

JADE LUTE

Renderings in Literary Scots and English

from fifty ancient Chinese poems

by

David Purves

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Ancient Chinese Poems in Scots and English

Anonymous (1st Century BC)

ORPHAN

*Whan ma mither an faither war leevin,
Ah uised ti hurl in a cairriage wi fower braw horses.
But whan thay baith dee'd, Ah tell ye:
ma brither telt me ti dae the denner.
Ma guidsister says: "See you til the horses!"
Ah wes never duin climmin up intil the haw,
syne rinnin doun again til the parlor,
never aff the gae an hattert fair ti daith.
Ah wes aye greitin an ma tears fell lyke the rain.
In the mornins thay sent me ti draw wattir,
an Ah never wan back or the gloamin.
Ma haunds war aw sair, an shuin Ah haed nane.
Ah gaed aboot barefuit, strampin on thrissils.
In wunter, nae tapcoat ti keep oot the cauld,
an in Simmer, Ah haed nae thin claes for the heat.
The'r nae pleisir in leevin an Ah'd suiner be deid.
Ah wad fain skreive a letter an send it
til ma mither an faither doun unner the mouls,
an tell thaim, nae mair can Ah thole it
up here, wi ma brither an sister,
bydin, in whit wes aye ma hame
an traetit lyke an outlin sornier.*

Anonymous (1st Century BC)

ORPHAN

*When my mother and father were living,
I rode in a carriage with four fine horses,
but when they both died, I can tell you,
my brother told me to make the dinner.
My goodsister says: "You see to the horses!"
I was never done climbing up to the hall,
then running back down to the parlor.
Never off the go and worked near to death,
I cried all the time and my tears fell like rain.
In the morning they sent me to draw water
and I never got back til the evening.
My hands were all sore, and shoes I had none.
I went about barefoot, tramping on thistles.
In winter, no topcoat to keep out the cauld,
and in Summer, no thin clothes for the heat.
No pleasure in living and I'd sooner be dead.
I would fain write a letter and send it
to mother and father down in the ground
and tell them, no more can I bear it
up here with my brother and sister,
living in what once was my home,
and treated like an stranger slave.*

SOUTH O THE GRET SEA

*Ma luiv is nou leevin
ti the south o the Gret Sea.
Whit sal Ah send him for a praisent?
Twa paerls an a kaim o tortoise-shell.*

* * * *

*Ah hear word he is no true:
Thay tell me he clasht ma box ti the grund,
clasht it ti the grund an brunt it,
syne sperfilt its auss ti the wund.
It's aw yin wi ma brukken hert.
Frae this day til the ends o tyme
Ah maun never think o him---
never think on him again.
Ah hear the cocks ir crawin,
an the dugs ir aw berkin---
Ma brither an his guidwyfe
wul suin ken aw about it.
The Back End wund is blawin,
the snell mornin wund is souchin.
In a meinit the sun wul ryse in the East
an syne it wul ken anaw.*

SOUTH OF THE GREAT SEA

*My love is now living
South of the Great Sea.
What shall I send him for a present?
Two pearls and a tortoise-shell comb.*

* * *

*Now I hear word he is not true:
that he dashed my box to the grund;
dashed it to the grund and burned it,
then scattered its ash to the wind.
It's all one with my broken heart.
From this day to the end of time
I must never think of him---
Never think of him again.
I hear the cocks are now crowing,
and the watch dogs are barking---
My brother and his goodwife
will soon know all about it.
The Autmn wind is blowing,
The keen morning wind is sighing.
In a minute the sun wull rise again
and then it will know as well.*

Anonymous (1st Century BC)

THE ITHHER SYDE

*Ah im a prisoner in the fae's haunds,
tholin the shame o ma thirldom.
Ma banes stick oot an ma strenth
is near gaen for want o guid meat,
but ma brither is a Mandarin
that wants aye for naething.
His horses wire in til the best o corn.
He nicht hae spared a pikkil siller
ti send here for ti ransom me!
In his steid, Ah wad hae duin
as mukkil for him, sae Ah wad!*

THE OTHER SIDE

*I am a captive in the hands of the foe,
suffering the shame of my captivity.
My bones protude and my strength
is near gone for lack of good food,
but my brother is a Mandarin
who always lacks for nothing.
His horses are fed on the best of corn.
He might have spared a little money
to send here here and ransom me!
In his place, I would have done
as much for him, so I would!*

Anonymous (1st to 2nd Century)

ETERNITIE

*Ah caw ma chairiot up til the Aistern Yett;
ferr awa Ah see the graff-yaird North o the Waw.
The whyte esps thare; hou they reishil, reishil!
Pines an cypressess in raws deskrive braid pads.
Ablo liggs men that dee'd langsyne:
blek, blek's the lang nicht that hauds thaim.
Deep doun anaith the Yallae Springs,
thousands o year thay ligg athout awaukenin.
Ayebydinlie, the licht an mirk abuin tak turn;
awa sants the bounless years lik mornin dew.*

*The days o Man is lyke a short byde-ower:
they want the siccarness o stane an airn.
An aye the murners in thair turn ir murned.
Sanct an shenachie --- aw is trapp't the same.
Ettlin frae meat ti win ayelestin lyfe,
monie hae been begowk't bi unco drogs.
Better bi ferr ti waucht guid wyne
an cleid oorsells in gouns o silk an saitin.
The deid is gaen – wi thaim we canna speak.
The leevin is here an thay soud hae oor luiv.*

*Quuttin the Ceitie Yett Ah luik aheid
an see afore me nocht but knowes an tombs.
The auld lairs is ploued up intil riggs;
the pines an cypresses cawed doun for timmer.
In the whyte esps the dowf wunds souch;
thair endless whusperin deids ma hert wi dule.
Ah want ti gang hame, ti ryde ti ma toun yett.
Ah wad fain gang hame, but the'r nae road back.*

ETERNITY

*I drive my chariot up to the East Gate.
In the distance I see the graveyard North of the Wall.
How the white aspens there rustle, rustle!
Pines and cypresses in rows define broad paths.
Below lie men who died long, long ago.
Black's the long night that holds them.
Deep down below the Yellow Springs,
thousands of years they lie without awakening.
Forever the light and darkness tak turn;
boundless years disappear like morning dew.*

*The days of man are like an interlude:
they lack the certainty of stone and iron.
Always the mourners in their turn are mourned.
Saint and shenachie: all are trapped the same,
aiming from food to achieve immortality,
and many have been deceived by alien drugs.
Better by far to drink good wine and clad
ourselves in gowns of silk and satin.
The dead are gone – with them we cannot speak.
The living are here and they should have our love.*

*Leaving the City Gate I look ahead
and see before me nought but mounds and tombs.
The old graves plowed up into fields;
The pines and cypresses felled down for timber.
In the white aspens the sad winds sigh;
their endless whispering deadens my heart.
I want to go home, but there's no road back.*

Su Wu (2nd Century)

DRAFTIT

*Thay mairrit us whan thay pit
up oor hair. We war juist twantie
an fifteen. An ever sensyne
oor luiv haes never been taigilt.
The-nicht we hae the auld jey
in ither, altho oor bliss,
Ah dout, wul nou suin be ower.
Ah think wi dreid on the lang mairch
that streiks afore me, an oot
Ah gae an goave at the ootlin sterna,
ti see hou the nicht is weirin on.
Ah see that Betelgeuse an Antares
haes baith dwyned oot. It's tyme
for me nou ti gae for ferrawa
battilgrunds. Nae wey o kennin
if we ir ever lyke ti see
ither again. We claucht
ither wi oor twa begrutten faces.
Sae fare ye weill ma darlin!
Hain aye the Spring flouers o
yeir bewtie that blooms but aince!
Think on the days you an me
war sae blyth thegither!
Gin Ah leeve, Ah wul cum back
Gin Ah die, mynd on me foraye!*

DRAFTED

*They married us when they put
our hair up. We were only twenty
and fifteen. And ever since then
our love has remained true.
Tonight we still have the old joy
in one another, although our bliss,
I fear, will now soon be over.
I think with dread on the long trail
that stretches out before me, and out
I go an gaze at the distant stars,
to see how the night is wearing on
I see that Betelgeuse and Antares
have both died out. It's time
for me to set out for distant
battlegrounds. No way of knowing
if we will ever likely see
one another again. We hug each
other with our tear-stained faces.
So fare you well my darling!
Keep always the Spring flowers of
Your beauty that bloom but once!
Think on the days that you and I
were so happy together!
If I survive, I will return.
If I die, remember me forever!*

Anonymous (300-500)

A LASSIE'S PROBLEM

*In the Spring we ingether the mulberry leafs.
At the Simmer's end we rowe down the cocoons.
Gin a yung quyne dargs aw day an aw nicht,
hou can she finnd tyme for ti git mairrit?*

A GIRL'S PROBLEM

*In the Spring we gather mulberry leaves.
At the Summer's end we unroll the cocoons.
If a young lass toils all day and all night,
How can she find time to get married/*

Anonymous (4th Century)

THE LITTIL LEDDIE

*Hir door opent on the whyte wattir
neirhaund the shakkin timmer brig.
That's whaur the littil leddie bade—
Aw hir lane athouten a man.*

THE LITTLE LADY

*Her door opened on the white water
Nearby the shaking timber bridge.
That's where the little lady dwelled--
All by herself without a man.*

T'ao Yuan Ming (365-427)

HAME HINNERLIE

*Frae a loun Ah never mukkil lykit the toun.
Ah never forgot the bens whaur Ah wes born.
The warld claucht me an yokit me
an fairlie harlt me throu the stour
for thertie year, awa frae hame.
The swallaes returns aye til the same tree.
Fish soums back til the puils thay war spawned.
Ah hae been aw ower the haill kintrie
an hae cum back again til ma ain gairden.
Ma ferm is anerlie ten acre lyke.
The ferm houss haes echt or nyne chaumers.
Birks an sauchs beild the back gairden.
Peach trees staun bi the houss door.
The clachan is richt oot o sicht.
Ye can hear the dugs berk in the loans
an cocks craw in the mulberry trees.
Whan ye cum throu the yett inti the court,
ye wul finnd here nae stour or midden.
Saucht an quaeit sains ilka chaumer.
Ah im content ti byde here the lave o ma days,
for at lest, Ah hae fund masell.*

T'ao Yuan Ming (365-427)

HOME AT LAST

*From a child I never much liked the town.
I never forgot the hills where I was born.
But the world took me and yoked me
and drove me through dirt and care
for thirty years away from my home.
The swallows return to the same tree.
Fish swim back to the pools they were spawned.
I have been all over the whole country
and now I am back again to my own garden.
My farm is only about ten acres.
The farm house has eight or nine rooms.
Birches and willows shelter the back garden.
Peach trees stand by the house door.
The clachan is well out of sight,
but you can hear the dogs bark in the lanes
and cocks crow in the mulberry trees.
When you pass the gate into the yard,
you will find here no mess or midden.
Peace and quiet blesses every room.
I am glad to live here the rest of my days,
for at last I have found myself again.*

T'ao Yuan Ming (365-427)

PUIR BURDS

*The trees in ma aistlin gairden
birze oot thair new twigs.
They ettil ti kittil new joy.
An men say the sun an muin keeps movin
aye, kis thay canna finnd a saft saet,
but the burds flichter ti rest in ma tree,
an Ah hear thaim sayin, thinks Ah:
"It's no that the'r nae ither men,
but we lyke this cheil the best,
but houever we lang ti speak o't,
he can never ken o oor dule."*

T'ao Yuan Ming (365-427)

POOR BIRDS

*The trees in my eastern garden
thrust out their new twigs
intending to create new joy.
And men say the sun and moon keep
moving, since they can't find a seat,
but the birds flutter to rest in my tree,
and I hear them saying, I think:
"We know that there are other men,
but we like this man the best,
but however we long to speak of it,
he can never know our sorrow?"*

Ho Hsun (5th Century)

THE FERR TRAVLAR

*The traivlar wi his lourd hert
gaes aff himlane for a thousan myle.
On the mirk wattir i the teimin rain:
whyte horses skiffin afore the wund.*

THE FAR TRAVELER

*The traveler with his heavy heart
sets off himself for a thousand miles.
On the dark waves in the drenching rain:
white horses charging before the wind.*

Ng Shao (6th Century)

THE NEW WYFE

*Day eftir day ma silken gouns growes lowss.
The peach an ploum blossoms wede awa.
Ah dream o ma yung guidman at never cums hame.
Whan he dis..... Ai, Ah dout he winna ken me!*

THE NEW WIFE

*Every day that passes my silken gowns grow loose.
The peach and plum blossoms fade away.
I dream of my young man that never comes home.
When he does, I fear he will not know me.*

Ho Ch'e Ch'ang (659-744)

HAMECUMMIN

*Ah wes a bit loun whan Ah left hame.
Ah cam back a cruppen bodach.
Ah think Ah mynd the kintrie speak,
but ma heid's inti snaw sen Ah spak it.
The bairns forgether an gove at me,
but naebodie richt unnerstauns me.
Thay luik at me an lauch, an yin
wi a richt snotterie-lik neb spiers:
"Whaur div EE cum frae, ma Lord?"*

HOMECOMMING

*I was but a boy when I left home.
I returned here a bent old man.
I should remember the country speak
but my head's into snow since I spoke it.
The children gather and stare at me,
but nobody seems to understand me.
They look at me and laugh, and one
with a snottery nose asks me:
"Where do YOU come from, my Lord?"*

Wang Chi (ca.700)

GAUN TI THE PUB

*Thir days, foraye fouzilt wi the drink,
Ah never slokken the drouth o the saul.
But whan Ah see ither men aye fou,
it's ill for ti byde sober masell!*

GOING TO THE PUB

*These days, always the worse for drink,
I never quench the thirst of the soul.
But when I see other men always drunk,
it's hard to stay sober myself.*

Wang Wei (701-761)

HIELAND GLOAMIN

*Mang the lanesum bens eftir the new rain,
the forenicht is fresh afore the Back End.
The bricht muin leims atwein the pines.
The kirstal wattir skelters ower the stanes.
Quynes hoyin hame frae the wash in the linn
Reishil back slae, throu the bamboo shaws.
Lotus leafs dance bi the fisherman's boat.
The perfumed whuffs o the Simmer haes gaen,
tho thair maimorie hauds for monie a day.*

Wang Wei (701-761)

HIGHLAND DUSK

*Among the lonesome mountains after the rain
the evening is fresh before the Autumn comes.
The brilliant moon gleams between the pines.
The clear stream skelters over the stones.
Girls wending home from the wash in the stream
rustle slowly through the bamboo growth
Lotus leaves wave by the fisherman's boat.
The fragrance of the Summer has now gone
though the memory lingers for many a day.*

Ch'u Ch'uang I (Early 8th Century)

KINTRIE HOUSS

*Ah plantit a hunder mulberry trees
an fullie thertie acre o guid rice
an nou Ah hae rowth o silk an grain
an can afford ti walcum ma freins.
In the Spring, Ah plant the rice.
In the Faw, Ah gether chrysans
an parfume the wyne wi thair petals.
Ma guidwyfe lykes ti be hostess
an ma bairns is aye keen ti serr.
The late eftirnuin we aw hae a splore
at the fuit o oor kitchen gairden.
In the beild o the birkenshaw
ma freins beb awa or thay'r fou.
A caller saur cuils the heat o the day.*

*An whan thay hae aw stoitert hame,
Ah dauner oot ablo the nicht lift
an goave at the thousans o outlin sterns
that winks down at me frae the heivins.
Ah aye hae a hantil jous o wine left
i the grundhous, an wha'l hinner me
frae hanselin mair the-morn?*

COUNTRY HOUSE

*I planted a hundred mulberry trees
and fully thirty acres of good rice
and now I have a lot of silk and grain
and can afford to welcome my friends.
In the Spring, I plant my rice.
At the Fall, I gather chrysans
to perfume my wine with their petals.
My goodwife likes fine to be hostess
and my children are keen to help serve.
In the latre afternoon we all picnic
at the foot of our kitchen garden.
In the shade of the birches and willows
my friends drink away till they're full.
A cool breeze helps the heat of the day.*

*And when they have all staggered home,
I stroll out below the night sky
and gaze at the thousands of far stars
that blink down at me from the heavens
I still have some jugs of wine left
in the cellar, and who will stop me
from opening more tomorrow?*

Li Po (701-762)

A FLUIT AT LOYANG

*Frae whas houss airts the soun
o this clear fluit Ah hear?
Its wheipil thirls throu the mirk
atwein the Spring wunds
that fills Lo Ceitie.*

*On hearin this ae forenicht,
the lilt o, "Brekin the Widdies",
wha wul no bring ti mynd
lown gairdens langsyne?*

A FLUTE AT LOYANG

*From whose house comes the sound
of this clear flute I hear?
Its note thrills through the dark
between the Spring breezes
that fill Lo City.*

*On hearing this one evening
the sound of "Breaking the Withies",
who will not bring to mind
still gardens lang ago?*

Tu Fu (712-770)

DESERT VIEW

*A clear Back End. Ah goave intil
endless skowth. The easin kelters
in bands o skaum. Ferr awa
the river rins on lyke intil the lift.
The lane ceitie is bleirit wi reik.
The wund blows the lest leafs awa.
The hills derken as the sun gaes down.
A singil cran flies late ti reist.
The gloamin trees ir thrang wi craws.*

DESERT VIEW

*A clear Back End. I stare into
endless space. The horizon shimmers
in bands of haze. Far away,
the river runs on to merge in the sky.
The lonely city is blurred with reek.
The wind blows the last leaves away.
The hills darken as the sun goes down.
A single crane flies late to roost.
The evening trees are filled with crows.*

CLEAR EFTIR RAIN

*The Faw, an cloud on the easin.
The Wast wund blows frae ten thousan myle.
At dawin, i the clear mornin air we see,
the fermers eydent eftir the lang rain.
The desert trees skail thair lest green leafs.
The peirs on the bens ir wee but maumie.
A Tertar fluit wheipils bi the toun yett.
A singil wyld guiss sklins intil the tuim lift.*

Tu Fu (712-770)

CLEAR AFTER RAIN

*The Fall and cloud on the horizon.
The West wind blows from ten thousand miles.
At dawn in the clear morning air, we see
The farmers busy after the long rain.
The desert trees lose their last green leaves.
The pears on the hills are small but tasty.
A Tartar flute shrills by the town gate.
A single wild goose climbs into the sky.*

DAWIN OWER THE BENS

*The ceitie is lown
soun synds awa, biggins
sant in the dawin's licht,
cauld sunlicht glents
on the heichmaist peak,
an the lourd stour o nicht
haps aye on the brae face.
The yird reveals itsell,
the river boats swither,
the quaet lift abuin---
the reishil o fawin leafs.
A mukkil dae trips delicat
richt up til the gairden yett,
sindert frae the herd,
fair lost an feartlyke—
seekin aye its freins.*

DAWN ON THE MOUNTAINS

*The city is tranquil,
sound ebbs awa, buildings
disappear in the dawn's light,
cold sunklight gleams
on the highest peak,
and the heavy dust of night
covers the hill face.
The earth reveals itself,
the river boats hesitate
the sky above is still---
the rustle of falling leaves.
A big doe trips delicate
right up to the garden gate,
sundert from the herd,
lost and frightened---
seeking its own kind.*

THE SAUCH

*The sauch in ma neibor's gairden
reishils its delicat brainches,
douceyke an fou o grace.
It brings me in mynd, lyke,
o a bonnie quyne o fifteen.
The-day Ah'm fair dowie, turnt,
kis this mornin the coorse wund
dung down its langest brainch.*

THE WILLOW TREE

*The willow tree in my neighbor's garden
sways its slender branches,
quietly and gracefully.
At times, it rather reminds me
of a pretty lass of fifteen.
Today I am very sad
since this morning the wind
broke down its longest branch.*

Rihaku (8th Century)

LUIV FORAYE

*Whan ma hair wes yit cut strecht on ma brou,
Ah played about the front yett, pouin the flouers.
Ye lampit by on bamboo stilts, be-in a horse, lyke.
Ye daunert aroun ma saet, playin wi blue ploums
an we gaed on leevin in the clachan:
twa smaw bodies, wi nae ill in thaim.*

*At fowerteen Ah mairrit Ma Lord Fou.
Ah never laucht, no be-in forritsum, lyke.
Bouin ma heid, Ah goaved at the waw.
Cryit a thousan tymes, Ah never gledged back.*

*At fifteen Ah stappit glowerin.
Ah wantit ma stour ti be melled
wi yours forever, an aye an foraye.
Whit for soud Ah be sklimmin the look-oot?*

*At saxteen ye gaed awa.
Hyne awa ye gaed ti Ku-to-yen,
bi the river o swurlin swaws,
an ye hae been gaen fullie five munth.
The monkeys girn dulesum abuin.*

*Ye trauchilt yeir feet whan ye gaed oot.
Bi the yett nou, ither mosses haes growne,
ower deep for ti clear thaim awa!
In the wund this Back End, the leafs ir suin down,
an butterflie pairs turnt yallae wi August
birl ower the gress in the Wastlin gairden.
Aye Ah growe aulder an it hurts me ti see thaim.
Gin ye cum throu the cleuch o the River Kiang,
please tell me afore an Ah'l hoy on oot
for ti meet ye, the lenth o Cho-fu-Sa?*

Rihaku (8th Century)

LOVE FOREVER

*When my hair was still cut straight on my brow,
I played around the front gate, pulling flowers.
You strode past on your bamboo stilts, being a horse.
You wandered around my seat, playing with plums
and we carried on living in the village
two little children with no ill in them.*

*At fourteen, I married My Lord Fou.
I never laughed, not being forward in manner.
Bowing my head, I stared at the wall.
Cried a thousand times, I never glanced back.*

*At fifteen I stopped glaring.
I wanted my dust to be blended
with yours forever and ever.
So why should I be climbing the lookout?*

*At sixteen ye went away.
Far away you went to Ku-to-yen,
by the river of billowing swells,
and have been gone now for fully five months.
The monkeys cry sadly above.*

*You trailed with your feet when you left me.
By the gate now, new mosses have grown,
too deep now to be cleared away!
With the wind this Autumn, the leaves are soon down,
and butterfly pairs turned yellow in August,
twirl over the grass in the garden.
As I grow older, it hurts me to see them.
If you come through the vale of Kiang River,
please tell me before and I'll hasten
to meet you as far as Cho-fu-Sa!*

Rihaku (8th Century)

PAIRTIN FRAE A FREIN

*Blue bens up ti the North o the waws,
whyte wattir rinkin about thaim;
here we maun pairt frae ither ti gae
throu a thousan myle o deid gress.
Mynd lyke a floatin braid cloud,
the sunset lyke the pairtin o auld feres
that bou ower clespit haunds frae aferr.
Oor cannie horses nicher til ither,
in taiken, lyke, as we sinder.*

PARTING FROM A FRIEND

*Blue moutains to the North of the walls,
white water encircling them;
here we must part from each other
for a thousand miles of dead grass.
Mind like broad floating cloud,
the sunset like the parting of old friends
who bow with clasped hands from afar.
Our gentle horses neigh to each other
as in token, as we move apart.*

Po Chü-I (772-846)

EFTIR DENNER

*Eftir denner – ae short nap:
on waukenin up – twa cups o tea.
On liftin ma heid, Ah see the sun's licht
airtin aince mair ti the south-wast.
Thaim that is blyth is vext
at the shortness o the day;
thaim that is dowie, whyles staw
at the lang wearie oors.
Whas herts ken naither joy or dule,
juist cairrie on leevin for aw.*

AFTER DINNER

*After dinner, a brief nap:
on waking up—two cups of tea.
On lifting my head, I see the sun's light
slanted more to the south-west.
Those who are cheerful are vexed
at the shortness of the days;
those who are sad and depressed,
resent the long weary hours.
Whose hearts know no joy or sadness
just carry on living whatever.*

Tu Mu (803-852)

VIEW FRAE THE HICHTS

*Ah sklim up the cauld ben bi
a stey gait up throu the craigs
til ma wee bit biggin here abuin,
in the steid whaur the clouds ir born.
Ah stap ma cairt an luik oot
ower the forest o maples
in the crammasie sunset---
the freistit leafs mair kenspekkil
nor onie o yeir flouers o Spring.*

VIEW FROM THE HEIGHTS

*I ascend the cold mountain by
a steep path up among the crags
to my little hut here above,
in the place where the clouds are formed.
I stop my cart and look out
over the forest of maples
in the crimson sunset---
the frosted leaves more wonderful
than any of your flowers of Spring,.*

Lu Kuei Meng (9th Century)

TIL AN AULD TUIN

*Men howp ti leeve a hunder year.
Flouers lest but the ae Spring,
But ae day o blatterin wund,
thay ir sperfilt on the grund.
Gin thay kent whit wes befawin thaim,
they wad be as dowie as men.*

TO AN OLD TUNE

*Men aspire to live a hundred years.
Flowers survive only the one Spring.
But one day of blustering wind,
they are scattered on the ground.
If they knew what was befalling them,
they would be as sad as men.*

Huang Chiao (-834)

THE CHRYSANT SPEAKS

*Ither flouers ir in bluum, but no me.
Aince Ah cum oot, see thair petals chitter!
Ah hae gowden airmor, an cled in it,
Ah'm graithed ti fecht even Boreas blaws.*

THE CHRYSANT SPEAKS

*Other flowers are blooming, but not me.
Once I come out, see them chitter!
I am clad in golden armor,
and ready to fight even Boreas blows.*

Mei Yao Ch'en (1002-1060)

ON DAITH O HIS GUIDWYFE

*Sen we war first mairrit,
seivinteen year haes gaen in.
Ah luikit up bede in, an she wes awa.
She said she wad never leave me.
Ma haffets haes nou gaen whyte.
Whit hae Ah ti growe auld for nou?
In daith we wul be thegither
in the lair, but nou Ah'm aye leevin,
an ma tears rins down even on
a begrutten face athout end.*

ON HIS WIFE'S DEATH

*Since we were first married
seventeen years have gone in.
I looked up and suddenly she was gone.
She promised she would never leave me.
My temples have now gone white.
For what, have I to grow old now?
In death we will be together again
in the grave, but now I'm still living
and my tears continually run down
my grieving face without end.*

Mei Yao Ch'en (1002-1060)

OWER THRANG

*Ye maunna fash, man
kis Ah'm sweir ti gae oot
wi ye. Ye ken me ower weill
for that. On ma lap Ah haud
ma wee quyne. At ma knees,
stauns ma braw wee son.
The tane haes juist stertit ti speak.
The tither yammers on even on.
Thay hing aye on til ma claes
an follae ilka step Ah tak.
Ah juist canna manage ower
the houss door, an Ah dout
Ah'l never win til yeir houss.*

TOO BUSY

*You must not be annoyed
because I'm reluctant to go out
with you! You know me too well
for that. On my lap I hold
my little lass. At my knee,
stands my fine little son.
The one has just started to speak.
The other chatters on without end.
They hang always to my clothes
and follow every step I take.
I just cannot manage over
the door, and I doubt
I'll ever reach to your house.*

THE CRESCENT MUIN

*The crescent muin leims
ower the neuk o ma houss.
Ma neibor's dugs yowl.
Ah dout thon failmie's in truibil
throu the middil o the nicht.
Bogils flies aboot an unco things steir.
A souch whuspers ower the hie gress,
altho nae wund blaws.*

THE CRESCENT MOON

*The crescent moon gleams
over the corner of my house.
My neighbor's dogs howl next door.
I fear that family is in trouble
during the middle of the night.
Ghosts fly about and strange things stir.
A sigh whispers over the high grass,
though no wind blows.*

Su Tung p'o (1036-1101)

SHILPIT WYNE

*The waeker the wyne the easier
it is ti waucht twae glesses.
But the waekest wyne is aye
better nor lew-warm wattir.
Auld duds is better nor nae claes ava.
An ugsum wyfe an a fashiuss byde-in
is aye better nor a tuim houss.*

*But whan ye ir fou it maks nae odds—
whatever Ah weir Ah feel nae cauld;
gruesum wyfes an randie byde-ins---
the aulder lyke thay growe
the mair thay'r the same!*

WEAK WINE

*The weaker the wine the easier
it is to down two glasses.
But the weakest wine is always
better than lew-warm water.
Old clothese are better than no clothes.
An ugly wife or a quarrelsome partner
is always better than an empty house.*

*But when drunk it makes no odds--
whatever I wear, I feel no cold;
grueome wives and angry partners--
the older they grow, it seems
The more they are the same!*

Su Tung p'o (1036-1101)

SOUTH ROOM BI THE WATTIR

*The chaumer is redd up, the incense burnt,
Ah steik the shutters afore Ah shut ma een.
The paiterns o the quilt ir lyke the swaws on the river.
The gauze curtain hings doun lyke a haar.
Syne a dream cums ti me, an whan Ah wauk,
for a wee, Ah kenna whaur Ah im ava.
Ah open the wast winnok an goave at the swaws
kelterin on oot ma sicht til the ferr easin,
awa at the ferr end o ma warld.*

SOUTH ROOM BY THE WATER

*The chamber is tidied, the incense burned,
I close the shutters and shut my eyes.
The pattern on the quilt is like the waves on the river.
The gauze curtains hang down like a mist.
Then a dream possesses me and when I awake,
I don't know, any more, where I am.
I open the window and gaze at the waves
keltering out of sight to the horizon
away at the far end of my world.*

Su Tung p'o (1036-1101)

TERRACE IN THE SNOW

*In the gowden gloamin, the rain
wes lyke sae monie silken threids.
Throu the nicht it cleared awa.
Syne it grew caulder lyke.
Ma bed cuivers felt damp
an cauld. Athout ma kennin,
the snaw haed driftit intil
ma chaumer, lyke haeps o saut.
At the fift watch, at the first glisk
o dawin, Ah steik the curtains
o the study. Throu the lave
o the nicht, Ah ligg an listen
til the ice, bauchlin the culort
tyles on the ruif. In the mornin,
Ah soup the snaw frae the norlin terrace
an keik oot at the Saidil Law.
The ben is clear o clouds an Ah
can see baith peaks. Abuin
the clachan i the aerie sunlight,
a hantil craws begins ti sweil.
The street glaur is happit wi whyte.
Nae cairt wheels haes fylt it yit.
The ice haes turnt the shop ruifs
inti whyte jade an the snaw in the entries
is fair inti gless. The lest o the chirkers
haes gaen ti grund langsyne.
Nou thay wul hae ti howk deep doun.
Sum clouds forgether, the culor o moss
But here, ma kist is batherin me again!
Ah im nithert an cruppen wi cauld.
Ah feel Ah hae tint the wull ti wryte
awthegither. The icicles on the easins
dirl i the wund like the swords
o bangster murderers.*

TERRACE IN THE SNOW

*In the golden evening, the rain
was like so many silk threads
till by night it had cleared away.
Then it seemed to grow colder.
My bed covers felt damp
and chilly. Without my noticing,
the snow had drifted into
my chamber, like heaps of salt.
At the fifth watch, at the first glimpse
of dawn, I shut the curtains
of the chamber. For the rest
of the night, I lie and listen
to the ice, distorting the colored
tiles on the roof. In the morning
I sweep the North Terrace clear
And look out at the Saddle Hill.
The top is clear of clouds and I
can see both peaks. Above
the village in the morning light
some crows begin to circle.
The street mud is now white-covered.
No cart wheels have marked it yet.
The ice has turned the shop roofs
into white jade and snow in entries
is into glass. The last of the chirpers
have gone to ground long ago.
Now they will have to dig deep down.
A few clouds gather, the color of moss.
But my chest is bothering me again.
I am shivering and bent with cold.
I feel I have lost the will to write
altogether. The icicles on the eaves
whine in the wind like the swords
of violent murderers.*

Chou Pang-yen (1057-1121)

THE AFF-PIT

*She peels fresh oranges for hir jo,
waidgin a blade that haes a watterie leim.
Raisin hir een til his, she offers him
a reed-pype an pits yin til hir ain lips.
Thegither thay wheipil, the notes dwynin intil
the scentit haze whufft bi the incense burner.
She draps hir een an whuspers:
“Hae ye no thocht whaur ye nicht finnd
sum cosie place for ti byde the nicht?
Frae the Ceitie waws ye maun hae heard
the signal for the third nicht watch?
The freist wul be dour an slippy ootby,
the streets desertit. Wad it no be wyce
for ti bydeor the morn’s mornin?”*

PROCRASTINATION

*She peels fresh oranges for her lover
using a knife that has a watery gleam.
Raising her eyes to his, she offers him
a reed-pipe and puts one to her own lips.
Together they play, the notes dying down
into the scented haze from the incense burner.
She drops her eyes and whispers:
“Have you not thought where you might
find some cosie place to stay the night?
From the City walls you must have heard
The signal for the third night watch?
The frost will be hard and slippery outside,
The streets deserted. Would it not be wise
to stayuntil tomorrow morning?”*

Li Ch'ing Chao (1082-1144)

KEIKIN GLESS

*Year eftir year Ah hae watcht
ma keikin gless. But nou ma rouge
an creams skunner me. Ae mair
year at he haesna cum back!
Ma flesh trummils whan a letter
cums frae the South o the River.
Ah canna drink wyne sen he gaed,
but the Faw haes drakkit ma tears.
Ah hae tint ma mynd, ferr awa
in the jungle rouks o the South,
an the yetts o Heivin ir nearer nou
a whein, nor the bodie o ma man.*

LOOKING GLASS

*Year after year I have watched
my looking glass, but now my rouge
and face creams disgust me. One more
year that he has not returned.
My body trembles when a letter
arrives from South of the River.
I cannot drink wine since he left,
but the Autumn has dried up my tears.
My mind is lost now far away
in the jungle fogs of the South,
and the gates of Heaven are nearer now
than the body of my beloved man.*

A WUMMAN IN MURNIN

*Seekin, fouterin, wi ma frozen hert,
a fauss close spell turns ti cauld again,
wi caups o wyne at dawin, the'r nae end
til the wund, whyle the wyld geese abuin,
Ah uised ti send in days bygaen, ti cairrie
messages o luiv til ma guidman,
hae tint thair meanin awthegither nou,*

*In the gairdens, wuthert chrysants
haes cuist a fauch lyke shroud.
Wha wul ever pick onie flouer for me?
Ah hing oot owre the bare winnok,
waitin on the dreidit nicht ti faw.
On the pagoda the smirr o rain gethers
inti draps that dreip down in the gloamin.
Gin this is murnin, ower mukkil's here
for me ti thole—or comprehend!*

Li Ch'ing Chao (1082-1144)

A WOMAN IN MOURNING

*Seeking, fumbling with my frozen heart,
A false mild spell turns to cold again,
with cups of wine at dawn, there's no end
to the wind, while the wild geese above
I used to send in days bygone to carry
my messages of love to my goodman,
have lost their meaning altogether now.*

*In the gardens, withered chrysanthemums
have cast a dullish shroud on everything.
Who will ever pick any flower for me now?
I hang out over the bare window,
waiting for the dreaded night to fall.
On the pagoda the small rain gathers
into drops that fall down in the dusk.
If this is mourning, too much is here
to be endured---or comprehend!*

Ch'en Yu Yi (1090-1138)

SPRING MORN

*Ai Mercie, here the dawin!
The blyth burds lilt in the yaird,
An Spring owerhails the wuids
wi bricht flouers. Aw at aince
a lousum poem kyths afore me.
But whan Ah try ti claucht it
in the wab o ma ain leid,
lyke a flichtermouss i the derk,
it jooks awa intil Eternitie,
sae that Ah canna finnd it
oniewhaur, oniewey at aw.*

SPRING MORNING

*My, here is the dawn again!
The blyth birds sing in the yard
and Spring overwhelms the woods
with bright flowers. All at once
a lovely poem appears before me.
But when I try to embrace it
in the web of my own tongue,
like a fluttering bat in the dark,
it jinks away back into Eternity,
so that I cannot find it again
anywhere, any way at all.*

Lu Yu (1125-1209)

A DAUNER AT NICHT

*The muin is that hie, it is
amaist inti the Plou.
Ah walk oot the Ceitie
alang the gait ti the Wast.
The damp wund bumfils ma coat.
The dewie gress drouks ma sandals.
Fishermen ir singin awa,
blyth lyke, on the ferr wattir.
Tods lowp on the connacht lairs.
A snell wund gethers an fills
me wi dowiness. Ah try for
ti think on the richt wurd
ti claucht this unco lanesumness.
Ah stodge hame late. The nicht
is nou hauf duin. Ah staun for
a lang whyle bi the hous door.
Ma wee son is aye up, readin.
Aw at aince, he bursts oot lauchin,
an aw the birn o dule o the
gloamin o ma lyfe haes flaen awa,
lyke winnelstrae afore the wund.*

BLYTH DAYS

*Aince we haed a chapper
hingin on the front yett.
Nou we haurlie open it,
but Ah dinna want fowk
skliffin up the green fug.
The sun growes warm lyke.
Spring haes fair cum at lest.
Whyles ye can juist hear,
cairrit on the lown saur,
the dirdum o the street.
Ma guidwyfe reads the clessics.
She speirs at me the meanin
o the auld characters.
Ma son fleitches for a sowp wyne.
He gollops doun the haill cappie
afore Ah can richt stap him.
Ir the oniething ava better,
nor a wawed gairden,
wi yallae an purpie ploums
plantit tyme about?*

A WALK AT NIGHT

*The moon is so high, it is
nearly into the Plough
I walk outside the City
by the road to the West.
The moist wind ruffles my coat.
The dewie grass wets my sandals.
I hear fishermen singing,
happily on the far river.
Foxes leap on the spoiled graves.
A cold wind gathers and fills
me with sadness. I try
to think of the right words
to catch this strange loneliness.
I plod home late. The night
has now half gone. I stand for
a while before the house door.
My young son is still awake, reading.
All at once, he bursts out laughing,
and all the weight of woe of the
decline of my life at once flies away
like straw driven before the wind.*

HAPPY DAYS

*Once we had a knocker
hanging on the front door.
Now we hardly open it,
but I don't want people
disturbing the green moss.
The sun growes a little warmer.
Spring has surely come at last.
At times you can just hear,
carried on the quiet breeze,
the noise of the street.
My wife reads the classics.
She asks me the meaning
of the ancient characters.
My son begs for a taste of wine.
but he gulps down the whole cup
before I can stop him.
What on earth could be
better than a walled garden,
with yellow and purple plums
planted time about?*

Lu Yu (1125-1209)

FORENIGHT I THE CLACHAN

*Here i the heich Clachan
the forenicht faws lichtsum.
Hauf fou, Ah slounge bi the
houss door. The muin leims in the
gloamin lift. The breeze is that
douce, the wattir is haulrie
lippert. Ah hae wun free frae
lees an mishanter. Ah im nou
nae langir o onie importance.
Ah never want ma brankin naigs
an rummlin chairiots. At hame
Ah hae rowth o pigs an hens.*

LEAVIN THE MONASTERY

*In ma sleepin bed, Ah dream.
It seems Ah im a butterflie.
A crawin cock waukens me
lyke a skelp. The sun cums up
the lest tyme atwein thae bens,
an mist haps the distant craigs.
Ma lang retreat is ower
an ma worries growe again.
Lauchin monks ir getherin
brainches o braw peach blossoms
for a fareweill myndin for me.
But ma stirrup cup wul cheer me
on ma lang traivil back
til the dule of the warld
intil a warld o truibils.*

RAIN ON THE WATTIR

*In the blinnd haar we drift here
an thare owre the derk swaws.
At lest, oor wee boat finnds
a beild anaith a sauchie bank.
At midnicht Ah im waukrif,
fair fou wi the wyne. The reikie
lenten is foraye smouderin.
The smaw rain is souchin aye
i the theikit ruif o the boat caibin.*

VILLAGE EVENING

*Here in the high village
The evening falls quietly.
Half drunk, I lounge by the door
of the house. The moon shines in the
gloaming sky. The breeze is so
gentle, the water is hardly
disturbed. I have wun free
from lies and misfortune. And now
I'm no longer of any importance.
I never miss my prancing horses
and rumbling chariots. At home
I have plenty of chickens and pigs.*

LEAVING THE MONASTERY

*In my sleeping bed, I dream
It seems I am a butterfly.
A cock crows and wakes me
like a slap. The sun comes up
the last time between those hills,
And mist covers the distant crags.
My long retreat is now over
and my worries start up again.
Laughing monks are gathering
branches of fine peach blossoms
for a parting gift for me.
But no stirrup cup will cheer me
on my long journey back
to the sorrow o the world--
into a world of troubles.*

RAIN ON THE WATER

*In the blind fog we drift here
and there over the dark waves.
At last our little boat finds
shelter beneath a willow tree.
At midnight I am wakeful,
quite tipsy with the wine. The smoky
lantern keeps smouldering on.
The snall, rain is sighs always
in the thatched roof of the boat's cabin*

Lu Yu (1125-1309)

THE COURTESAN

*Pink an whyte haunds lik roses!
Caups fou wi gowden puils o wyne!
The-day the sauchs ir in blossom
bi the Pailace waw. The Spring wund
brings me nae pleisir, an Ah hate
it nou. Ma intimmers is fair
cruppen wi bitterness. Ah canna
lowse the ticht cord o the years
that haes bund us baith thegither.
The Spring is aye the Spring
o ither days, but nou Ah im tuim
an wuzzent wi pyne an dule.
Ma rouge is aw fair begrutten
an ma gown is smirdit wi ma tears.
The peach trees ir in flouer again
abuin ma chaumer here, bi the lown
lochan at mirrors the mukkil bens.
Ah nae langir hae the smeddum
for ti feinish this bit skreid
an rowe it in the gowden claith.
Whan it is in yeir haund, awthing
wul be aw by an duin, foraye.*

THE COURTESAN

*Pink and white hands like rose petals!
Glasses filled with golden pools of wine.
Today the willow trees are in bloom
by the Palace wall. The Spring wind
brings me no pleasure, and I hate
it now. My insides are knotted
with bitterness. I cannot loosen
the tight cord of the years
that has tied us both together.
The Spring is always the Spring
as before, but now I am hollow
and wizened with pain an sorrow.
My rouge is streaked on my face
and my gown smeared with tears.
The peach trees are in flower again
above my room here, bi the still
lake, which mirrors the mountains.
I no longer have the heart
to put an end to this letter
and roll it in the cloth of gold.
When it's in your hand, everything
will be all by and done now, forever.*

Comment [D1]:

Lu Yu (1125-1209)

THE WYLD FLOUER MAN

*Div ee ken thon auld caird that
sells the flouers bi the South Yett?
He fair leeves on flouers lik a bee.
In the forenuin he sells mallaes;
In the forenicht, he haes poppies.
His shantie ruif lets in the blue lift.
His rice girnal is aye tuim.
Whan he haes ingethert aneuch siller
frae flouers, he heids for a tea-houss.
Whan his siller is gaen, he
gethers mair flouers. Aw throu
the Spring wather, whyle the
flouers ir in bloom, he is lyke
in bloom, tae. Ilka day he is
fou the haill tyme. Whit dis
he care gin new laws ir posted
at the Emperor's pailace?
Whit dis it maitter ti him
gin the government is biggit
on sand? An ye mak ti speak
til him, he winna aansir; but
onlie gie ye a drukken smirtil
frae ablo his tousilt heid.*

THE WILD FLOWER MAN

*Do you know that old man who
sells flowers by the South Gate?
He seems to live on flowers like a bee.
In the morning he sells mallows;
In the evening he sells poppies.
The roof of his hut lets in the blue sky.
His rice store is always empty.
When he has gathered enough money
from flowers, he heads for a tea-house.
When his money is gone, he
gathers more flowers. All through
the Spring weather, while the
flowers are in bloom, he is
blooming as well. Every day he is
drunk the whole time. What does
he care if new laws are posted
At the Emperor's palace?
Does it matter to him that
the government is founded
on sand? If you try to speak
to him, he will not answer; but
only give you a drunken smirk
From below his tousled head.*

Chu Hsi (1130-1200)

THE BOATS FLOAT

*Yestrein along the river banks
the fluids o Spring haes risen.
Gret warships an mukkil bairges
float along as licht as feathers.
Afore, naething coud shift thaim
frae the glaur. The-day thay snuve
easylyke in the fest current*

THE BOATS FLOAT

*Last night along the river banks
The Spring floods have risen.
Huge warships and great barges
float a.long as light as feathers.
Before, nothing could shift them
from the mud. Today they glide
easily in the fast current.*

Hsin Ch'i-chi (1140-1207)

DAUNER TI HUANGSHA

Midnight--a leim frae the muin
glifs the pyot frae the spaik,
a caller souch steirs the chirkers
inti sang an whuffs o douce parfume
skails frae the breirdin paddy hauchs.
The craiks frae merdils o countless
threipin puddoks deives the nicht air.

Juist the seivin or echt sterns
skinkils in the lift abuin;
twae-thrie raindraps, nae mair,
splatters on the brae face,
afore a sudden blatter---
a simmer dounpour sterts,
garrin me breinge for beild:
an auld weill-kent den o mynes!

Ah rin for the burn, win ower the brig,
an aw at aince, asyde the wuiden chaipel,
Ah see the yill-houss wi its theikit ruif.
Ma een ir filled wi maimories lik wyne.

HAME I THE CLACHAN

Laich, laich ower nairrae easins
hings the lousumness o thatch
an shallae streams ir daibelt
emerant wi gress. An syne.....
a dwaumie burr Ah hear:
twa tungs frae the South!
Wha dae thay belang til?
Aha, thon auld couple
yammerin awa in the shade.
Hou divertin this is!
On the ferr bank the burn,
ma auldest son lamps
aw ower the pea-riggs,
howein awa at the weeds.
His brither plaits a hen coup,
an ma yungest lyke laddie,
aye sae guid at finndin nocht
ti dae, liggs speldert bi the wal,
splittin the lotus pods
aye in his ain tyme.

STROLL TO HUANGSHA

Midnight, a beam from the moon
starts a magpie from his perch,
a cool breeze stirs the chirpers
into song and whiffs of sweet perfume
spills from blossoming paddy fields.
The croaks from from countless
insistent frogs fill the night air.

Juist seven o eight stars
twinkle in the sky above;
two-three raindrops, no more,
spatter on the hill face,
before a sudden shower---
a summer dounpour starts
making me charge for shelter:
an old well-known den of mine!

I run for the burn, win over the bridge,
and all at once, beside the old chapel,
I see the ale-house with its thatched roof!
My eyes fill with memories like wine

HOME IN THE VILLAGE

Low, low over narrow eaves
hangs the beauty of thatch
and shallow streams are dabbled
emerald with grass. And then.....
a dreamy burr I hear:
two tongues from the South!
Who do they belong to?
Aha, that old couple
chattering in the shade!
How diverting this is!
On the far bank of the stream,
my oldest son strides
all over the pea fields,
hoeing away at the weeds.
His brother plaits a hen coup,
and my youngest lad,
always happy with little,
to do, lies spread by the well
splitting the lotus pods,
always in his own time.

Chu Shu Chen (ca. 1200)

TINT

*Lest year at the Lantern Festival
the flower booths were bright as day.
When the moon rose over the willows.
Ah daunt in the moonlight with my love.
Another year – the same festival –
the moon and lanterns are the same,
but my man is tint, Ah cannot find him,
an Ah dicit awa tears with my sleeve.*

LOST

*Last year at the Lantern Festival
the flower booths were bright as day.
When the moon rose over the willows.
I strolled in the moonlight with my love.
Another year – the same festival --
the moon and lanterns are the same,
but my man is lost, I cannot find him,
and I wipe away tears with my sleeve.*

MA MORNIN

*Ah rise up. Ah im that seik
o rougin ma chowks. Ma gizz
in the glass fair gies me the bowk.
Ma shilpit shouthers ir boued down
wi howplessness. Tears o lanesumness
wals in ma een. Wearilie lyke,
aince mair, Ah hirpil til ma dresser.
Ah airch an pent ma eebrous
an steam ma heavy plets.
Ma maid is that donnert, she offers
me ploum blossoms* for ma heid!*

MY MORNING

*I rise up. I am so sick
of rouging my cheeks. My face
in the glass disgusts me.
My skinny shoulders are bowed down
with despair. Tears of loneliness
well in my eyes. Wearily,
once more. I hobble to my dresser.
I arch and paint my eyebrows
and steam my heavy plaits.
My maid is so stupid, she offers
me plum blossoms for my head!*

*A preparation for sexual adventure

Kso Jui-shiuan (13th Century)

CHING MING SPLORE

*The knowes til the North an South ir fou o lairs
an at Ching Ming, the leevin ir thrang anaw,
haiglin thair praisents til thair forbeir's lairs.
lik butterflies the joss-paper auss flies by,
an reid azaleas dreip as bairnies greit.
But eftir sundown, the lairs ir lowries' dens
aince mair. The bairns, gaun hame, lauch,
i the lantern licht. Man, wul Ah no git fou
the-nicht, an aw the nichts as lang's Ah leeve,
for nou it's shuirle clear aneuch ti me
the neist drap guid strang whusky
thay pour in the eftir warld, wul be the first!*

Kso Jui-shiuan (13th Century)

CHING MING FESTIVAL

*The mounds to the North and South are full of tombs
and at Ching Ming, the living are crowded as well,
carrying presents to the graves of their ancestors.
Like butterflies, joss-paper ashflies by,
and red azaleas drop as children weep.
But after sundown, the graves are foxes' dens
once more. The children going home,
Laugh in the lantern light. Man, will I not get full
tonight, and all the nights as long as I live?
For now it's surely clear enough to me,
the next good drop of good strong whisky
they pour in the after world, will be the first!*

Chang Kuo Fan (19th Century)

THERTIE-THRIE THE-DAY

*Mair as thertie year haes stoured
by me lik a rinawa chariot.
In siclyke wey Ah hae spent
ma lyfe, breingin here an thare
frae ae end the kinrik til tither.
Nou Ah grein for the steid
Ah wes born, ten thousan bens awa.
Lik the runkilt yallae leafs
at the Simmer's end, a whein
whyte hairs haes kythed
areddies on ma heid. An aw
ma traivel haes duin nae mair
nor sklif the driftin sand.
Ah gethert leir lik a snaw baw
Ah sklum gret craigs. Ah passed exems
an blethert lairnit lecters
at fowk daft aneuch ti heed me.
But whit did Ah gain at aw?
Better haed Ah bidden at hame
for ti growe the prize melons.*

THERTY-THREE TODAY

*More than thirty years have sped
by me like a runaway chariot.
In such a way, I've spent
my life, charging here and there
from one end of the land to the other.
Now I long for the place where
I was born, ten thousand hills away.
Like the wrinkled yellow leaves
at Summer's end, a few
white hairs have now appeared
already on my head. And all
my travels have done no more
than brush the drifting sand.
I gathered gear like a snowball.
I climbed mountains. I passed exams
and gave learned lectures
at folk daft enough to heed me.
But what did I gain at all?
Better had I stayed at home
to grow prize melons.*

GLOSSARY

This glossary is intended to be no more than an aid to readers unfamiliar with the Scots language. The Scots spellings used are in accordance with the guidelines published by the Scots Language Society in 1985 for Scots orthography. In general, these spellings avoid many of the anomalies associated with English orthography and give useful guidance to the pronunciation of Scots words. The equivalent meaning given in English, represents the appropriate meaning in the text. Many of the Scots words covered have several other meanings, or synonyms, and these may be found in the Concise Scots Dictionary (Aberdeen University Press, 1985) or in the Scottish National Dictionary.

ablo, prep, away
about, adv, about
abuin, prep, above
ae, a, one
aerlie, adv, early
aferr, adv, afar
afore, adv, before
Ah, pron, I
aheid, adv, ahead
ahint, prep, behind
Ai, interj, Oh
ain, a, own
aince, adv, once
airmor, n, armor
airn, n, iron
airt, n, art, direction
aistern, a, east
aistlin, a, easterly
alang, prep, along
altho, c, *although*
amaist, adv, almost
amang, prep, among
an, c, and
anaith, prep, beneath
anaw, adv, also
ane, a, one
anelie, a, only
aneuch, a, enough
anither, a, another
areddies, adv, already
athout(en), prep, without
atwein, prep, between
auld, a, old
aunsir, n, answer
ava, adv, at all

aw, a, all
awa, a, away
awauken, v, awaken
awthegither, adv, altogether
awthing, n, everything
aye, adv, always
ayebydinlie, adv, eternally
ayelestin, a, everlasting

bade, v, dwelled
banes, n, bones
bangstar, n, bully
bairn, n, child
barefuit, a, barefoot
bauchil, v, distort
beb, v, drink
becum, v, become
bedein, adv, suddenly
befaw, v, befall
beglaumert, a, enchanted
begowk, v, deceive
begrutten, a, tear-stained
behauden, a, beholden
beild, n, v, shelter
beir, v, bear
beirial, n, burial
beiss, n, animals
belanged, v, belonged
ben, prep, in
bens, n, mountains
bern, n, barn
bewtie, n, beauty
bi, prep, by
biggin, n, building
birl, v, rotate

biggit, v, built
birk, n, birch
birkenshaw, n, group of birches
birn, n, burden
birze, v, press
blatter, v, rattle
blaw, v, blow
blek, a, black
blether, v, chatter
bluim, v, bloom
blyth, a, happy
bodach, n, old man
bogil, n, scarecrow
bonnie, a, beautiful
bou, v, n, bow
bowk, v, retch
braes, n, slopes
raid, a, broad
brainches, n, branches
braw, a, fine
breinge, v, charge
breird, v, sprout
brek, v, break
bricht, a, bright
brig, n, bridge
brither, n, brother
brocht, v, brought
brou, n, brow
brukken, v, broken
brunt, v, burnt
buith, n, booth
bumfil, v, pucker
bund, v, bound
byde, v, stay
byde-ower, n, sojourn
bygaen, n, bygone

caibin, n, cabin
caird, n, old man
cairriage, n, carriage
cairt, n, cart
caller, a, fresh
cam, v, came
canna, v, cannot
cauld, a, cold
caw, v, call, drive
ceitie, n, city

chairiot, n, chariot
chapper, n, knocker
chaumer, n, chamber
cheil, n, fellow
chirker, n, cricket
chitter, v, shiver
chowks, n,
clachan, n, village
claes, n, clothes
claith, n, cloth
clash, v, throw
claucht, v, clutch
cleid, v, clad
cled, v, clad
cleuch, n, glen
connach, v, spoil
coorse, a, wild
craig, n, crag
craik, v, croak
crammasie, a, crimson
cran, n, crane
craw, n, crow
croun, n, crown
cruppen, a, shrivelled
cuil, v, cool
cuist, v, cast
cuiver, v, cover
cum, v, come

dae, v, do
daibil, v, dabble
daith, n, death
darg, v, toil
dauner, v, wander
daunert, v, wandered
dawin, n, dawn
dee, v, die
deid, a, dead
deive, v, deafen
denner, n, dinner
deskrive, v, describe
dicht, v, wipe
didna, v, did not
dirdum, n, noise
dirl, v, vibrate
div, v, do
douce, a, soft

doun, prep, down
dout, v, n, doubt
dowf, a, sad
dowie, a, sad
drak, v, soak up
dreid, n, dread
dreip, n, v, drip
drog, n, drug
droukit, a, drenched
drouth, n, thirst
drukken, a, drunken
duds, n, rags
dug, n, dog
duin, v, done
dule, n, sorrow
dulesum adv, sorrowfully
dung, v, broke
dwaiblie, a, feeble
dwaumie, a, dreary
dwyne, v, dwindle

easin, n, horizon
echt, a, eight
eebrou, n, eyebrow
efir, prep, after
efirnuin, n, afternoon
esp, n, asp
ettil, v, intend
exem, n, examination
eydent, a, industrious

faimlie, n, family
fain, v, like to
fareweill, n, farewell
fash, v, worry
fashiuss, a, irritating
fae, n, foe
faither, n, father
fauch, a, feeble
faw, v, n, fall, autumn
fearthlyke, a, frightened
fere, n, companion
ferm, n, farm
ferr, a, far
finnd, v, find
fleitch, v, implore
flichter, v, flutter
flichtermouss, n, bat

flower, n, flower
fluid, n, flood
fluit, n, flute
flyte, v, scold
follae, v, follow
foraye, adv, forever
forby, adv, also
forebeir, n, ancestor
forenuin, n, forenoon
forenicht, n, evening
forgether, v, assemble
forritsum, a, forward
fortuin, n, fortune
fou, a, full
fouter, v, fuss
fouzilt, a, confused
fower, a, four
fowk, n, people
frae, prep, from
frein, n, friend
freist, n, frost
fuit, n, foot
fund, v, found
fyle, v, defile

gae, v, go
gaed, v, went
gaen, v, gone
gairden, n, garden
gait, n, way
gang, v, go
gar, v, compel
gether, v, collect
gin, c, if
girn, v, complain
girnal, n, grain store
git, v, get
gizz, n, face
glaur, n, mud
gledge, n, v, glance sideways
glent, n, gleam
gless, n, glass
glif, v, scare
glisk, n, glance
gloamin, n, dusk
goave, v, stare
goun, n, gown
gowd, a, gold

glower, v, glare
gollop, v, gulp
graaff-yaird, n, graveyard
graithed, v, equipped
greinin, n, longing
greit, v, weep
gress, n, grass
gret, a, great
growe, v, grow
gruesum, a, disgusting
grund, n, ground
grundhouss, n, cellar
guid, adj, good
guidsister, n, sister-in-law
guidwyfe, n, housewife
guiss, n, goose

haar, n, sea mist
hae, v, have
haep, v, n, heap
haffets, n, temples
haigil, v, carry with difficulty
haill, a, whole
hain, v, conserve
hame, n, home
hansil, v, inaugurate
hap, n, v, cover
hantil, a, many
hauch, n, low field
haud, v, hold
haurlie, adv, hardly
haw, n, hall
heich, a, high
heid, n, head
heidmaist, a, foremost
heivin, n, heaven
hert, n, heart
hicht, n, height
hie, a, high
himlane, pron, himself
hing, v, hang
hinner, a, final
hir, pron, her
hirpil, v, hobble
hou, adv, how
houss, n, house
howe, n, v, hoe
howk, v, dig

howp, v, n, hope
hoy, v, hurry
hunder, n, a, hundred
hyne-awa, adv, far away
hyst, v, raise

ilk, a, each
ill, a, difficult
im, v, am
ingethert, a, brought in
inti, prep, into
intimmers, n, internal organs
ir, v, are
ither, a, other

jei, n, joy
jo, n, sweetheart
joug, n, jug
jouk, v, avoid
juist, a, just

kaim, n, v, comb
keik, v, peer
kelter, v, undulate
ken, v, know
kennawha, n, anonymous
kenspekkil, a, conspicuous
kinrik, n, kingdom
kintrie, n, country
kirstal, a, n, crystal
kis, c, because
kist, n, chest
knowe, n, hillock
kyth, v, appear

laich, a, low
lair, n, grave
lamp, v, stride
lang, a, long
langir, a, longer
lanesum, a, lonely
langsyne, adv, long ago
lauch, v, laugh
lave, n, remainder
law, n, hill
lecter, n, lecture
ledder, n, ladder
leddie, n, lady

leeve, v, live
leim, n, v, gleam
lentern, n, lantern
leir, n, learning
lichtsum, a, joyful
lift, n, sky
ligg, v, lie
lik, a, like
lilt, v, sing
linn, n, pool, waterfall
lippert, a, disturbed
littil, a, little
loun, n, boy
lourd, a, heavy
lousum, a, lovable
lowe, n, flame
lown, a, calm
lowrie, n, fox
lowp, v, leap
lowse, n, loosen
lowss, a, loose
luik, v, look
luiv, n, love

ma, a, my
mair, a, more
mairch, v, march
mairrie, v, marry
masell, pron, myself
maumie, a, ripe
maun, v, must
meinit, n, minute
mell, v, mix
merdil, n, crowd
micht, n, might
midnacht, n, midnight
mirk, n, v, dark
mishanter, n, misfortune
mither, n, mother
monie, a, many
mouls, n, soil
muin, n, moon
mukkil, a, big
murner, n, mourner
mynd, v, remember
myndin, n, remembrance

nae, a, no
naebodie, n, nobody
naething, n, nothing
nane, pron, none
naither, c, neither
nearhaund, prep, nearby
neibor, n, neighbor
neist, a, next
neuk, n, recess
nicht, n, night
nicker, v, neigh
nithert, a, chilled
no, adv, not
norlin, n, northerly
nou, adv, now

o, prep, of
oor, n, hour
oorsells, pron, ourselves
oot, pron, out
outlin, n, stranger
ower, adv, too, over
owerhail, v, overtake

pad, n, path
paerl, m, pearl
pailace, n, palace
pairt, n, part
paitern, n, pattern
peir, n, pear
pikkil, n, small quantity
pit-aff, n, procrastinator
pleisir, n, pleasure
plet, v, plait
plou, v, n, plow
ploum, n, plum
pou, v, pull
pou, v, pull
praisent, a, n, present
puddok, n, frog
puil, n, pool
pul, v, pull
pyot, n, magpie

quut, v, quit
quyne, n, lass

rair, v, roar
randie, a, wild
raw, n, row
redd, v, tidy
reik, n, smoke
reishil v, rustle
reist, v, roost
riggs, n, fields
rin, v, run
rink, v, surround
rouk, v, fog
rowe, v, roll
rowth, n, abundance
ruif, n, roof
rummil, v, rumble

sae, adv, soul
saet, n, seat
saft, a, soft
sain, v, bless
saitin, n, satin
sanct, n, saint
sant, v, disappear
sauch, n, willow
saucht, n, peace
saul, n, soul
saur, n, breeze

saut, n, salt
saxteen, a, sixteen
seik, n, sick
seivin, a, seven
seivinteen, a, seventeen
sen, adv, since
serr, v, serve
shaw, n, copse
shouther, n, shoulder
shenachie, n, bard
shilpit, n, iil-thriven
shuin, n, shoes
siccarnss, n, certainty
sicht, n, sight
siller, n, money
simmer, n, summer
sinder, v, divide
singil, a, single
skail, v, empty
skelp, n, v, slap
skelter, v, rush

skaum, n, vapor
skiff, v, brush
skinkil, v, twinkle
skliff, v, graze
sklim, v, climb
sklum, v, climbed
skowth, n, scope
skreid, n, letter
skreive, v, write
skunner, n, v, disgust
slokken, v, quench
slounge, v, loiter
smaw, a, small
smeddum, n, gumption
smird, v, smudge
smirr, n, small rain
smirtil, n, smirk
smouder, v, smoulder
snaw, n, snow
snell, a, cold
snuive, v, glide
souch, n, sigh
soud, v, should
souk, v, suck
soum, v, n, swim
soup, v, sweep
sowp, v, sup
spak, v, spoke
spaik, n, spar
speir, v, enquire
sperfil, v, scatter
splore, n, celebration
stap, v, stop
stane, n, stone
staun, v, stand
staw, n, stall
steid, n, place
steidin, n, dwelling
steik, v, shut
steir, v, stir, move
stern, n, star
stert, v, start
stey, v, stay
stodge, v, stump
stoiter, v, stagger
stour, n, dust
stramp, v, tramp
strecht, a, straight
streik, v, stretch

suin, adv, soon
swaw, n, swell
sweil, v, circulate
sweir, a, reluctant
swurl, v, swirl
suiden, a, sudden
synd, v, rinse
syne, adv, then

taigil, n, burden
taiken, n, token
tak, v, take
tane, pron, one
tapcoat, n, overcoat
teim, v, pour down
thay, pron, they
thaim, pron, them
thair, a, their
thare, adv, there
the-day, adv, today
thegither, adv, together
theikit, a, thatched
the-morn, adv, tomorrow
the-nicht, adv, tonight
the`r, v, there is
thir, a, these
thirldom, n, servitude
thole, v, endure
thon, a, that
thousan, a, n, thousand
thrang, a, busy
thrissil, n, thistle
throu, prep, through
ti, prep, to
til, prep, to
timmer, a, timber
tint, a, lost
tither, a, other
toun, n, town
traivel, v, journey
traivlar, n, traveler
trauchilt, v, oppressed
truibil, n, trouble
trummil, v, tremble
tuim, a, empty
tuin, n, tune
twantie, a, twenty
twa(e), a, two

ugsum, a, ugly
uise, v, use
unco, a, strange
unner, prep, under
unnerstaun, v, understand

wab, n, web
wad, v, would, wed
wal, n, well
walcum n, welcome
war, v, were
warld, n, world
wastlin, a, westerly
wattir, n, water
waucht, v, quaff
wauken, v, waken
waukrif, a, wakeful
waw, n, wall
wede, v, vanish
weill, adv, well
weir, v, wear
wes, v, was
wha, pron, who
whas, pron, whose
whan, adv, when
whaur, adv, where
whein, a, few
wheipil, v, whistle
whit, pron, what
whusper, v, whisper
whuff, n, scent
whyles, adv, sometimes
wi, prep, with
winnelstrae, n, witheredgrass
winnok, n, window
wuiden, a, wooden
wuids, n, woods
wul, v, will
wumman, n, woman
wunds, n, winds
wunter, n, winter
wuzzent, a, withered

yallae, a, yellow
yammer, v, chatter, lament
ye, pron, you
yeir, a, your
yestrein, adv, yesterday
yett, n, gate

yett, n, gate
yill, n, ale
yin, n, one

yird, a, earth
yung, a, young
yungir, a, younger