that I have barked along with them.

Still it's owre true that ye hae said, Sic game is now owre aften play'd; There's mony a creditable stock O' decent, honest, fawsont folk, Are riven out baith root an' branch, Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,

that said, it is more than true what you have said; such games are often over played = exaggerated because there is many a creditable number of decent, honest, upright people who are driven out both root and branch (evicted) to quench the greedy pride of some rascal. (scélérat) *Wha thinks to knit himsel the faster In favour wi' some gentle master*, Wha, aiblins, thrang a parliamentin, For Britain's guid his saul indentin-

Who thinks (by this type of action) to knit himself (to ingratiate oneself) in the favour of some well-born master who perhaps is busy at parliamentary business and for the good of Britain selling his soul. To indent was to employ someone on a type of apprenticeship basis. In exchange for board and lodging the apprentice could learn the trade.

Caesar

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it: For Britain's guid! guid faith! I doubt it. Say rather, gaun as Premiers lead him: An' saying ay or no's they bid him: At operas an' plays parading, Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading: Or maybe, in a frolic daft, To Hague or Calais takes a waft, To mak a tour an' tak a whirl, To learn bon ton, an' see the worl'.

Faith my lad, you know very little about it, for Britain's good! (you must be joking) Good faith I doubt it. I would rather say going as Prime Ministers lead him and saying yes and no as they tell him to do. And parading himself (to be seen) at operas and plays. Mortgaging (hypothéquer), gambling (le jeu) and masquerading or maybe in a foolish frolic (whim, caprice) goes off to take a turn in the Hague or Calais. To take a turn or take a whirl (a fast jouney) to learn good manners and see the world.

There, at Vienna, or Versailles, He rives his father's auld entails; Or by Madrid he takes the rout, To thrum guitars an' fecht wi' nowt; Or down Italian vista startles,

There in Vienna or Versailles he spends all the money of his father's estates; or he takes the route by Madrid to strum guitars or fight for nothing or to wander down Italian landscapes.

Whore-hunting amang groves o' myrtles: Then bowses drumlie German-water, To mak himsel look fair an' fatter, An' clear the consequential sorrows, Love-gifts of Carnival signoras.

Whore-hunting among myrtle groves, then drinks muddy German water to make himself look fair and fatter and clear up the bad consequences of sex with signoras he has picked up at Carnivals. The love-gift is probably venereal disease which is why is taking the German spa water.

For Britain's guid! for her destruction! Wi' dissipation, feud, an' faction.

For the good of Britain! For her destruction with dissipation, feuds and faction = strife/division/trouble

Luath

Hech, man! dear sirs! is that the gate They waste sae mony a braw estate!

Hech is an exclamation we still say hec or What the hec? is it in that way they waste so many fine estates. (dissipate their fortunes) *Are we sae foughten an' harass'd For gear to gang that gate at last?*

Are we so troubled and harassed for money (the gentry are always trying to get as much as they can from the poor) for them to go that way eventually. (to spend it finally in the way you have described.)

O would they stay aback frae courts, An' please themsels wi' country sports, It wad for ev'ry ane be better, The laird, the tenant, an' the cotter! For thae frank, rantin, ramblin billies, Feint haet o' them's ill-hearted fellows; Except for breakin o' their timmer, Or speakin lightly o' their limmer, Or shootin of a hare or moor-cock, The ne'er-a-bit they're ill to poor folk,

If only they would stay away from courts and find amusement in country sports then it would be better for everyone : the lord, the tenant and the cottage labourer! For those frank, ranting, rambling chaps they care about nothing else those ill-hearted men except for the sawing of their timber or speaking disparagingly of their whores, or shooting a hare or moor-cock (lagopède d'Ecosse). While they are busy with this they are never really bad to poor folk.

But will ye tell me, Master Caesar, Sure great folk's life's a life o' pleasure? Nae cauld nor hunger e'er can steer them, The very thought o't need na fear them.

Neither cold nor hunger can ever drive them and they never have to fear the very thought of it.

Caesar

Lord, man, were ye but whiles whare I am, The gentles, ye wad ne'er envy them!

Well if you were where I am sometimes you would never envy the gentry.

It's true, they need na starve or sweat, Thro' winter's cauld, or simmer's heat: They've nae sair wark to craze their banes, An' fill auld age wi' grips an' granes: But human bodies are sic fools, For a' their colleges an' schools, That when nae real ills perplex them, They mak enow themsel's to vex them; An' aye the less they hae to sturt them, In like proportion, less will hurt them. It's true, they do not have to starve or sweat through the cold winter and the heat of summer; they never have sore work to hurt their bones and fill their old age with seizures and groans. But humans are such idiots, in spite of their colleges and schools that when they do not have any real ills/problems to upset them they invent enough problems themselves to vex them! And the less they have to bother them then the least thing will hurt them in proportion. (If they are not accustomed to trouble then the very smallest trouble will seem very big to them).

A country fellow at the pleugh, His acre's till'd, he's right eneugh; A country girl at her wheel, Her dizzen's dune, she's unco weel; But gentlemen, an' ladies warst, Wi' ev'n-down want o' wark are curst. They loiter, lounging, lank an' lazy; Tho' deil-haet ails them, yet uneasy; Their days insipid, dull, an' tasteless; Their nights unquiet, lang, an' restless.

When the country man has tilled an acre of land with his plough he feels fine, and when a country girl has woven her dozen on the loom she feels unusually well; but gentlemen and ladies even worse when evening arrives they are cursed from lack of work. They loiter (trainer) lounging (s'avachir), lank (spent in this context) and lazy. Nothing ails them yet they are uneasy; their days are insipid, dull and tasteless and theirs nights uneasy, long and restless.

An'ev'n their sports, their balls an' races, Their galloping through public places, There's sic parade, sic pomp, an' art, The joy can scarcely reach the heart. And even their sports : balls and races and galloping through public places: there is such parade (showing off) such pomp and art (artifice) that joy can hardly reach their hearts.

The men cast out in party-matches, Then sowther a' in deep debauches. Ae night they're mad wi' drink an' whoring, Niest day their life is past enduring.

The men have gambling contests then they all make amends (presumably for the quarrels they have had in gambling) in deep debauches. One night they are mad with alcohol and whoring (fornication) and the next day their life is past endurance.

The ladies arm-in-arm in clusters, As great an' gracious a' as sisters; But hear their absent thoughts o' ither, They're a' run-deils an' jads thegither. Whiles, owre the wee bit cup an' platie, They sip the scandal-potion pretty; Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbit leuks Pore owre the devil's pictur'd beuks; Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard, An' cheat like ony unhanged blackguard. The ladies go arm-in-arm (bras dessus bras dessous) in groups and all of them as great and gracious as sisters but to hear their thoughts of another one who is absent! They are all utter devils and jades (nasty woman) together. Sometimes they sip very prettily/daintily the potion of scandal over their fine cup and plate. Then live-long nights they pore over the devil's picture books (les cartes) with crabbed (pincé) looks and bet a farmer's stockyard and cheat like any unhanged blackguard = scélérat.

There's some exceptions, man an' woman; But this is gentry's life in common.

There are some exceptions both man and woman but this is the gentry's life in general.

By this, the sun was out of sight, An' darker gloamin brought the night; The bum-clock humm'd wi' lazy drone; The kye stood rowtin i' the loan; When up they gat an' shook their lugs, Rejoic'd they werena men but dogs;

By this time the sun had dropped out of sight and the darker gloaming/twilight brought the night the beetle (coléoptère) hummed with a lazy drone (low humming noise) and the cows stood lowing (the noise cows make) in the lane. When up they got and shook their ears to rejoice that they were not men but dogs. <u>An' each took aff his several way,</u> <u>Resolv'd to meet some ither day.</u>

And each one went off his separate way and they resolved to meet some other day.

[Footnote 1: Luath was Burns' own dog.] [Footnote 2: Luath, Cuchullin's dog in Ossian's "Fingal."-R. B.]

21. TAM O' SHANTER 1790

This is a narrative poem or cautionary tale. The first fourteen lines describe a typical market day evening among the men. They stay drinking and getting drunk enough to have no fear of going home over long miles where their angry wives are waiting for them and this is the truth that Tam discovered one night when he rode from Ayr one night. Burns adds the aside that in Ayr the men are honest and the women lovely.

When chapman billies leave the street,

And drouthy neibours neibours meet.

When pedlar men/fellows 'a billy is an old word for the male for example one still says a billy goat for the male goat and in Scotland it is still used for man comme type, mec). A pedlar = colporteur

The word drouthy (thirsty) probably comes from drought which means sécheresse.

1.5-6 bousing at the nappy = drinking alcohol

in slang we say boozing for drinking so it might originate from bousing.

fou and unco happy = tipsy (émeché) and extremely happy

1.8 slaps = gap or breach in a fence and a style is a fence or barrier

1.13 fand = found

1.14 frae = from

to canter = a semi gallop : a horse trots then canters then gallops in terms of speed

O Tam! hadsst thou but been sae wise

As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!

She tauld thee weel thou thou was a skellum,

A bletherin', blusterin', drunken blelllum;

The word 'blether' is still used by Scots people to designate nonsensical talk.

O Tam, if only you had been wise enough as to listen to the advice of your wife Kate. She told you well enough that you were a good for nothing and a blusterer full of drunken silly talk.

That ilka melder wi' the miller

That every grinding corn with the miller. The miller was responsible for operating the wind mill = le Moulin to turn the grains of wheat or corn into flour. They often had the reputation of being thieves or drunks or both!

siller = silver = money

naig = nag = horse and very often an old female one from which we have the description of a woman who keeps complaining.

The smith = le forgeron. Every time he had to get a shoe on the horse he got roaring drunk with the smith.

A smith often means an artisan or craftsman especially in metals cf. silversmith, goldsmith (orfèvre) ironsmith etc. It's the most common surname in England there is even a society for men called John Smith c'est un peu comme Jacques ou Jean Martin!

The Lord's house= the church. Even on Sunday Tam got drunk. His wife prophesied that sooner or later he would be found drowned deep in the river Doon.

warlock = male witch

mirk = the dark

the kirk = the church

Line 33. it gars me greet : it makes me cry 1.34-36 to think how many sweet counsels and long, wise advice from his wife the husband despises! General statement of truth before getting back to the narrative.

Line 37-38 Tam had planted himself extremely well close to the fireside (ingle) which was

blazing nicely.

Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely = with frothing new ale which was divine to drink And at his elbow, Souter Johnny= The cobbler (cordonnier) Johnny

His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony = his old, trusted and thirsty good friend

Tam lo'ed him like a very brither = Tam loved him like a brother

They had been fou for weeks thegither = They had been drunk together for weeks

The night drave on wi' songs and clatter = the night drove/wore on with songs and noise And aye the ale was growing better = and the ale was still getting better

The landlady and Tam grew gracious = sounds like he's starting to 'draguer' la patronne! Wi favours secret, sweet and precious = cela se confirme

lines 49-52 cobbler tells his strangest stories and the landlord's laughing is like a chorus. Outside the storm is roaring and rustling but Tam does not care in the least.

Lines 53-67 The poet makes more generalized statements about care, pleasures and life and some of these lines are often quoted today.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy

E'en drowned himself amang the nappy

This is the literary figure of PERSONIFICATION of an abstract word.

A man who is drunk and happy cannot have a care. Burns says that care drowned himself in drink.

As bees flee hame wi' lades of treasure,

The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure

The passing of the time was so pleasant but it was also fast; it could be compared to bees who fly home with loads of treasure (the pollen they collect is their treasure). Burns is using an analogy here.

The poet then follows with another comparison to show how happy Tam was.

Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,

O'er a' the ills o' life victorious.

He had conquered all the bad things in life

The poet introduces now several similies to caution us about how short-lived and fleeting good moments, pleasure, beauty, even life itself are.

But pleasures are like poppies spread—

= comme les coqueliquots étalés

You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed = if you pick the flower then its beauty is lost. When a tree loses its leaves we say the tree is shedding or has shed its leaves. When one is extremely sad one sheds tears. If you dislike someone and he or she meets ill-fortune you can say : I wouldn't shed a tear for him or her or I won't be shedding any tears about him or her. These are the two most common examples of using this verb. To shed, shed, shed. You may have met it in Shakespeare.

Or like the snow falls in the river—

A moment white, then melts for ever

Notice how the two similies have a long dash at the end of the line to indicate a pause in which you can really imagine the image before the 'lesson'. 'spread' and 'shed' are one-syllable masculine rhyme words which emphasise the finality of the disappearance and 'river' and 'forever' are feminine 2 syllable rhyme words which give an echo to the idea of for ever.. Or like the borealis race,

That flit ere you can point their place;

Borealis is the streams or particles of light which occur in the sky of the northern hemisphere; it is also called the northern lights They pass so quickly that before you can point out the position of one it has gone.

To flit is an intransitive, regular verb= to move out of sight with speed. Sometimes heard as in

: he was flitting about all over the place or flitting from here to there but it is not common. Or like the rainbow's lovely form

Evanishing amid the storm. = vanishing. There is probably a link too with evanescent. The series of similies ends with the conclusion

Nae man can tether time nor tide;

This may just be a variant of the popular saying : time and tide waits for no man. Tide = marée

To tether = to tie up so figuratively to control

Tam maun ride...Tam must ride home

The poem now moves into a descriptive mood in order to create the atmosphere of the forbidding night which will be a necessary build-up to the vision.

That hour, o' night's black arch and key-stane = quay (prononcé comme key) stone That dreary hour, he mounts his beast in;

And sic a night he takes the road in,

As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

Repetition of 'that' and 'in' at the end of the lines to emphasise the dark, frightening ambiance. He also puts the complements before the verb to make the events more dramatic. There is also a comparison that on such a night as he is going to travel there has never been a poor sinner outside on such a night. To be abroad = to be outside although no longer really in modern English.

We have the time and now we will hear about the elements.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last = the wind blew as if it were blowing for the last time The rattlin' sho'rs rose on the blast = rattling showers = the sound of the rain pouring down emphasised by the alliteration and noisy sound of the rolled Scottish 'r'. Blast is almost onomatopoeic

The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;

Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellow'd:

Note the use of gleams instead of light which adds more power to the darkness of the night. Swallowed, avalé so the darkness is personified.

Notice the effectiveness of accumulating the adverbs before the verb appears. To bellow = to roar, to shout loudly

That night, a child might understand,

The Deil had business on his hand.

The night was so evil that even a child would know instinctively that the Devil had things to do.

Weel mounted on his gray mare, Meg,

A better never lifted leg,

a mare is a female horse and the foal is the baby! To lift a leg = ran or galloped for a horse

Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire

Despising wind, and rain, and fire;

Tam drove on through puddles (flaques d'eau) and mire = muddy earth

Méprisant the elements : air, fire, water and dashing through earth.

We now have a series of verbs in ing which emphasise movement and speed.

The repetition of whiles increases our attention to the present moment which will soon lead to something bad.

Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet;

Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;

Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,

Lest bogles catch him unawares.

Although he is riding and singing to himself he is staring around him in case he should be

caught off guard by a hobgoblin or a bogie. This is the first sign that Tam is in fact superstitious. A goblin, hobgoblin or bogey is an ugly spirit who is also very often malicious and evil.

Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,

Where ghaists and houlets nightly cry

Kirk-Alloway is associated in this poem with the supernatural and evil events. Every night the owls and ghosts scream here.

The poet now lists some of the terrible associations of the place and alternates the head words of the lines with and and where to build up effect.

By this time he was cross the ford,

Where in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;

And past the birks and meikle stane

Where drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;

And thro' the whins and by the cairn

Where hunters fand the murder'd bairn;

And near the thorn, aboon the well,

Where Mungo's mither hang'd herself.

Each landmark has a bad association. By this time he had crossed the ford where the pedlar had smothered in the snow, and he had passed the birches and the great stone where Charlie had broken his neck bone and through the furze and by the cairn where the hunters found the murdered baby, near the thorn above the well where Mungo's mother had hung herself. We may presume that the tale was written by Burns for the local people and that these local references to 'faits divers' were probably known by his audience. A cairn is a heap of stones piled up and serves as a landmark.

Furze is a sort of grass. A birch is a tree but I cannot remember which one in French. I was brought up in the city so I do not know very much about flora and fauna in either language! To continue the feeling of impending evil the river Doon is also personified

Before him Doon pours all his floods;

The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;

The lightings flash from pole to pole;

Near and more near the thunders roll;

pole to pole here probably means from one end of the woods to the other. Note the repetition of near to accumulate.

When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,

Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;

Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing;

And loud resounded mirth and dancing

The lightning is lighting the scene "through every recess beams of light were glancing" Mirth is merriment, good cheer accompanied by laughter

His first perception of the coming scene is through the noise. This noise is incongruous with the storm.

The poet now makes some general remarks upon the courage which comes from drinking. John Barleycorn is a common personification of alcohol. To scorn = to despise = mépriser Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;

Wi' usquebae, we'll face the devil!

With tuppence = two pennies and he probably means with tuppence worth of alcohol we are not afraid of evil.

Usquebae =is gaelic and I think it means water of life. It is whisky. Under it's influence we are ready to face the devil himself. The pronoun 'we' makes the audience concur with these general observations.

The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,

Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle!

The new ale bubbled so in Tam's head (to ream = to cream but here we need to interpret figuratively)

Fair enough! He did not care a farthing about devils.

In the past a farthing was a quarter of one penny and a halfpenny often pronounced hapenny /ei/ was a half. There was another coin called a groat which was the equivalent of fourpence. If Tam was ready to face hell the horse was a little unwilling so Tam had to spur her on with his heel and guide her with his hand.

But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,

Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,

She ventur'd forward on the light;

For the name Margaret there are many variations : Mag, Maggie, Meg, Peggy, Marge, Margie etc. Margaret was an extremely popular first name in Scotland.

sair = sore, sorely. Literally it means painfully but it is often used as a synonym for extremely to admonish = to reprove

And, vow! = exclamation of surprise similar to the modern wow!

unco sight = a rare or uncommon sight

warlock = thanks to Harry Potter I think the French now have a very extended vocabulary in the world of fantasy! This is the male version of a witch. There is a ball going on.

Nae cotillon brent new frae France

This dance, was not a brand new dance (like a quadrille) from France

but traditional Scottish dances

But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys (a slower dance than a reel) and reels,

Put life and mettle in their heels.

mettle = spirit

The man playing the pipes for the dancers is none other than the Devil himself!

The Devil has a whole variety of names : Satan, Lucifer, Beelzebub, the Evil One, Old Nick Traditionally he is represented with cloven hooves (sabots fendus comme la chèvre), a tail and hairy, animal legs like a goat. He also has horns. Burns often calls him 'Hornie or Clootie = sabot)

A winnock-bunker in the east,

There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast—

A winnock is a window and a winnock-bunker here probably means a recess. Old Nick is in the form of an animal.

A touzie tyke, black, grim, and large!

To gie them music was his charge.

Touzie means shaggy, so he is covered with matted, tangled hair and tyke means dog. A shaggy dog would be a dog you would need to brush!

His charge = his responsibility was to give them music.

He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,

Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.

He squeezed the bagpipes (cornemuse) and made them play loudly = cry

Until all the roofs and rafters (=pouters d'une maison) vibrate.

Coffins stood round like open presses,

The coffins were open like cupboards. (A press is an old word for cupboard; it is often used in Ireland, my mother always says press and never cupboard!)

That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses.

They showed the dead bodies in the last clothes they wore before being buried.

And by some devlish cantraip sleight

Each in its cauld hand held a light. cantraip means charm or spell. sleight means skill or stratagem and it is pronounced like night or light. cauld is cold.

The light enables Tam to notice other dark details in the scene.

By which heroic Tam was able

To note upon the haly table

A murderer's banes in gibbet-airns;

Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;

Lying on the holy table probably the altar and here used ironically the bones of a murderer still in the irons of the gibbet = potence where he was hung.

A span was a measurement of an outstretched hands and is the equivalent of about 22+ centimetres. Twa is two. The small babies are about 45 centimetres long and have not been baptized.

A thief new-cutted frae the rape = A dead thief who has just been cut down from the rope Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape; = With his last breath his mouth dropped open. Notice the effect of the alliteration with the hard g sound.

Five tomahawks, wi' blude red rusted;

Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;

Repetition of five and alliteration of red rusted. The tomahawks are 'rouillés' with red blood and the scimitars have dried blood from a murder committed with them. When blood dries we talk about crust. A crust is also the first and last slice of bread in a loaf. It translates croûte also.

More grisly details

A garter, which a babe had strangled;

A knife, a father's throat had mangled,

Whom his ain son o' life bereft—

The gray hairs yet stack to the heft;

A garter= porte-jarretelles had been used to strangle a baby and there was a knife which had been used to cut the throat of a father. This father was deprived of his life by his own son and the grey hairs of the father still stuck to the haft = the handle of a weapon.

Wi' mair of horrible and awfu',

Which even to name wad be unlawfu'

There were more horrible and awful things that would be unlawful to mention.

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd and curious, The mirth and fun grew fast and furious: The piper loud and louder blew, The dancers quick and quicker flew; They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit Till ilka carlin swat and reekit And coost her duddies to the wark And linket at it in her sark!

As Tam stared amazed and curious. They set = they took up their positions for the reel. They cross'd = the dancers cross each other in a reel. They cleekit = they linked arms Till ilka carlin = each old woman swat and reekit = sweating and smoking (image of the hot sweat) Coost her duddies to the wark = threw off her clothes because of the work (getting so hot at dancing she undresses).

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans, Now Tam if they had been queens A' plump and strapping in their teens! Plump (potelé) and strapping (ferme et en pleine forme) and teenagers Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen. Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!— And if their had been snow-white seventeen hundred linen: this was very fine linen with 1700 threads (fils) to a width; instead of greasy flannel. Flannel is a more coarse kind of cotton. In thinking upon the girls the poet intervenes in the story directly with the pronoun I. Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair, That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair, These trousers of mine, my only pair that were once plush of good blue (hair) wool perhaps. I wad hae gien them aff y hurdies. I would have taken them off my buttocks For ae blink o' the bonie burdies! For one glimpse of the beautiful damsels (from demoiselle) girls. But wither'd beldams, auld and droll, But (they were) withered old ladies and funny. (In the context probably means strange) Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal, Withered (in the sense of no milk to give from the breast) hags (a horrible old woman) that would wean a foal. To wean is when one accustoms a child to food instead of breast milk. A foal is a baby horse. Lowping and flinging on a crummock. leaping and dancing wildly on a staff with a crooked head. (A staff is a long piece of wood a bit like the one a bishop carries. It was used for walking but is much longer than a walkingstick. It is also a symbol of power and authority.) I wonder didna turn thy stomach. I'm surprised it did not make your stomach turn (make you sick). But Tam ken'd what was what fu' brawlie; But Tam knew what was fully very beautiful (notice the tautology of fully and the emphasis on braw + ie) There was ae winsom wench and walie, There was one charming girl and ample (well-built). In Scotland a beautiful girl is big and well-built. That night enlisted in the core She was enrolled in the core of the dancers. The core = noyau (Lang after ken'd on Carrick shore. She was known long after on the Carrick shore. There now follows a list of her crimes! For mony a beast to dead she shot, She had shot many a beast to death And perish'd mony a bonie boat, And made many a beautiful boat perish (capsize) And shook baith meikle corn and bear, And shaken both much corn and barley And kept the country-side in fear);

And kept the country side in a state of fear Her cutty sark o' Paisley harn, Her short shirt was of coarse Paisley linen That while a lassie she had worn, That she'd worn when she was a young girl enfin finished, enfin juste le story outline car nous n'avons pas vraiment commerneer l'analyse... In longitude tho' sorely scanty, In length it was badly short : this is ironic as the poet and Tam we must suppose were quite happy to see the forms of the girl more clearly. It was her best, and she was vauntie. It was her best and she was very proud of it. Ah! little ken'd thy reverend grannie, That sark she coft for her wee Nannie, Ah! Little knew her revered grandmother who had bought the shirt (a sort of long dress probably worn under the main dress) Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches), for two Scottish pounds (it was all the money she had). Two pounds was a fortune for poor people in those times. Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches! Would ever have been worn at a witches' dance. But here my Muse her wing maun cow'r, The poet again intervenes in the first person complaining that his muse must cover her wing Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r: because such flights of imagination are far beyond her power To sing how Nannie lap and flang, to describe how Nanny leapt and danced wildly (A souple jade she was and strang), A supple jade = a worthless horse and/or a perverse ill-natured woman = une rosse And how Tam stood like ane bewitch'd, And thought his very een enrich'd; The poet also finds it difficult to describe how Tam stood like one bewitched (under a spell) and thought/felt his very eyes were enriched. Even Satan glowr'd and fidg'd fu' fain, And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main: Even Satan stared and fidgeted with pleasure and jerked and blew with all his strength. With might and main = strength Till first ae caper, syne anither, Tam tint his reason a' thegither, until one great leap, then another made Tam lose his mind altogether so that he betrays himself by shouting out And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty-sark!" Well done! short shirt! (probably staring at what she reveals during the jumps) And in an instant all was dark: And scarcely had he Maggie rallied, When out the hellish legion sallied. After dark there is a semi-colon marking a pause to emphasise the sudden change in the atmosphere. To rally is to come round, to come back to one's senses. The horse just had time to come round when this hellish (d'enfer) troop charged out. To sally = saillir

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke, When plundering herds assail their byke;

Comparison with the bees with angry fuss buzzing out when some plundering herd (troupeau) assails their hives (byke= ruche)

As open pussie's mortal foes, When, pop! she starts before their nose; Comparison with how the mortal enemies of the hare give vent to their anger when pop the hare disappears in front of their noses.

As eager runs the market-crowd,

When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud;

Maggie taking off and running away from the witches resembles the flight of a thief in a crowd at the market when the crowd cries out 'Catch the thief". The tense changes from the past and goes into the general present with the comparison and the action now continues in the present. This lends immediacy to the scene.

So Maggie runs, the witches follow,

Wi' mony an eldritch skriech and hollow.

So Maggie runs in the same way and the witches follow her with many a hideous an hollow screech .

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin!

In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!

In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin!

Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!

Series of apostrophes to Tam. He will get his reward! (come uppance). Your Kate is waiting for you to come home but Kate will soon be a very sad woman. The poet uses the auxiliary of will to express what is inevitable and certain and describes Kate waiting in the present tense. Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,

And win the key-stane of the brig:

There at them thou thy tail may toss,

A running stream they dare na cross.

The poet urges on the horse in the present tense. She must get to the keystone of the bridge because she can throw her tail up at them at that place. Notice the accumulation of alliteration which makes the line a bit tricky to read if you are to respect the syntax : there//at

them//thou//thy tail may toss. Then there is a reference to superstitious belief, the evil spirits cannot and dare not cross water.

But ere the key-stane she could make,

The fient a tail she had to shake!

But before she could make it to the keystone the devil a tail she had to shake..(she was obliged to swish her tail)

For Nannie far before the rest,

Hard upon noble Maggie prest,

This was because Nanny who was far out in front of the others was pressing closely (gaining on) noble Maggie

And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;

But little wist she Maggie's mettle-

And she jumped on Tam with furious purpose/intention but she had not counted on Maggie's

spirit

Ae spring brought aff her master hale

But left behind her ain grey tail:

One spring/jump threw off her master in one piece but she left behind her her own grey tail. (Afin d'éviter que Nannie n'attrappe Tam dans son saut, le cheval donne un coup de reins qui projette Tam par terre mais cette défense n'empêche pas la sorcière d'attraper sa queue.

The carlin claught her by the rump,

The woman clutched her by the rump (l'arrière-train)

And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Et cela a laissé la pauvre Maggie avec guère plus qu'un moignon

The poet ends with the moral of the story

Now, what his tale o' truth shall read,

Ilk man and mother's son, take heed,

Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,

Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,

Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear,

Remember Tam o' Shanter's mar. e

Now whoever reads this true story, every man and mother's son pay attention : Whenever you feel like drinking and short dresses are going through your mind, Think how dearly you might have to pay for those joys and remember Tam O'Shanter's mare.

This poem has eight six-line stanzas and the rhyme scheme is the Burn's Stanza. The rhyme pattern is aaabab. The a lines have four feet (tetrameter) and the b lines have two (dimeter).

TITRE	DATE	POETIC STRUCTURE	S/L
1. The Death And Dying Words Of Poor Mailie	1783	rhyming couplets	66 L
2. Poor Mailie's Elegy	1783	Burns stanza aaabab	8 S
3. Address To The Deil	1785	Burns stanza aaabab	21 S
4. Death And Doctor Hornbook	1785	Burns stanza aaabab	31 S
5. Holy Willie's Prayer	1785	Burns stanza aaabab	17 S
6. Scotch Drink	1785	Burns stanza aaabab	21 S
7. The Cottar's Saturday Night	1785	9 line stanzas ababbcbcc	21 S
8. The Holy Fair	1785	8 line + 1 line refrain ababcdcd	27 S
9. To A Mouse	1785	Burns stanza aaabab	8 S
10. Epistle to John Lapraik	1785	Burns stanza aaabab	22
11. Epistle to James Smith	1786	Burns stanza aaabab	29
12. Epistle to A Young Friend	1786	ababcdcd	11
13. A Bard's Epitaph	1786	Burns stanza aaabab	4 S
14. To A Haggis	1786	Burns stanza aaabab	8 S
15. Address To The Unco Guid	1786	8 line ababcdcd	8 S
16. On A Scotch Bard	1786	Burns stanza	10 S
17. The Auld Farmer's New-Year Morning Salutation	1786	Burns stanza aaabab	18 S
18. To A Louse	1786	Burns stanza aaabab	8 S
19. To A Mountain Daisy	1786	Burns stanza aaabab	9 S
20. The Twa Dogs	1786	rhyming couplets	238 L
21. Tam O' Shanter	1790	rhyming couplets	224 L

22. THE STRUCTURE OF THE POEMS OF ROBERT BURNS

S = stanza

L = lines

23. ROBERT BURNS LANGUAGE

By grouping vocabulary under different headings I think we get a really good idea of the angles we could take to study his language and understand his poetry better. These are some groupings from the top of my head but we could easily make subdivisions and add categories.

1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Scotland, Scotia, Dumfries, Ayrshire, Ayr, Carrick Shore, Galston Muirs, Kilmarnock, Kirkpatrick, Mauchline, The Cumnock Hills, Kirk Alloway, the Tweed, the Doon.

2. THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE

hills, hillocks, stanes, mosses, dub, mire, whin, whun, lake, lough, cairn, muirs, moors, knowe, howe, stream, crags, haugh, slough, glen

floods, storms, tempests, rains, showers, short winter nights, caller air, simmer, wind, blaw, blast, snaw, thawes, icy boord, chill, rainbow, Borealis, stars

slaps, styles, ford, brig, trenches, ditches, key stane, calf-ward, kirks, dykes, fences, quarry, sheugh

3. DRINK

John Barleycorn, Scotch drink, amber bead, whisky stell, whisky punch, distil, toddy, ale, yill, tippenny, penny wheep, pint-stowp, potion, brandy, bear, swats, nappy cogs, caups, glass, jug, bicker, lugged caup, barrel, horn, tankard Bacchus, wine, vine, wet the weasan', to bouse, Change house, tavern

4. FOOD

bill o' fare, crowdie time, lunch, , dinner, kebbuck, cheese, water-brose, drummock (meal and water), muslin-kail, pudding, paich, tripe, thairm, sawpe, grozet, bannock, parridge, haggis, ragout, olio, bakes (biscuits), bread, herring, cod.

5. DRESS

plush blue hair breeks, braid cloth, bonnet (term used for men and women), braw claithing, sark, sirk, sunday sirk, riding graith, mantel, manteeles, shoon, duds, seventeen hunder linen, paisley harn, creeshie linen, silks, scarlets, last claith, flannen

6. MONEY

bodle, plack, ha'pence, tippence, groat, mark, pund,Geordie, stents, cash, poortith, coin, racked rents, gear

7. WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

ell, pint, gill, teats o' hay, ripps o' corn, stacks, stocks, daimen-icker, thrave

8. FAUNA

mite, midge, louse, mice, moudieworts, poussie, hare, stinking brock, tods, kye, kain, hawkie, bill, yowe, tup, tup lamb, gimmer pets, stirks, asses, mare, naig, nag, jade, horse, mair, tyke, ploughman's collie, lav'rock, lark, craw, drake, moor cock, paitricks,

9. TRADES AND PROFESSIONS

chapman, the miller, the smith, souter, hunter, cottar, thief, gibbet airns, cheese-making, weaving, herding, pleugh, farmer, laird, country gentry, racer Jess, whore, wabster lad, judge, Clinkunbell, tinker-gypsy, mill, smiddie, ha' folk, flunkey, biggin, quarry, tenant, till, apothecary, teacher, butchin, trenchin, delver, ditcher, mill, happer, clap, Burnewin, ploughman, Howdie, lawyer, knappin-hammers.

10. CROPS

beans, pease, corn, kail, potatoes, basket, wheat, aits, awnie horn, barley

11. THE SUPERNATURAL

can't cross stream, hollow, eldritch, skriech, warlocks, kirkyard, witches, houlets, ghaists, nick, coffins, cantraip sleight, carlin, hag, beldam, carlin, rigwoodie, jade, satan, hellish legion, hornie, clootie, saul, harrow, boundless pit, brunstane, scorching heat, three taed leister, cursed skill, hangie, lowin heugh, tirling, ruin'd castle, croon, bumming, humming, drone, ragweed nags, leagues, howkit dead, mystic knots, cantrip wit, spunkies, cloots, black pit, gnash gums, fairy land, elf, bogles, kelpies.

12. ILLNESSES

batts, colic-grips, barkin' hoast, gout, colic, scabs, blotches, gall, plague

line	The divisions into feet and the metrical pattern								
	Х	/	х	/	Х	/	Х	/	
L.1	Fair	<u>fa'</u>	your	hon	est,	son	sie	face	a
	х	/	х	/	Х	/	Х	/	
L.2	Great	chief	tain	0'	the	pud	ding	race	а
	х	/	х	/	X	/	х	/	
L.3	Α	boon	them	a',	ye	tak	your	place	а
	х	/	х	/					
L.4	Painch	tripe	or	thairm					b
	х	/	х	/	Х	/	Х	/	
L.5	<u>Weel</u>	are	ye	wor	dy	0	a	grace	а
	х	/	х	/					
L.6	As	lang's	my	arm.					b

24. THE ROBERT BURNS STANZA

There is probably an exception in line 4 where in this particular stanza we would stress 'painch' and 'tripe'. This is known as a spondaic foot I think.

A Robert Burns stanza is a sextain with a rhyme scheme of aaabab. In general the a lines are divided into four iambic tetrameter feet and the b lines into two feet each with two iambs or iambic dimeters. In general there is a regular pattern of eight syllables in the a lines and four syllables in the b lines. However if there is an addition of an unstressed or weak syllable it will be contracted so that the four stresses give the impression of regularity. This is quite common in English verse which is not always as regular as French. This type of verse which depends on stressed and unstressed syllables is also known as accentual-syllabic verse. In the Robert Burns Stanza there tends to be more masculine rhyme ends to the lines : some people now say strong rhyme to avoid sexism! A "strong" rhyme is a monosyllabic word whereas a feminine rhyme is one of two syllables. Feminine rhyme endings such as greeting, fleeting will automatically change the stress pattern from the iambic as the stress falls on 'greet' and 'fleet'. This type of stress pattern is known as trochaic.

To A Haggis is an eight stanza poem. Once your have done the scansion of the poem (i.e. to figure out the metrical rhythm) you have to consider the following points :

TONE : this relates to the sound of the poem. To a Haggis is gusty, jocular, spirited in tone. DICTION : relates to the level of language again we have to be careful now about saying high diction (très soutenu) and low diction (argotique ou très familier) because it can be politically incorrect. To A Haggis is written in the Ayrshire dialect and is written in the language of the ordinary man. It may be described as colloquial (familier). Many contractions wi', a' o' so it closely follows spoken language and its pronunciation. LANGUAGE : the language used is sensual and relates to the five senses seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and even feeling. It is full of pictures and images as well as being exaggerated.

FIGURES DE STYLE :

similies are comparisons which are introduced by like or as : the grace he can give the haggis is as long as his arm.

metaphor a direct comparison : great chieftain

personification : we could say that the metaphor of the chieftain is also a personification of the haggis

anthropomorphism : the haggis is compared to the human body so chieftain again could be called an anthropomorphism; but the image of the 'sonsie (pleasant) face is perhaps even better.

alliteration : fair fa' face in the first line

OTHER COMMENTS

In fact this is a community poem and it is performed with gestures and you need to have a knife in your hand. When the line as lang's my arm is said you have to wipe the knife down your arm at the same time.

INTENTION : to entertain the company and extol not only the virtues of the national dish but also those of the Scottish nation in general!