

## Dialect Poetry, Empire, and the Globalization and Devolution of English Literature

### ROBERT BURNS

1739-1796

Scottish poet and lyricist, widely regarded as Scotland's national poet. Also referred to as the Ploughman Poet. Burns wrote in both Scots dialect and Standard English and has been important to Scottish nationalist, republican, liberal and socialist politics.

#### 'A Man's A Man For A' That'

Is there for honesty poverty  
That hings his head, an' a' that;  
The coward slave - we pass him by,  
We dare be poor for a' that!  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
Our toils obscure an' a' that,  
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,  
Wear hoddin grey, an' a' that?  
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,  
A man's a man for a' that.  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
Their tinsel show, an' a' that,  
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,  
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd a lord,  
Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that;  
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,  
He's but a coof for a' that.  
For a' that, an' a' that,

His ribband, star, an' a' that,  
The man o' independent mind  
He looks an' laughs at a' that.

A price can mak a belted knight,  
A marquise, duke, an' a' that;  
But an honest man's aboon his might,  
Gude faith, he maunna fa' that!  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
Their dignities an' a' that,  
The pith o' sense, an' pride o' worth,  
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,  
(As come it will for a' that,)  
That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth,  
Shall bear the gree, an' a' that.  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
That man to man, the world o'er,  
Shall brithers be for a' that.

#### **'A Fragment: Ballad on the American War'**

When Guilford good our pilot stood,  
An' did our hellim thraw, man,  
Ae night, at tea, began a plea,  
Within America, man:  
Then up they gat the maskin-pat,  
And in the sea did jaw, man;  
An' did nae less, in full Congress,  
Than quite refuse our law, man.

Then thro' the lakes Montgomery takes,

I wat he was na slaw, man;  
Down Lowrie's Burn he took a turn,  
And Carleton did ca', man:  
But yet, whatreck, he, at Quebec,  
Montgomery - like did fa', man,  
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,  
Amang his en'mies a', man.

Poor Tammy Gage within a cage  
Was kept at Boston-ha', man;  
Till Willie Howe took o'er the knowe  
For Philadelphia, man;  
Wi' sword an' gun he thought a sin  
Guid Christian bluid to draw, man;  
But at New York, wi' knife an' fork,  
Sir Loin he hacked sma', man.

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur an' whip,  
Till Fraser brave did fa', man;  
Then lost his way, ae misty day,  
In Saratoga shaw, man.  
Cornwallis fought as lang's he dought,  
An' did the Buckskins claw, man;  
But Clinton's glaive frae rust to save  
He hung it to the wa', man.

Then Montague, an' Guilford too,  
Began to fear, a fa', man;  
And Sackville doure, wha stood the stoure,  
The German chief to thraw, man:  
For Paddy Burke, like ony Turk,  
Nae mercy had at a', man;  
An' Charlie Fox threw by the box,  
An' lows'd his tinkler jaw, man.

Then Rockingham took up the game;  
Till Death did on him ca', man;  
When Shelburne meek held up his cheek,  
Conform to gospel law, man:  
Saint Stephen's boys, wi' jarring noise,  
They did his measures thraw, man,  
For North an' Fox united stocks,  
An' bore him to the wa', man.

Then Clubs an' Hearts were Charlie's cartes,  
He swept the stakes awa', man,  
Till the Diamond's Ace, of Indian race,  
Led him a sair faux pas, man:  
The Saxon lads, wi' loud placads,  
On Chatham's boy did ca', man;

An' Scotland drew her pipe an' blew,

"Up, Willie, waur them a', man!"

Behind the throne then Granville's gone,

A secret word or twa, man;

While sleet Dundas arous'd the class

Be-north the Roman wa', man:

An' Chatham's wraith, in heav'nly graith,

(Inspired Bardies saw, man)

Wi' kindling eyes, cry'd, 'Willie, rise!

Would I hae fear'd them a', man!

But, word an' blow, North, Fox, and Co.

Gowff'd Willie like a ba', man,

Till Suthron raise, an' coost their claise

Behind him in a raw, man:

An' Caledon threw by the drone,

An' did her whittle draw, man;

An' swear fu' rude, thro' dirt an' blood,

To mak it guid in law, man.

### **'To a Mouse'**

*On Turning up in Her Nest with the Plough, November, 1785*

Wee, sleeket, cowran, tim'rous beastie,

O, what a panic's in thy breastie!

Thou need na start awa sae hasty,

Wi' bickerin brattle!

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

I'm truly sorry Man's dominion  
Has broken Nature's social union,  
An' justifies that ill opinion,  
Which makes thee startle,  
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,  
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;  
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!  
A daimen-icker in a thrave  
'S a sma' request:  
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,  
An' never miss 't!

Thy wee-bit housie, too, in ruin!  
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!  
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,  
O' foggage green!  
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,  
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,  
An' weary Winter comin fast,  
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,  
Thou thought to dwell,  
Till crash! the cruel coulter past  
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee-bit heap o' leaves an' stibble  
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!  
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,  
But house or hald,  
To thole the Winter's sleety dribble,  
An' cranreuch cauld!

But Mousie, thou art no thy-lane,  
In proving foresight may be vain:  
The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men  
Gang aft agley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,

For promis'd joy!

Still, thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!  
The present only toucheth thee:  
But Och! I backward cast my e'e,  
    On prospects drear!  
An' forward tho' I canna see,  
    I guess an' fear!

### **John Clare**

1793-1864

English rural poet, son of a farm laborer and himself an agricultural laborer, enlisted for a period with the militia, later fell into poverty and mental illness. Clare is widely celebrated for his poems about nature and rural life, but he also protested the enclosures and the travails of the rural poor.

#### **'The Universal Epitaph'**

No flattering praises daub my stone,  
My frailties and my faults to hide;  
My faults and failings all are known—  
I liv'd in sin—in sin I died.  
And oh! condemn me not, I pray,  
You who my sad confession view;  
But ask your soul, if it can say,  
That I'm a viler man than you.

#### **'I Am!'**

I am—yet what I am none cares or knows;  
My friends forsake me like a memory lost:  
I am the self-consumer of my woes—  
They rise and vanish in oblivious host,  
Like shadows in love's frenzied stifled throes  
And yet I am, and live—like vapours tossed

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,  
Into the living sea of waking dreams,  
Where there is neither sense of life or joys,  
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;  
Even the dearest that I loved the best

Are strange—nay, rather, stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man hath never trod  
A place where woman never smiled or wept  
There to abide with my Creator, God,  
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,  
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie  
The grass below—above the vaulted sky.

### **'The Moors'**

Far spread the moorey ground a level scene  
Bespread with rush and one eternal green  
That never felt the rage of blundering plough  
Though centurys wreathed spring's blossoms on its brow  
Still meeting plains that stretched them far away  
In uncheckt shadows of green brown, and grey  
Unbounded freedom ruled the wandering scene  
Nor fence of ownership crept in between  
To hide the prospect of the following eye  
Its only bondage was the circling sky  
One mighty flat undwarfed by bush and tree  
Spread its faint shadow of immensity  
And lost itself, which seemed to eke its bounds  
In the blue mist the horizon's edge surrounds  
Now this sweet vision of my boyish hours  
Free as spring clouds and wild as summer flowers  
Is faded all - a hope that blossomed free,  
And hath been once, no more shall ever be  
Inclosure came and trampled on the grave  
Of labour's rights and left the poor a slave  
And memory's pride ere want to wealth did bow  
Is both the shadow and the substance now  
The sheep and cows were free to range as then  
Where change might prompt nor felt the bonds of men  
Cows went and came, with evening morn and night,  
To the wild pasture as their common right  
And sheep, unfolded with the rising sun  
Heard the swains shout and felt their freedom won  
Tracked the red fallow field and heath and plain  
Then met the brook and drank and roamed again  
The brook that dribbled on as clear as glass



Beneath the roots they hid among the grass  
While the glad shepherd traced their tracks along  
Free as the lark and happy as her song  
But now all's fled and flats of many a dye  
That seemed to lengthen with the following eye  
Moors, loosing from the sight, far, smooth, and blea  
Where swopt the plover in its pleasure free  
Are vanished now with commons wild and gay  
As poet's visions of life's early day  
Mulberry-bushes where the boy would run  
To fill his hands with fruit are grubbed and done  
And hedgrow-briars - flower-lovers overjoyed  
Came and got flower-pots - these are all destroyed  
And sky-bound mores in mangled garbs are left  
Like mighty giants of their limbs bereft  
Fence now meets fence in owners' little bounds  
Of field and meadow large as garden grounds  
In little parcels little minds to please  
With men and flocks imprisoned ill at ease  
Each little path that led its pleasant way  
As sweet as morning leading night astray  
Where little flowers bloomed round a varied host  
That travel felt delighted to be lost  
Nor grudged the steps that he had ta-en as vain  
When right roads traced his journeys and again -  
Nay, on a broken tree he'd sit awhile  
To see the mores and fields and meadows smile  
Sometimes with cowslaps smothered - then all white  
With daisies - then the summer's splendid sight  
Of cornfields crimson o'er the headache bloomd  
Like splendid armys for the battle plumed  
He gazed upon them with wild fancy's eye  
As fallen landscapes from an evening sky  
These paths are stopt - the rude philistine's thrall  
Is laid upon them and destroyed them all  
Each little tyrant with his little sign  
Shows where man claims earth glows no more divine  
But paths to freedom and to childhood dear  
A board sticks up to notice 'no road here'  
And on the tree with ivy overhung  
The hated sign by vulgar taste is hung  
As tho' the very birds should learn to know  
When they go there they must no further go

Thus, with the poor, scared freedom bade goodbye  
And much they feel it in the smothered sigh  
And birds and trees and flowers without a name  
All sighed when lawless law's enclosure came  
And dreams of plunder in such rebel schemes  
Have found too truly that they were but dreams.

## IRISH MACARONIC VERSE

Macaronic Verse is a term for poetry in which two languages co-exist, often in alternating form, so that one implicitly comments on the other. Historically, this has sometimes been used for irony or protest.

### ***Siúil a Rúin*** **(Walk, My Love)**

#### **Unknown**

*I wish I was on yonder hill  
Tis there I'd sit and cry my fill  
Till every tear would turn a mill  
Is go dte tu mo mhuirnin slan.*

*Siuil, siuil, siuil a ruin  
Siuil go sochair agus siuil go ciuin  
Siuil go doras agus ealaigh liom  
Is go dte tu mo mhuirnin slan*

*Ill sell my rock, Ill sell my reel  
Ill even sell my spinning wheel  
to buy my love a sword of steel  
Is go dte tu mo mhuirnin slan*

*Siuil, siuil, siuil a ruin  
Siuil go sochair agus siuil go ciuin  
Siuil go doras agus ealaigh liom  
Is go dte tu mo mhuirnin slan*

*I'll dye my petticoats, I'll dye them red  
and it's round the World I will beg for bread  
until my parents would wish me dead.  
Is go dte tu mo mhuirnin slan*

*Siuil, siuil, siuil a ruin  
Siuil go sochair agus siuil go ciuin  
Siuil go doras agus ealaigh liom  
Is go dte tu mo mhuirnin slan*

*I wish my love would return from France,  
his fame and fortune there advanced.  
If we meet again, 't will be by chance.  
Is go dte tu mo mhuirnin slan*

*Siuil, siuil, siuil a ruin  
Siuil go sochair agus siuil go ciuin  
Siuil go doras agus ealaigh liom  
Is go dte tu mo mhuirnin slan*

**RUDYARD KIPLING  
1865-1936**

Born in Bombay in English India in 1865, Kipling became famous as “The Bard of Empire.” He was a journalist who also wrote both poetry and prose and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. *The Jungle Book* (1896) and *Kim* (1901) are some of his more famous prose works but he was also famous for his poetry, much of it celebrating in dialect the ordinary English ‘Tommy’ or low-rank soldier.

**Tommy**

by Rudyard Kipling

*I went into a public house to get a pint of cheer.  
The owner up and says, "We serve no Red Coats here".  
The girls behind the bar, they laughed and giggled fit to die.  
I'm out into the street again and to myself says I;  
O it's Tommy this, and Tommy that, an Tommy go away.  
But it's "Thank you mister Adkins", when the band begins to play.  
The band begins to play my boys, the band begins to play.  
O it's "Thank you mister Adkins, when the band begins to play.  
Yes, making mock of uniforms that guard you while you sleep.  
Is cheaper than them uniforms, and they are starving cheap.  
An hustlin drunken soldiers when they're going large a bit.  
Is five times better than parading in full kit.  
Then it's Tommy this, and Tommy that, and "Tommy, own your soul"?  
But it's "thin red line of heroes, when the drums begin to roll.  
The drums begin to roll, by boys, the drums begin to roll.  
O it's "thin red line of heroes" when the drums begin to roll.  
We aren't no thin red heroes, nor we aren't no back guards too.  
But single men in barracks, most remarkably like you.*

*And if sometimes our conduct ain't all you fancy paints.  
 Why, single men in barracks don's grow into plaster saints.  
 While it's Tommy this, and Tommy that, and Tommy fall be'end.  
 But it's "Please to walk in front, sir, when there's trouble in the wind.  
 There's trouble in the wind, by boys, there's trouble in the wind.  
 O it's "Please to walk in front, sir", when there's trouble in the wind.  
 You talk better food for us, and schools, and fires, and all.  
 We'll wait for extra rations if you treat us rational.  
 Don't mess about the cook room slops, but prove it to our face.  
 The widow's uniform is not the soldier's disgrace.  
 For it's Tommy this, and Tommy that, and "chunk him out, the bruit".  
 But it's "Savior of this country" when the guns begin to shoot.  
 And it's Tommy this and Tommy that, and anytime you please.  
 And Tommy ain't a blooming fool - you bet that Tommy sees.*

### **'Fuzzy-Wuzzy'**

We've fought with many men acrost the seas,  
 An' some of 'em was brave an' some was not:  
 The Paythan an' the Zulu an' Burmese;  
 But the Fuzzy was the finest o' the lot.  
 We never got a ha'porth's change of 'im:  
 'E squatted in the scrub an' 'ocked our 'orses,  
 'E cut our sentries up at Sua~kim~,  
 An' 'e played the cat an' banjo with our forces.  
 So 'ere's ~to~ you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan;  
 You're a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin' man;  
 We gives you your certificate, an' if you want it signed  
 We'll come an' 'ave a romp with you whenever you're inclined.

We took our chanst among the Khyber 'ills,  
 The Boers knocked us silly at a mile,  
 The Burman give us Irriwaddy chills,  
 An' a Zulu ~impi~ dished us up in style:  
 But all we ever got from such as they  
 Was pop to what the Fuzzy made us swaller;  
 We 'eld our bloomin' own, the papers say,  
 But man for man the Fuzzy knocked us 'oller.  
 Then 'ere's ~to~ you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, an' the missis and the kid;

Our orders was to break you, an' of course we went an' did.  
We sloshed you with Martinis, an' it wasn't 'ardly fair;  
But for all the odds agin' you, Fuzzy-Wuz, you broke the square.

'E 'asn't got no papers of 'is own,  
'E 'asn't got no medals nor rewards,  
So we must certify the skill 'e's shown  
In usin' of 'is long two-'anded swords:  
When 'e's 'oppin' in an' out among the bush  
With 'is coffin-'eaded shield an' shovel-spear,  
An 'appy day with Fuzzy on the rush  
Will last an 'ealthy Tommy for a year.  
So 'ere's ~to~ you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, an' your friends which are no more,  
If we 'adn't lost some messmates we would 'elp you to deplore;  
But give an' take's the gospel, an' we'll call the bargain fair,  
For if you 'ave lost more than us, you crumpled up the square!

'E rushes at the smoke when we let drive,  
An', before we know, 'e's 'ackin' at our 'ead;  
'E's all 'ot sand an' ginger when alive,  
An' 'e's generally shammin' when 'e's dead.  
'E's a daisy, 'e's a ducky, 'e's a lamb!  
'E's a injia-rubber idiot on the spree,  
'E's the on'y thing that doesn't give a damn  
For a Regiment o' British Infantee!  
So 'ere's ~to~ you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan;  
You're a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin' man;  
An' 'ere's ~to~ you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, with your 'ayrick 'ead of 'air —  
You big black boundin' beggar — for you broke a British square!  
(Soudan Expeditionary Force)

A tribute to the *Hadendowah*, who where the first to breach and break-through to the centre of a square. (A defencive formation used by the infantry, each side of the square would contain two lines of troops. The first would kneel with bayonets raised, the second would stand and fire.) This formation had never been broken until the *fuzzy-Wuzzies* (black Dervish warriors) in the battle of Abu Klea. © by owner.

### **'The White Man's Burden'**

*As the United States waged war against Filipino insurgents, the British writer and poet Rudyard Kipling urged the Americans to take up "the white man's burden."*

Take up the White Man's burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—

Go send your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need  
To wait in heavy harness  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child  
Take up the White Man's burden  
In patience to abide  
To veil the threat of terror  
And check the show of pride;  
By open speech and simple  
An hundred times made plain  
To seek another's profit  
And work another's gain  
Take up the White Man's burden—  
And reap his old reward:  
The blame of those ye better  
The hate of those ye guard—  
The cry of hosts ye humour  
(Ah slowly) to the light:  
"Why brought ye us from bondage,  
"Our loved Egyptian night?"  
Take up the White Man's burden-  
Have done with childish days-  
The lightly proffered laurel,  
The easy, ungrudged praise.  
Comes now, to search your manhood  
Through all the thankless years,  
Cold-edged with dear-bought wisdom,  
The judgment of your peers!

Source: Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," *Literature* (February 4, 1890), 115.

**Claude McKay**  
**1889-1948**

Jamaican writer and poet, son of well-to-do farmers. McKay left Jamaica for the United States in 1912 and later became a seminal figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Later, he travelled widely in Europe, Russia and North Africa and was involved with socialist and community politics.

**'The Apple-Woman's Complaint'**

While me deh walk 'long in de street,  
Policeman's yawnin' on his beat ;

An' dis de wud him chief ta'n say--  
Me mus'n' car' me apple-tray.

Ef me no wuk, me boun' fe tief;  
S'pose dat will please de pólíce chief!  
[De prison dem mus' be wan' full](#),  
Mek dem's 'pon we like ravin' bull.

Black nigger wukin' laka cow  
An' wipin' sweat-drops from him brow,  
Dough him is dyin' sake o' need,  
P'lice an' dem headman boun' fe feed.

P'lice an' dem headman gamble too,  
Dey shuffle card an' bet fe true;  
Yet ef me Charlie gamble, well,  
Dem try fe 'queeze him laka hell.

De headman fe de town police  
[Mind](#) neber know a little peace,  
'Cep' when him an' him heartless ban'  
Hab sufferin' nigger in dem han'.

Ah son-son! dough you 're bastard, yah,  
An' dere's no one you can call pa,  
Jes' try to ha' you' mudder's min'  
An' Police Force you'll neber jine.

But how judge believe policemen,  
Dem dutty mout' wid lyin' stain'?  
While we go batterin' along  
Dem doin' we all sort o' wrong.

We hab fe barter-out we soul  
To lib t'rough dis ungodly wul';  
massa Jesus! don't you see  
How police is oppressin' we?

Dem wan' fe see we in de street  
Dah foller dem all 'pon dem beat;  
An' after, 'dout a drop o' shame,  
Say we be'n dah solicit dem.

Ah massa Jesus! in you' love  
Jes' look do'n from you' t'rone above,  
An' show me how a poo' weak gal  
Can lib good life in dis ya wul'

### **'The Harlem Dancer'**

APPLAUDING youths laughed with young prostitutes  
And watched her perfect, half-clothed body sway;  
Her voice was like the sound of blended flutes  
Blown by black players upon a picnic day.  
She sang and danced on gracefully and calm,                   5  
The light gauze hanging loose about her form;  
To me she seemed a proudly-swaying palm  
Grown lovelier for passing through a storm.  
Upon her swarthy neck black, shiny curls  
Profusely fell; and, tossing coins in praise,                   10  
The wine-flushed, bold-eyed boys, and even the girls,  
Devoured her with their eager, passionate gaze;  
But, looking at her falsely-smiling face  
I knew her self was not in that strange place.