

**ROB DONN MACKAY:
FINDING THE MUSIC IN THE SONGS
APPENDIX II: TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS**

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APPENDIX II - TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

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¹ Titles and first lines of the poems are from the 1899 edition by Hew Morrison, arranged in alphabetical order by first line. A few titles have been changed to specify a person's name instead of "To the Same." In most cases where a poem has a chorus, the first line listed here is that of the first verse, not the chorus, shortened occasionally for reasons of space. I have avoided using Gaelic titles because they differ in each edition and tend to be either too generic (e.g., "Òran"), or too long (e.g., "Oran a rinn X nuair Y a bha a' dèanamh Z"). Where I have reason to believe that a particular song is better known by another name (such as the first words of the chorus), I have included that information in parentheses under the first line above.

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NOTE ON SOURCES AND EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES FOR APPENDIX II

The four principal editions of the texts of Rob Donn's poems are as follows (in chronological order):

Mackay, Mackintosh, ed., *Songs and Poems in the Gaelic Language*, by Robert Mackay (Inverness: Kenneth Douglas, 1829)

Morrison, Hew, ed., *Songs and Poems in the Gaelic Language by Rob Donn* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1899)

Gunn, Adam, and Malcolm MacFarlane, eds., *Songs and Poems by Rob Donn Mackay* (Glasgow: The Celtic Monthly, 1899)

Grimble, Ian, *The World of Rob Donn*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1999)

In this appendix, they will be referred to by the last name of the editor or author and the date of the edition.

With one exception (#40, for the reasons explained in a footnote), all the Gaelic texts included here are from the same edition of the poems, the 1899 edition by Hew Morrison. His edition is the most complete, containing 220 poems, including all those in the other editions. Also, unlike the other nineteenth-century editors, he usually managed to refrain from editorial tampering with Rob Donn's racier passages. The orthography is that in Morrison's original, although I have corrected a few obvious typographical errors and have used only the grave accent. Each poem is accompanied by a footnote indicating its location in each of the four main editions (if present).

The English translations come from a variety of sources, also identified in the footnotes. Where no translation has been published, I have done my own with review and corrections from my PhD supervisor, Dr. Anja Gunderloch (62 poems). Where a published translation is available from a scholarly source since the 1990s (usually Grimble), I have used that translation (19 poems). In a few cases where older translations exist, I have consulted them for meaning but have not adopted them verbatim; this includes the two Jacobite poems, #5 and #45, where John Lorne Campbell's translations now seem quite dated. In addition, Grimble (in particular) often translates a poem only in part, so I have tried to translate the remaining verses in a compatible style (19 poems). In the poems I translated only in part, as well as

those in which I made changes to previous published translations, my own translations are in italics. For meaning, I relied primarily on Edward Dwelly, *Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), supplemented by the glossaries of Sutherland Gaelic words appended to the three 19th-century editions. On occasion, a question mark indicates a passage whose meaning I was unable to penetrate.

The texts and translations are set out in two columns, side-by-side in Gaelic and English. The translations are literal and line-by-line to the extent possible given the differences in word order and structure of the two languages. In my own translations, I made some effort to reflect the tone or register of the various songs (e.g., distinguishing between serious elegies and bawdy satires), and occasional efforts to reflect the original rhythm. However, my main purpose was simply to understand the texts and background of the songs well enough to analyze their relationship to the music; this does not purport to be a scholarly edition of the texts. American English spelling is used throughout for consistency with the body of the thesis.

The footnotes to each poem contain basic information about the characters, place-names and incidents in the songs, mostly compiled from the prior editions and occasionally supplemented by consulting a map of Sutherland or a source such as *Scotland's People*. Unfortunately — as the latter reveals — surviving records from the eighteenth-century Highlands are not abundant; in particular, the parish registry in Durness did not commence until 1764, near the end of Rob Donn's life. And since both Ian Grimble, a trained historian, and Hew Morrison, a professional librarian and archivist, delved into these historical sources, I have not attempted to replicate their research here.

1. TO DR. MORRISON²

Sèist:

Binn sin uair-eigin,
Searbh sin òg,
Binn sin uair-eigin,
Searbh sin òg;
Binn sin uair-eigin,
'N comunn so dh' fhuaraich
Air an robh earball glè dhuaineil,
Ged bu ghuanach a shròn.

[1] A' bhliadhna na caluinn s',
Bu gheur am faobhar a ghearradh an t-eud,

Bh' eadar Dòmhnall 's am Morair,
'S iad mar aon ann an comann 's an gaol;

Ach cia b' e ni bha 's na cairtean,
Chaidh e feargach oirnn seachad an dè;
'S cò a 's dàcha bhi coireach,
Na 'm fear a dh' fhàgas am baile leis fèin?

[2] Chunnaic mis' air a' bhòrd thu,
Bhliadhna ghabh Sine Ghòrdan an t-àt,
'S cha chuireadh tu t' aodan
Ann an comunn nach slaodadh tu leat.
Ach 'n uair shaoil leat do shorchan,
Bhi cho làidir ri tulchainn a' gheat',

Shliob na bonna-chasa reamhar
Dhe na loma-leacaibh sleamhuinn gun taic!

[3] Dearbh cha ghabhainn-sa ioghnadh
As an leac so chuir mìltean a muigh,

Dhe na corra-cheannaich, bhrìosgach,
Aig am faicteadh 'n dà iosgaid air chrith;

Chorus:

*Sometimes the sweet
Rapidly sours;
Sometimes the sweet
Rapidly sours;
Sometimes a friendship
Suddenly cools,
From a hopeful start
To an ugly end.*

A year ago this Hogmanay
Sharp was the blade that could sever the
bond
Between Donald and the Chief,
Who used to be one in fellowship and
affection.
But whatever was on the cards,
He passed by us angrily yesterday,
And who is more likely to be at fault
Than the one who leaves the village on his
own?

I saw you at table
The year Sheena Gordon had the tumor,
And you couldn't show your face
Without drawing people to you.
But when you thought your seat
Was as firmly established as the gable of
the gate,
The great stout feet slipped
On the treacherous bare flagstones, without
support.

*Indeed I would not be surprised
On this flagstone that made thousands
falter,
Of the light-headed and hasty,
Who were seen shaking in their boots.*

² The text is from Morrison (1899: 109-11); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 282-84) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 68-69). The translation is from Grimble (1999: 10, 205-7) except as shown in italics; I translated the chorus and verse 3.

As Morrison explains (1899: 109): "Dr. Donald Morrison was for some time in Lord Reay's family, and enjoyed their confidence and affection. A misunderstanding having arisen, he left the place suddenly. The poem here illustrates the proverb 'Is sleamhan leac doruis an tigh mhor.'" This translates as: "Slippery is the flagstone at the door of the big house." The poem does not identify the cause of the breach, although it suggests the doctor was at fault. Grimble (1999: 206, 236, 255) dates the poem to the tenure of the fifth Lord Reay, 1761-1768.

Ach an trostanach treubhach,
Chuireadh neart a dhà shlèisde 'n an sith,

Ma thuit es' aig an doras,
Cia mar sheasas fear eile 's am bith?

[4] 'S ann tha ceumanna Freasdail
Toirt nan ceudan de leasan duinn,
Deanamh ìobairt de bheagan,
Chum càch bhith air an teagasg r' an linn.
Ach ma thuiteas fear aithghearr,
Le bhi sealltuinn ro bhras os a cheann,
Cha 'n 'eil fhios agam idir,
Cò a 's ciontaich' an leac no na buinn.

[5] Tha mise fèin ann an eagal,
'G iarruidh fàsaich no eag do mo shàil,

Is mi falbh air na leacaibh,
Air an d' fhuair daoine seasmhach an sàr;
Ach tha m' earbsadh tre chunnart,
Mo gharbh-chnàimhean uile bhi slàn,
Oir ged a thàrladh dhomh clibeadh,
Cha 'n 'eil àird' aig mo smigead o 'n làr.

[6] An duin' òg s' tha 'n a lèigh,
Tha mi clàistinn tha tighinn à dhèigh,
Fhuair e leasan o dhithis,
Chum gu 'n siùbladh e suidhicht' 'n a cheum.
Ach mu 'n chùis tha de leantuinn,
Cuiream cùl ri bhi cantuinn ni 's lèir;
Ach na 'm biodh brìgh ann mo chomhairl',
Seo an t-àm am bheil Somhairl' 'n a feum.

[7] Iain Mhic-Uilleim 's an t-Srathan,
Faodaidh deireadh do lathach'-s' bhi searbh,
Ged tha 'n aimsir-s' cho sìtheil,
'S nach 'eil guth riut mu phrìs air an tarbh.

Chaidh luchd-fàbhoir a bhriseadh,
Na bha 'n dreuchd eadar Ruspann
's am Parbh.
Am fear a thig le mòr urram,
Gheibh e ceud mìle mallachd 's an fhalbh.

*But the strong, sturdy man
Would strengthen his two legs in their
stride;
If he fell at the door,
How could any other man stand?*

The Paths of Providence
Give us hundreds of lessons,
Making a sacrifice of some
For the instruction of their contemporaries.
But if a man suddenly falls
Through looking *too rashly* above him,³
I haven't the slightest idea
Which are more at fault, the stones or the
feet.

I'm afraid myself
As I look for ground or a crevice for my
heel
As I pass over the stones
That upset stable men.
But I'm hopeful despite the risk
That all my large bones will remain intact:
For although I should happen to stumble,
It isn't far from my chin to the ground.

The young man who's a doctor,
Who, I hear, is to succeed him,
Has learnt a lesson from two of them
To be circumspect in his ways.
But concerning the course he is following,
Let me forbear from saying all I know.
But if there is substance in my advice,
This is the time when Samuel is in need of
it.

John, son of William in Strathan,
The end of your days may be bitter,
Although this weather is so calm
That no one challenges you over the price
of the bull.
People in favor have been ruined —
All who were in office between Rispond
and Cape Wrath.
The man who comes with great respect
Will receive a hundred thousand curses
when he departs.

³ Grimble (1999: 206) has “too hastily about him” here, but “os a cheann” means “above him” and seems to refer to social climbing. In Dwelly (2001: 115), the first meaning of “bras” is “rash.”

2. TO ROB MACEACHAINN⁴

[1] A Rob 'Ic Eachainn, ma thèid thu Shasunn, Gheibh thu mharcaid fo do cheann, Cuir làmh 'n ad phòcaid, is cuimhnich Seònaid, Is aithnicheadh 'còmhach gu 'n robh thu ann.	Rob MacEachainn, if you go to England, You will get the sale under your belt, Put a hand in your pocket and remember Seònaid, And feel the proof that you were there.
[2] Na tugadh gèireineachd mu na sprèidh ort, Gu 'n caill thu 'n t-eud sin a dh' fhàs 'n ad cheann, Le comhairl' dhilsean no taine nìthe, Na trèig do ghaol ged a bhiodh sibh gann.	If you are criticized about your cattle, So that you lose your growing ardor, By the advice of relatives or a shortage of stock, Do not forsake your love although you will be poor.
[3] Tagh a' ghruagach, do rèir a buadhan, Mu 'n tagh thu 'm buar, ged a bhiodh e ann; Thig gillea treubhach troimh iomadh èigin, Mar theine sèideadh à èibhle gann.	Choose the girl, according to her virtues, Before you choose a herd of cattle (even if you had one); Brave lads will come through many a trial, As fire would spread from a tiny flame.
[4] Ma ni thu 'm pòsadh, mar thriall thu 'n tòs e, Cha chan neach beò riut gu bheil thu meallt'; Bheir creidimh còir dhuit tre ghainne stòrais, Gu 'n tig an còrr ort mar thig a' chlann.	If you marry, as you intended at first, No one living will say you are deceived; Steady faith will take you through scarcity of goods, The rest will come to you as children will come.
[5] Ma ni thu caochladh o 'n tè a 's caomh leat, Cha bhi thu sìthicht' ged fhaigh thu meall; Cuir seòl air bargan, 's bi beò an earbsa, Gu 'n tig an sealbh air a dhara ceann.	If you turn away from the one you love, You will be unhappy even with a pile of goods; Arrange an engagement, and live in trust That good fortune will come thereafter.

⁴ The text is from Morrison (1899: 358), with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 134-35) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 77).

The full title in Mackay (1829: 134) is "Comhairle do fhleasgach og, gu cuimhneachadh air a leannan aig an tigh, 's e bhi dol do Shasunn le sprèidh gu fèill" (i.e., "Advice to a young man to remember his sweetheart at home when he is going to England with cattle to a market"). This replicates Rob Donn's own situation as a young man at the cattle fair in Crieff. In the song, he advises his young friend to marry for love, and not to worry about his own poverty or the girl's apparent lack of a dowry.

3. THE STRANGER AT THE DANCE⁵

[1] Ach ma nì thu bargan,⁶
Gu 'n cuir an sealbh do 'n tìr thu.
Ach an toir mi urra dhuit,
'S nì 's urrainn mi do 'n t-saoghal.
Fal da ral da rà, fal da rà ra ral.⁷

But if you make a bargain
To provide yourself with land,
I give you my assurance
I will do what I can for the world.
Fal da ral da rà, fal da rà ra ral.

[2] Na 'm faiceadh tu 'm fear
crasg-shuileadh,
B' e tasgullach Rì-mhìchidh.
Leis na bh' air do sgreataidheachd,
Gu 'n bhreac a chasan caola.

If you saw the cross-eyed man,

He was covered with insect larvae.
With his disgusting skin
That spotted his skinny legs.

[3] Tha spuachdean is tha sgealpan air,
Le tachas is le sgrìobadh,
Gur leath' iad air ghàirdeanan,
Na bàrnaich air Leac-Fhlirim.

He has scabs and marks on him
From scratching and from scraping,
They are more common on his arms,
Than limpets on Leac-Fhlirim.

[4] Tha 'n duine sin r' a mheasrachadh,
Nì 's miosa na mar shaoil leam,
Cha 'n 'eil àit an suidheadh e,
Aon nighean nach gabh daoach dheth.

That man is to be judged
Even more harshly than I thought;
There is no place he could sit
Where one daughter would not be
disgusted by him.

[5] Cha 'n 'eil àit an suidheach e,
Aon nighean nach [gabh] daoach dheth.

There is no place he could sit
Where one daughter would not be
disgusted by him.

Cha chreid thu leis an tuar a th' air,
Gu 'n d' fhuair e riamh ach faochagan.

You will not believe from his appearance
That he ever ate anything but wheelks.

[6] Tha 'n fheòsag aig 'n a greidheanaibh,
Is sneadhan air gach gaoisdeag.
'M falt carrach aig air caitheamh,
Mar gu 'n dàthadh tu le fraoch e.

His beard is uncombed,
And nits on each whisker,
His mangy hair worn
As if you scorched it with heather.

⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 402-03), with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 229-31) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 16).

Mackay (1829: 229) describes the song as: "Oran do fhear a thachair ann an cuideachd a' dannsadh an tigh a' bhàird, agus nach gabhadh nighean eile gu dannsadh leatha, ach tè de nigheanaibh a' bhàird fèin, agus e 'n a choigreach 's an tigh, ge bha aobhar fuath aca dha, thaobh an droch dhreach a chunnaic iad air an òlach. Chunnaic am bàrd gu robh e mi-oileanach, ladurna, agus rinn e an t-òran mar chronachadh dha." This translates as: "A song to a man that appeared in company dancing in the house of the bard, and who would not dance with any girl except one of the bard's daughters, and he a stranger in the house, although they had reason to abhor him, because of the evil appearance they saw on the worthless fellow. The bard saw that he was ill-bred and impudent, and he made this song to rebuke him." It was probably composed sometime between 1763, when Rob Donn returned home from the Sutherland Fencibles, and 1773, when his youngest daughter married. See Grimble (1999: 198, 222).

⁶ Rob Donn uses the English word "bargain" throughout his verse to mean a marriage contract or engagement.

⁷ Vocables are repeated after each verse.

[7] 'S iomadh beathach b' fheàrr na e,
A bhàsaich leis a' chaoile;
Brògan dubh' gun iallan air,
'S na miallan air a chaol-druim.

[8] Ach ma ni e pòsadh,
Bitheadh mòran leis do dhaoineibh,
Oir cha b' uilear sèathnar dhuibh,
Gu deanamh teach-an-tìr dha.

[9] 'S gu dearbh cha b' uilear dithis da,
G' a nigheadh is g' a sgrìobadh,
'S gu 'm bu bheag dha deichnear dhiubh,
Gu faosgadh a chuid aodaich.

There is many an animal better than he
That died of starvation;
Black shoes without shoe-laces,
And lice on his skinny back.

But if he marries,
Many people would be required,
Because you would need six
To make a living for him.

And certainly he would need two
To wash and scrape him,
And ten would be barely enough
To delouse his clothing.

4. TO DONALD⁸

Sèist:

Hei 'm fear dubh, ho 'm fear dubh,
Hei 'm fear dubh feadh a' bhaile;
Hei 'm fear dubh, ho 'm fear dubh,
Hei 'm fear dubh feadh a' bhaile.

[1] Am brochan bhios aig Dòmhnall,
Cha neònach leam e bhi salach,
Oir bithidh e le 'chrògaibh,
An còmhnuidh toirt dheth na barraig.

[2] Sùilean mar an cù aig',
A's lùthan mar bhios air searrach;
Co nach gabhadh daoich
Roimh an aogas a th' air a' bhalach[?]

[3] Cha 'n fhaca mise riamh
Cat fiadhaich no gaothar baile,
Bu sgaitiche fiacaill,
Na 'n ciaran dubh leis a' bhearras.

[4] Ged a bhiodh e riabhach,
Ciar-dhubh, dubh, agus tarr-fhionn,
Odhar, glas, no du-ghlas,
Cha diùltainn-se dhol 'n a charaibh.

Chorus:

Hey, the dark man, ho the dark man,
Hey, the dark man round the village;
Hey, the dark man, ho the dark man,
Hey, the dark man round the village.

It's no surprise to me
That Donald's porridge is dirty,
Because he always takes the cream
Out with his clumsy hands.

His eyes are like a dog,
His joints are like a colt;
Who would not take fright
Before the face on that fellow?

I have never seen
A wild cat or village dog
With sharper teeth
Than the swarthy one with the shears.

If he were grizzled,
Blue-black, dark, and white-bellied,
Sallow, gray or dark gray,
I would not refuse to approach him.

⁸ The text is from Morrison (1899: 339), with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 75) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 10).

Morrison (1899: 339) describes Donald as "an untidy, little-thought-of simpleton, who was cadaverous and greedy."

5. TO PRINCE CHARLES EDWARD STUART⁹

[1] An diugh, an diugh, gur reusontach
Dhuinn èirigh ann an sanntachas,
An tritheamh lath' air crìochnachadh,
Do dhara mios a' gheamhraidh dhuinn;
Dean'maid comunn fàilteach riut,
Gu bruidhneach, gàireach, òranach,
Gu botalach, copach, stòpanach,
Le cruìt, le ceòl, 's le dannsaireachd.

Today, today, *it's* right for us
To rise up in all eagerness;
The third day of the second month
Of winter now has *ended*.
We'll welcome you together,
With *speech, laughter, and song*,
With *bottles, froth, and tankards*,
With *harp, music, and dancing*.

[2] Dean'maid comunn fàilteach
Ris an là thug d'n t-saoghail thu;
Olamaid deoch-slàinte nis
An t-Seumais òig o 'n d' inntrig thu;
Le taing a thoirt do 'n Ard Rìgh,
Gu 'n d' fhuair do mhàthair lìobhraigeadh,
Dhe h-aon bha do na Gàidheil,
Mar bha Dàibhidh do chloinn Israeil.

Let us meet to hail with joy
The day that *brought you into* the world,
Let us drink now to the health
Of young King James who fathered *you*;
Giving our thanks to God on high
For *your* mother's safe delivery
Of one who *was to the Gaels*
As David was to Israel.

[3] Tha cupall mhios a's ràidhe,
O 'n là thàinig thu do dh' Alba so,
'S bu shoilleir dhuinn o 'n tràth sin
An fhàilte chuir an aimsir oirnn.
Bha daoine measail, miadhail oirnn,
'S bha àrach nì a' sealbhach' oirnn,
Bha barran troma tìr' againn,
Bha toradh frìdh' is fairg' againn.

It is two months and a season
Since *you came here to Scotland*;
And since then *it's been* clear to us
The welcome that the weather gave;
We'd worthy, honored men o'er us,
The herds we reared were *thriving*,
We'd heavy crops from the land,
And fruits of moor and ocean.

[4] An diugh, an diugh, gur cuimhne leam,
Air pung nach còir a dhearmadadh,
Mu bhreith a' Phrionnsa rìoghail so,
Dhe 'n teaghlaich dhirich Albannaich;
Togamaid suas ar sùilean ris,
Le urnuigh dhlùth gun chealgaireachd,
Ar làmhan, na 'm biodh feum orra,
Le toil 's le eud 's le earbsalachd.

Today, today, I recollect
A date *that should not be* forgotten,
The birthday of this royal Prince,
Of the true reigning house of Scotland;
Let us raise up our eyes to him
With loving prayer, free from guile,
Our hands, if they are needed,
With willing zeal and *confidence*.

⁹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 79-81); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 57-59), John MacKenzie, *Sàr-Obair nam Bard Gaelach* (Glasgow: 1865), p. 189, Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 32), and John Lorne Campbell, *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1933), pp. 230-35. My translation is adapted from Campbell, but I have removed his deliberate archaisms (e.g., replacing "thee" with "you") and otherwise aimed for a simpler and more literal English rendition of the Gaelic text.

Morrison comments (1899: 79): "This poem is remarkable coming from the bard of the Reay Country, as it is well known that both the Earl of Sutherland and Lord Reay were Hanoverians. The Rev. Murdoch Macdonald, the minister of the parish, denounced the Prince in no measured terms. The poem shows that a deep under-current of feeling in favour of the Stuarts pervaded the people generally." Based on the text, Morrison (1899: 79 n. 1), calculates the date of the song as the 3rd of December, 1745.

[5] Togamaid fuirm us meanmnadh,
Is aithnichear air ar dùrachd sinn,
Le latha chumail sunndachal,
As leth a' Phrionnsa Stiùbhartaich.
Gur cal' an àm na h-èigin e,
Ar carraig threun gu stiùradh air;
Thug bàrr air cheud am buadhannaibh,
'S tha cridhe 'n t-sluaigh air dlùthadh ris.

Let us *raise* pomp and merriment,
Let us be known by our sincerity,
By keeping a day cheerfully apart
For Charles, our Stewart Prince.
He is our haven in time of need,
Our steadfast rock for steering by;
He has surpassed all in virtues,
And every heart has warmed to him.

[6] Cha 'n ioghnadh sin, 'n uair smuainichear
An dualachas o 'n d' thàinig e;
'N doimhne bh' ann air foghlum,
Gun bhonn de dh 'èis 'n a nàdur dheth,
Mur Sholamh, 'n cleachdadh reusanta,
Mur Shamson, treun an làmhan e,
Mur Absalom, gur sgiamhach e,
Gur sgiath 's gur dìon do chàirdean e.

That is no wonder, when one considers
The ancestry from which he came;
The depth of learning that he holds
His nature without defect,
Like Solomon's his reasoning,
Like Samson's his strength,
Like Absalom's his *beauty,*
A shield and guard to his friends.

[7] Nach fhaic sibh fèin an spèis
A ghabh na speuran gu bhi 'g ùmhladh dha;
'N uair sheas an reannag shoillseach,
Anns an *line* an robhtadh' stiùradh leis.
An comhar' bh' aig ar Slànuighear, —
Roimh' Theàrlach thigh'nn do 'n dùthaich —
'N uair chaidh na daoine ciallach ud
'G a iarraidh gu Ierusalem.

Do you not see *the mark of respect*
Emanating from the very heavens,
When *the shining star stood*
In the path destined for him?
The sign that marked our Lord alone —
Before Charles came to the country —
When the *Three Wise Men* went
To seek Him in Jerusalem.

[8] A nis, a Theàrlaich Stiùbhairt,
Na 'm biodh 'n crùn a th' air Rìgh Seòras ort,

But now, Prince Charles Stewart,
If King George's crown were on *your*
head,

Bu lionmhor againn cùirtearan,
Bhiodh tionndadh ghùn is chleòcaichean.
Tha m' athchuing ris an Ti sin,
Aig a' bheil gach ni ri òrduchadh,
Gu 'n tearn' e o 'n cheilg ac' thu,
'S gu 'n cuir e 'n seilbh do chòrach thu.

We'd have *plenty of courtiers*
Changing their gowns and robes.
And 'tis my prayer to Him above,
Who has the ordering of all things,
That he preserve *you* from *their treachery*
And restore you to your rightful
inheritance.

6. A MAID TO HER LOVER¹⁰

Sèist (Chorus):

Hè, hoirionnan o, 's ho, hoirionnan o,
'S e hoirionnan o, 's ho, hoirionnan o.

[1] An sgeul a thàinig o chladach,
Mheudaich fadalachd oirnn,
Ma tha 'n triall aig mo leannan,
Gu long chrannag nam bòrd.

The story that came from the shore
Grew dreary to us,
About my sweetheart's journey
To the masted ship of the decks.

[2] B' fheàrr gu 'n cluinnt' e mu bhealltuinn
'N uair bha 'ghealltanais òg,
Mu 'n do chùlaich mi 'n t-airgiod
'S nach do shealbhaich mi 'n t-òr.

Better that it was heard around Beltane,
When his promise was young,
Before I renounced the money
And did not possess the gold.

[3] Dearbh cha ghabh mi fèin buachail',
No fear ruagaidh nam bò.
C' uime 'n gabhainn do leithid
Dh' aindeoin feabhais do sheòrs'.

Indeed I would not take a cattleherd,
Or one who herds the cows.
Why would I take the likes of you
Despite an improvement in your status?

[4] Is fear eile 'g am iarruidh,
B' fheàrr na ceud do Mhac-Dheòrs'.
'S olc a fhuair mi an gearran,
'S am ball geal air a shròn.

Another man wants me,
Better than a hundred sons of George,
It's a pity I got the gelding
With the white spot on his nose.

[5] Dh' iomchair britheamh gun reuson,
Do chur èis air a' chòir.
'S maith am bargan a mhill e,
Luath's 's a phill e o 'n drobh.

He decided unreasonably
To obstruct the matter,
And excellent the bargain he ruined
Upon his return from the drove.

[6] Ach ma tha do phost leathan,
An trath-sa air eithear fuidh sheòl.
Eadar Dungasbaidh 'n Gallaibh,
Is tìr allail Mhic-Leoid.

But may your beam be wide
While you are sailing on a fishing boat
Between Duncansby in Caithness
And the illustrious MacLeod country.

[7] 'S ma 's a maraiche dearbht' thu,
Cum an fhaig' air a sròn.
Ionnsaich stiùradh na stuaidhe,
'S tarruing suas air an sgòid.

And if you are a real sailor,
Keep the horizon on her prow,
Learn how to steer the billow
And pull up on the rope.

¹⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 268-71), modified to remove the rolling couplets, with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 195-98) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 5), although the structure of the verses is somewhat different in the latter (which includes music), so it is possible that the words have been sung to more than one tune.

The song is composed in the voice of a young woman whose father opposed her plans to marry a young man, who then threatened to go to sea. Although Rob Donn apparently disagreed with the father's position in the matter — and perhaps tried to change it through this song — it is not clear whether the marriage ever took place. The poem also features a series of place-names that may have served as landmarks for sailors. Most I have not identified, but they range from Assynt (the Point of Stoer and the MacLeod Country) around Cape Wrath and across the north coast to Duncansby Head near John o' Groats.

[8] Seachad ruinn Rugha-bhuachail',
'S cum an cuan thun an Stoir.
Mothaich Parbh, agus Pùiteig,
'S biodh do shùil air a' Chlò.

Past the Herder's Point
And keep the ocean to the Stoer.
Cape Wrath will appear, and Pùiteig,
And your eye will be on the Clò.

[9] Seachad ruinn Sgeir-an-Daoimein,
'S am muir a' straightlich r' a sròn.
Is ma gheibh mi mo dhùrachd,
Chaidh cha chiùrrar i fuidhp'.

Past Diamond Skerry
And the sea sparkling on her prow.
And if I get my wish,
She will never be damaged below.

[10] 'S 'n uair gheibh thu foghlum is beartas,
Thig thu dachaidh le deòin.
Ach na sparradh ghaoth tuath thu,
Gu taobh shuas Tom-an-eòin.

And when you obtain learning and wealth,
You will come home with good-will.
But may the north wind not drive you
Up on the side of the Hill of Birds.

7. TO JOHN MACKAY¹¹

[1] An taobh staigh do thìom gearr,
'S mi nach creideadh an sgeul,
Gur tu thogadh, ged bhiodh bàs fèidh orm,

Na 'm biodh barrant air mo chùl,
No caraid agam anns a' chùirt,
B' i mo bhàrail gu 'm bu tu fèin e.
Ach dh' fhàs an comunn sin cho searbh,

'S nach robh fhios a'm e a dh' fhalbh,
Tha mi cinnteach gun d' rinn sealbh feum
dhomh,
Freasdal fradharcach, teann,
A dh' fhàg goirid agus gann,
H-uile h-adharc air gach ceann beumnach.

[2] Dhuine chridhe, glac fios,
Dh' aindeoin urram agus meas,
Nach 'eil romhad ach greis bhliadhnach'.
Faodaidh fàillinn bhith an trath-sa,
Fo do bhreitheanas air clàr,
Thàirngeas fathast anns an t-sàs
cheudn' thu.

Chuir thu thuig le do chruas,
Daoine urramach, uails',
Nach do loisg am fùdar-cluais riamh orr',
Is cha 'n 'eil mionnan mu 'n bheinn,
Nach tig mallachd ort do 'n cinn, —

'S mòr am peanas sin, mar pill Dia thu.

[3] Pàirt do t' alladh gun bhreug,
'S faide mhaireas na do chrè,
Rèir do chomais, bha thu glè nàimhdeil.

Chuir thu thuig le do bheum,
Ni bu liutha na thu fèin;
Cha 'n 'eil samhuil duit an ceud nàibuidh.

Within the span of a brief lifetime
I would never have believed that the report
Was circulated by you, even if I had killed
the deer.

If I had support behind me
Or if I had a friend at court,
I should have expected you to be he.
But that company has grown so
disagreeable

That I was not aware it had gone.
I am certain that fortune aided me —

Firm, all-seeing Providence
Brought shortness and scarcity
Of antlers on stricken heads.

Get wisdom, dear fellow,
Despite deference and respect,
You will live only a span of years.
There may be a defect now
In the judgment you pronounce
That will nail you in a similar predicament.

You have prosecuted with rigor
Respectable, worthy people
Whose priming never caught fire on them,
And there are no oaths around the mountains
That will not bring down curses on your
head —
Great will that punishment be unless God
prevents it.

Part of your reputation is no lie —
It will endure longer than your body.
According to your power you were most
vicious;
You prosecuted harshly
Deeds less reprehensible than your own.
There is not your like among your hundred
neighbors.

¹¹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 360-61) and the translation is from Grimble (1999: 168-69); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 145-46), and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 53).

This John MacKay was Iain mac Naoghais 'ic Uilleim (ibid.), a bailiff (previously a well-known poacher himself) who prosecuted Rob Donn for poaching deer. While this was a longstanding offense, it finally led, probably between 1757 and 1759, to Rob Donn's mandatory removal from Strathmore, and relocation to the coast, probably to Fresgill, an isolated spot on the western slope of the Moine headland. See Grimble (1999: 161-62, 168-71). Grimble argues (1999: 161) that the song was composed before 1757, while Rob Donn's patron Iain mac Eachainn was still living to protect him.

An lagh a rinn thu gu geur,
Nis a bhuineas riut fèin;
'S ann as coslach e ri cèill Hàmain, —
Bi-s' gu saoithreach rè seal,
Ri bhi saor is an t-Sail
Sin 'n uair chi thu gur smal caimean.

The law you used so harshly
Will now be turned on yourself.
Your wisdom resembles that of Haman.
Try for a brief spell
To escape from the beam,
Then you will see that a mote is a blemish.

8. JOHN DONN AND CATHERINE PHAIL¹²

[1] B' fheàrr leam gu 'm pòsadh
An t-oganach grinn,
Gheibhinn banais òlar,
Is ceòl a bhiodh binn.
Tha sliochd ud gun dèanadh,
'S tha cràdh orm d' a chinn,
Oir 's ionndrain à bàghan
Pòl mac Iain Duinn.

[2] Dona sin a Phàileig,
Ma chaidh Iain Donn
Dh' iarraidh nan àilleagan
Dh' fhàg e air chall.
Gur measa mar dh' èirich,
Chaidh 'n fhèill thar a bonn,
Le tinneas a leum air,
Dh' fhàg a ghèillinean lom.

[3] 'S e 'n leigheas bu shaoire
Chaidh 'shaoithreachadh dha,
Bùrn deth na bhith,
No do 'n aol, na 'm b' e b' fheàrr;
B' e deireadh na cùise,
Bhi 'g a sgrùdadh le sàl,
Bhi 'g a gabhail le sùileig,
A sgùird nighean Phàil.

[4] Tha 'chasan 's a làmhan
Gu cràicinneach, cruinn,
'Amhach 'm bheil òirleach
Smiot shròin os a cinn;
Tha cromadh 'n a shlèisdibh,
Is rèis ann a dhruim;
'S a' chuid nach cuir mi 'n cèill dheth,
Cha 'n fhiach leam a sheinn.

I would prefer to marry
The handsome young man;
I would have a drunken wedding
With melodious music.
That tribe is without conduct,
And it pains me to the end
That Paul, son of Iain Donn
Is missing from the bays.

That was bad for the Phail woman,
If Iain Donn went
To seek the pretty maids
He abandoned, lost.
It was worse as it happened,
The fair went beyond her coin,
With a sickness that leapt upon him,
That left his cheek-bones bare.

It was the cheapest treatment
That went to work for him,
Water from the tar,
Or from lime, if that was better;
The end of the business
Was examining him with salt water
That was taken through a small opening,
The lap of Phail's daughter.

His feet and his hands
Are round with loose skin,
His neck just an inch,
A bit of a nose above it;
His thighs are the length of a middle finger,
His back a span;
And the part of him I will not describe
Is not worth singing about.

¹² The text is from Morrison (1899: 316-17) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 62-63) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 30).

Morrison (1899: 316) identifies the parties as follows: "John Donn in Crospie had a child baptized Hugh - 22nd July 1770. Catherine appeared before the Kirk-Session on 12th November 1764. - *Par. Reg*". Although Mackay and Gunn and MacFarlane both label it an "Oran Suiridh" or wooing song, it appears to describe an illegitimate child, whose father — a serial seducer of young maids — then became seriously ill, perhaps with venereal disease, although my ignorance of 18th-century medical practices makes it difficult to interpret verse 3, which also seems to describe childbirth. In any case, the song was apparently composed some time between 1764 and 1770.

9. THE WIFE OF INCHVERRY¹³

[1] Bean Innse-mheiridh, cha 'n 'eil i ro bhrònach,
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Ged thìodhlaic i bodach, tha bodachan beò aic',
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi.
Na gabh-sa mar èigin eudach nan glas-bhodach,
Ni mò bheir i sràbh air am bàs, oir a chleachd i e,
Air ni 's lugha na gèidh, gu 'm puinnsean Gilleasbuig e,
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi.

The wife of Inchverry, she is not too unhappy,
I am sleeping, do not wake me;
Although she buried one old man, she has another,
I am sleeping, do not wake me.
Don't assume she suffers from the jealousy of old gray codgers;
Nor will she receive a large distribution on their death,
because she used it,
To the smallest guinea, for that reptile Gillespie.
I am sleeping, do not wake me.

[2] Tha Seòras 'n a bhuannadh mu 'n cuairt do 'n tigh òsda,
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Ged thèid e a' chodal, cha 'n fhada a stòlas,
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Siùbhladh e 'n oidhche, gun soillse, gun ghealach,
Oir is saor a tha ann, cha chum bantrach dorus ris,
Tollaidh e dìomhair, tha snìomhair is fairche aig',
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi.

George is enjoying himself around the inn,
I am sleeping, do not wake me,
Although he will go to sleep, he will not rest long,
I am sleeping, do not wake me;
He will travel by night, without light, without moon,
Because he is a joiner, a widow cannot close her door to him,
He will perforate it secretly — he has an auger and a hammer.
I am sleeping, do not wake me.

¹³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 418) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 261).
As Morrison explains (1899: 418), the subject of the song had been “twice married — to an old man on each occasion — and it being common talk that she was not satisfied with either, but had frequent visits from a local joiner.”

10. THE OLD MAID TO HER LOVERS¹⁴

Sèist:

So guidheam gu 'm faigheadh mi
faoilt is aighear,
'N uair gheibheadh, cha gabhadh,
tha mi fo bhròn. (2x)

[1] Bha mi uair 's cha chuirinn spèis,
Ann am fear gun leabhar 'n a dhòrn;
B' fheàrr an diugh na 'm fear a 's
foghlumt',
Fear idir cèillidh thigh'nn 'n am chòir.

[2] Cha bu luach leam e mar chèile,
Fear gun leughadh thoirt domh pòig;
Ach a nis 's ann orm a thàinig
Claoidheadh nàduir ann am fheadail.

[3] Am fear bu tàire bha do naoinear,
Bha 'g an liobhan fa mo chòir,
Chionn gu 'n tigeadh e 'n diugh
am thairgse,
Bheirinn tùs mo mhairbheist da.

[4] Chaill mi trian nan uile bhuadhan,
Leis am buannaichinn duin' òg;
Trian do m' aimsir, 's trian do
m' aillteachd,
Dà thrian m' àrdain agus còrr.

[5] Chaill mi tùs de 'n h-uile mairbheist;
Dhiùlt mi tairgsean na bu leòir;
Chaill mi chuid a b' fheàrr do m' airgid;
A' cumhadh mar rinn, chaill mi deòir.

[6] Mo cho-mhaighdeanean air crìonadh,
Chaill iad trian do bhlàth na h-òig:

Tha iad nis air dol ni 's saoire,
'S geàrr an tìom nach fhiach iad gròt.

Chorus:

This is my entreaty, that I may find
delight and gladness;
When I seek but do not obtain it,
I am sorrowful.

At one time I would not respect
A man without a book in his hand;
Better today than the most educated
Is any steady man that comes my way.

I did not value as a spouse
An illiterate man to give me kisses;
But now nature's weariness
Has come upon my flesh.

The basest man out of nine
Would be attractive to me
If he proposed to me today;

I would give him all my wealth.

I have lost a third of all the charms
With which I could conquer a young man;
A third of my time, a third of my beauty,
Two thirds of my pride and more.

I lost my investment for the future;
I refused offers that were sufficient;
I lost the better part of my money;
My lamentation lost me tears.

My maidenly features have faded,
They have lost a third of the blossom of
youth:

They have now become less valuable,
And soon they will not be worth a groat.

¹⁴ The text is from Morrison (1899: 210-11) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 111-12) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 28).

The Gaelic title in Gunn and MacFarlane (ibid.) is "Oran mar gu 'm b' ann le seana mhaighdinn", and the prefatory note states: "A' caoidh, chionn i bhi taithireach air fir, 'n uair bha iad 'g a h-iarraidh, 's a nis iad a bhi air a toirt thairis" (i.e., lamenting, because she was fond of men, when they used to seek her, and now they pass over her). Rob Donn is sympathetic, but seems to be advising her to reduce her expectations if she still hopes to find a husband.

11. ALEXANDER CORMACK AND ROB DONN¹⁵

[1] **A.C.** Ceud furan is failt ort fèin a Rob Dhuinn,
Gu 'n chaill thu do thàland am bà-theach MhicAoidh,
Mur caochail thu àbhaist, gu 'm fuiling thu tàmailt,
Ma chluinneas do chàirdean gu 'n chaill thu do chlà.

A hundred greetings and welcomes to you, Rob Donn,
Who lost your talent in MacKay's byre,
If you don't change your practice, you will be disgraced,
If your friends hear that you lost your touch.

[2] **R.D.** Tha mise mo thàmh ann am bà-theach Mhic-Aoidh,
'S na gnothuichean aige-s' dh' fhàg m' aigheadh fo strì;
'S e sin bheireadh orm-sa, gu 'm fuilinginn do 'n Ghèigean,
Sineadh leis fèin air a mhàbairachd bhaoth.

I am keeping quiet in MacKay's byre,
His business has left my temper out-of-sorts;
That is what made me endure the Geigean,
Who would himself prolong his foolish stuttering.

[3] **R.D.** Ach bheir mi mo mhionnan nach bi mi aig sìth,
Ma chluinneas mi tuilleadh o 'n duin' ud a chaoidh;
O 'n tha mi cho abuich toirt freagairt duit fèin,
Cha mhò orm ès' na 'n gobhlachan gaoith.

But I take my oath I will not remain silent,
If I ever hear any more from that man;
Since I am so ready to answer you,
He is no more to me than the fork-tailed swallow!

[4] **A.C.** Tha e gu tinn, 'n a luidh' air a dhruim,
'S 'g a leigheas le drine, is ìm, is eòin;
Se eanaraich a' choilich air fholach le h-ìm,
Chuir riplis a dhruim a mach air a thòn.

He is sickly, lying on his back,
Being treated with mutton and butter and birds;
It is chicken broth on afterings with her butter;
Ripples [backache] put his back out on his buttocks.¹⁶

¹⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 304-05) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 279-80) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 87).

Mackay (1829: 279) describes it as: "Rainn Orain eadar Rob Donn agus Alastair Cormaig, roimh dhoibh cur a mach air a chèile; Alastair Cormaig a' toirt cronachaidh do 'n bhàrd, chionn nach robh e a' pilleadh òrain a rinn an Gèigean. Bha am bàrd 'cur ùine roimh so as an taghadaireachd, ach bha e nis air pilleadh d' a h-ionnsuidh" (i.e., verses of a song between Rob Donn and Alastair Cormack, before they fell out with each other; A. C. criticizing the bard because he did not respond to a song by the Geigean. The bard was spending time before this in taking care of another's cattle, but now he had returned to it). This probably dates the poem to about 1770, when Rob Donn was working for Col. Hugh MacKay (who had returned from Jamaica) at Balnakeil. See Grimble (1999: 261).

¹⁶ Dwelly (2001: 408) defines "falach" as "what remains in a milked cow's udder; afterings."

[5] **R.D.** Ged rinn thu a leigheas, cha d' rinn thu a' chòir,
'N uair dh' innis thu 'n acfhuinn a leighis a leòn,
Mur biodh an leigheas a thug bean Shanndaidh Cormaig,
Bhitheadh e marbh, 's cha chluinnteadh a bhròn.

Although you made the medicine, you did not do it justice,
When you described the salve that cured his wound,
If not for the treatment Mrs. Cormack provided,
He would be dead, and no mourning would be heard.¹⁷

¹⁷ According to Grimble (1999: 129, 182), the “Geigean” was one of the men suspected of seducing Catherine MacKay, a maid to Lady Reay who was the subject of another satire. In this case, I assume that Rob Donn is actually praising Mrs. Cormack for her nursing abilities rather than making yet another sexual innuendo. If the latter, he certainly could not expect to keep Mr. Cormack as a friend!

12. THE DOMINIE AND KITTY¹⁸

Seist:

'S grànd' an togar, Sheumais, thug thu,
'N àird do 'n tobar 'n robh am bùrn;
'S grànd' an togar, Sheumais, thug thu,
'N àird do 'n tobar 'n robh am bùrn.

[1] Cha 'n 'eil litir anns a' Bhìobull,
A 's trice chi thu le do shùil,
Na na h-ainmeanna¹⁹ bh' aig Cèitidh,
Anns an lèine bh' air a glùn.

[2] Nach bu ghrànd' an sealladh, Dominie
'G èiridh lomnochd as a' chùil,
Ged bha bhrìogais aige leathann,
Bhris an leathair bha 'n a cùl.

[3] 'S ann bha sinne 'g a do chleachdadh,
Mur gu 'm biodh ann Parson ùr,
Cha b' e Gnàth-fhocail Sholaimh
Bha air t' aire dol do 'n bhùrn.

Chorus:

Shameful the desire, James,
That took you to the well;
Shameful the desire, James,
That took you to the well.

There is not a letter in the Bible
That you see with your eye more often,
Than Kitty's private parts,
In the shift that was on her knees.

Wasn't the sight disgraceful, the Dominie
Rising uncovered from the hiding place,
Although his trousers were wide,
The leather tore in the back.

It is we who were on your case
In the absence of a new Parson;
There was no Wisdom of Solomon
On your mind going after water.

¹⁸ The text is from Morrison (1899: 357) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 130) with the title "Oran do mhaighister-sgoile, a lean nighean òg do 'n tobar" (i.e., a song to a schoolmaster, who followed a young girl to the well). The last verse suggests that the poem was composed in 1763 or 1764, after Rev. MacDonald died but before his successor Rev. Thomson arrived in Durness.

¹⁹ I am assuming from the context that this word means buttocks or some other private body part.

13. TO THE GEIGEAN²⁰

[1] Cha 'n 'eil mi 'g radh nach bi thu pàight' Air son do mhàbaidh beumnaich, 'S gu 'n do thàrladh mi dhe 'n làraich, Chuir mo nàbaidh spèis annam. Toimhsean làidir Mhic 'Ic Sheumais, Dh' aithnich mèinn a' Ghèigein, 'N uair rinn e 'n rèite mu 'n Allt-bhreugach, 'S a fhuair e t' àite fèin duit.	I am not saying you will not be paid For your taunting abuse, And that I happened upon the scene; My neighbor respected me. The strong understanding of Mhic 'Ic Sheumais Recognized the Geigean's disposition When he made the agreement about Allt- breugach, And he got your own place for you.
[2] 'S olc a labhradh tu mu bhràthraibh, 'S gu 'm b' olc t' àireamh fèin dhuibh, Thaobh droch ghrìd a bha 'n ad dhaoinibh, Sgeith an tìr s' gu lèir iad. Bha t' athair againn fichead bliadhna, Gus 'n do liath a ghèilleann, 'S na chaith e 'thlachd a' deanamh thros, g, 'S cha 'n fheudtadh 'chasg o 'n eucoir.	It is evil that you spoke about his brothers, And evil were your own number to them, Regarding a bad quality that was in your people, Vomit of this land all of them. We had your father twenty years, Until his cheeks turned gray; And what he wasted of pleasure making a stupid fellow Who cannot be restrained from injustice.

²⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 425) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 233-34). Morrison states (1899: 425) that Rob Donn composed this song in reply to one the Geigean made to the poet's brothers.

14. THE WHITE HORSE OF TARBERT²¹

[1] Cha 'n 'eil mis 'n am àraidh do dhaoin' uails', Ach 's aobhar-thruais gu dearbh mi, Le bean is clann, 's nach 'eil mi saoibhir, 'S each gun oighr' air falbh uam. Tha mise 'm bliadhn' air seòrs do rian, Nach robh mi riamh, 's nach earbainn, Mo phears' fo phian, 's mo chroit fo chliabh, Is cnap na cliath ri m' earball.	To the gentry I am no worthy specimen But an object of commiseration indeed With a wife and children and little wealth, And having lost a horse without an heir. This year I am reduced to shifts I never adopted before and wouldn't count on, My body in pain, my back beneath a creel And a straw rope of the harrow at my tail.
[2] Fhuair mis' o Sheòras ²² gearran bàn, 'S o Henni làir mur oighreachd, Ach mus d' fhuair mi dhuibh mor stà, 'S iad sud na dhà a chaill mi. Bithidh m' athchuing dhìchiollach 's gach tìom, 'S gach ùrnuigh ni mi ris an Triath, A' bhean a 's feàrr a thabhairt dà-s', 'S an duine a 's feàrr do 'n mhaighdinn.	From George I got a white gelding And from Henny a mare as a gift, But before I got much service[] from them, ²³ I lost the two of them. My entreaty will be diligent every time, <i>In each prayer I make to the Lord,</i> ²⁴ That the best wife be given to him, And the best man to the girl.
[3] O' n là a chaill mi an t-each bàn, Gur tric a làn 's a' chliabh orm, E bhi bàith' gun fhios dhomh c' àit', Chuir mise tràth gu liathadh. Do cholla-mhàs làn, bhi 'm poll no 'm blàr, Aig sionnaich chàrn 'g am biathadh; Chaidh a thogail òg san sgoil aig Deòrs', 'S bu mhaith a chòir air cliathadh.	Since the day on which I lost the white horse My creel is often full; That it was drowned, I knew not where, It has turned me quickly grey. The haunch of your carcass in bog or meadow Being eaten by the foxes of the cairns. From his youth he was reared in George's school, And high was his reputation at harrowing.
[4] Bu ghasda mo phonaidh air an t-sràid Gu marcach speiseal iomchainn; 'S b-fhiannuis e air tarruing fèill' Nach robh e riabh ag iomradh. Fear Eilean S-Hannda air a chrann, 'S b'e 'n toirein teanntadh cuimseach,	My pony was excellent on the street For carrying a handsome rider, And he bore witness approaching the fair That he had never been worked excessively. The Laird of Handa at the plough, A ploughman he was, sedate, unerring

²¹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 340-41); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 92), Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 87), and Grimble (1999: 62, 151-53). The translation is from Grimble except as noted in italics; I translated verse 6, which he omits.

Presumably the Tarbert in the title is the one north of Scourie, where it is still possible to catch a ferry to Handa Island. The Maighstir Falconair mentioned in the last verse was the Rev. Alexander Falconer, minister of Eddrachillis from 1763 to 1802 (Morrison: 341 n. 1). This dates the poem to fairly late in Rob Donn's life (between 1763 and 1778), when his age was between 49 and 64 and he would not have enjoyed pulling a plow in place of a horse.

²² Seòras was George MacKay of Handa (Morrison: 340 n. 1).

²³ Grimble (1999: 152) has "services" in the plural; this must be a mistake.

²⁴ Grimble (1999: 152) has "In every prayer I make, or have made" which translates the line in the Mackay edition (1829: 92).

Air glasaich ghleann gun bhaile gun chàrn,
'S gun cheannair ann ach inighean.

[5] Their Fear Shrathie, sean is òg,
Is canaidh Dòmhnuaill Foirbeas,
Their Fear Mheilinis a rithist —
Se fein bhiodh gleusd 's an t-seirbheas —
“Gur maireach nach d’ fhuair nuair bha e òg
Airson tomhas oir no airgid,
Fear a ghlèidheadh a rùn gu bràth,
Mar ghlèidh each bàn na Tairbeirt.”

[6] An duine maith o ’n d’ fhuair mi thu,
'S e fein an tùs fhuair t-fheum-sa,
Cha b’ ionnann rian bh’ agad ’s aig pairt,
Gu iasgach fàt na bheusan.
Na ’m biodh tu beulach, bruidhneach,
breugach,
Mar tha cach mu d’ dheighinn’s,
Bhiodh Maighstir Falconair ag radh
“Gu ’m bu mhaith an trath-sa ’s a Chleir
thu.”

On the lea-field of the glen, without
township, without cairns,
None leading the horse save a lassie.

The Laird of Strathy, young and old, will say
And Donald Forbes will observe,
The Laird of Melness will repeat —
He’s the one who would be active in service —
“It’s tragic that he didn’t get when young
In exchange for a measure of gold or silver
One that would retain his affection forever
As the white horse of Tarbet did.”

*The good man from whom I acquired you,
It is he that first obtained your services.
Your manner was not the same as some,
Fishing for a fault in the virtues.
If you were fawning, garrulous, lying,*

*As are the others around you,
Rev. Falconer would say:
“It would be good for you to spend some
time in the Presbytery.”*

15. ILLEACHAN²⁵

Sèist:

Illeachan, an tig thu idir,
Illeachan, an tig thu chaoidh,
Illeachan, an tig thu 'm bliadhna,
Na 'n tu cliamhuinn Rob 'Ic-Aoidh.

[1] Cha 'n fhaca mis' o làthibh m' òige,
Leithid do phòsadh an Dùth'ch Mhic-Aoidh,

'N nighean a 's òig' aig Rob nan goibhnean,
Pòsd' aig oighre Glog na gaoith'.

[2] Fhuair i ciùrradh ann an cnàmhaibh,
A dh' fhàg i trì ràidheach' gu tinn,
Uilleam, 'n uair theid i gu fiaras,
Cum an t-slias'd ud os a cinn.

[3] Gur h-e Naoghas mac Iain 'Ic Hùistein,
'N duine 's lùthmhoir' tha 's an tìr,
'S èigin es' a chur r' a h-earball,
O nach tearbar i gun taod.

[4] 'N saoil sibh fèin nach maith an stàbull,
Fhuair an làir aig Rob MacAoidh,
Cia b' e 's am bith a tha 'n a h-eanchainn,
Am fear ud calg tha oirr' do mhuing.

Chorus:

Willie, will you come at all,
Willie, will you ever come,
Willie, will you come this year,
The son-in-law of Rob MacKay.

I have not seen since the days of my youth
The like of your marriage in MacKay
Country,
The youngest daughter of Rob of the
blacksmiths
Married to the heir of Glog of the wind.

She got an injury in her bones
That left her sickly three seasons;
William, when she goes awry,
Keep that thigh of yours over her.

Even Naoghas mac Iain 'Ic Hùistein,
The most agile man in the country,
Had trouble capturing her,
Since she could not be separated from
the herd without a halter.

Don't you think it was a fine stable
That Rob MacKay's mare got?
Whoever it is that is on her mind,
Yon bristly man, your collar is on her.

²⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 323) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 29) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 56).

Mackay (1829: 29) describes it as: "Oran mu ghille agus nighean òg bha dol a phòsadh; an nighean bhi maol gun fhalt, agus i leasg, sgòdach" (i.e., a song about a young man and woman who were going to marry, the girl being bald, lazy and awkward).

16. MACRORY'S BREEKS²⁶

Sèist:

An d' fhidir no 'n d' fhairich,
no 'n cuala sibh,
Cò idir thug briogais
Mhic Ruairidh leis?
Bha bhriogais ud againn
an àm dol a chadal,
'S 'n uair thàinig a' mhaduinn
cha d' fhuairadh i.

[1] Chaidh bhriogais a stampadh,
Am meadhon na connlaich,
'S chaidh Hùistein a dhanns' leis
Na gruagaichibh;
'N uair dh' fhàg a chuid misg e,
Gu d' thug e 'n sin briosgadh,
A dh' iarraidh na briogais,
'S cha d' fhuair e i.

[2] Na 'm bitheadh tu làimh ris,
Gu 'n deanadh tu gàire,
Ged a bhiodh siataig
Na d' chruachanan.
Na faiceadh tu 'dhronnaig
'N uair dh' ionndrain e 'pheallaig,
'S e coimhead 's gach callaid,
'S a' suaiteachan.

Chorus:

Did you divine or detect
or hear
Who on earth carried off the trousers
of Rory's son?
Those trousers were here
when we went to sleep,
And when morning came
they were gone.

The breeks were trampled
Amongst the straw
And Hugh went dancing
With the lassies.
When his intoxication left him
He took a bound
In search of his trousers
And couldn't find them.

If you had been near him,
You would have laughed
Even if you had rheumatism
In your hip-joints,
To have seen his loins
When he missed his covering,
And he searching in every corner
And shrugging his shoulders.

²⁶ The text is from Morrison (1899: 151-55); the translation is from Grimble (1999: 98-103). The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 220-24) (without verse 9); and in Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 37-38) (without verses 9 and 10). This is consistent with the general pattern whereby Morrison includes material censored or deemed too trivial for publication by Rob Donn's other nineteenth-century editors. See Grimble (1999: 102).

The occasion for the song is explained in Morrison's note (1899: 151):

This, one of the sprightliest songs in the language, was composed almost on the spur of the moment. The occasion was the wedding in Musal of "Isobal Nic Aoidh," daughter of John Mackay (MacEachainn) and John, son of Kenneth Sutherland of Cnocbreac. The poet had not been invited to the wedding, as he was not on the best of terms with the family at the time. Being missed by the guests, he was sent for to Bad-na-Achlais, where he then resided. Conversing with the messenger by the way, he learned that Macrory had lost his "breeks." When, shortly after his arrival he was called upon for a song, he gave this as it now stands.

Since Rob Donn did not receive his belated invitation until the day after the wedding, Grimble speculates that the clothing was probably stolen as a practical joke while some of the wedding guests were sleeping overnight in a barn after the first day of the festivities. See Mackay (1829: 221); Grimble (1999: 98). Rob Donn allegedly composed the song while walking the two miles between his home and the wedding site (Mackay: 221). Since Isabel married in 1747, this dates the poem precisely. Grimble (1999: 97-98).

[3] Iain MhicEachuinn,
Ma 's tusa thug leat i,
Chur grabadh air peacadh
'S air buaireadh leath';
Ma 's tu a thug leat i,
Cha ruigeadh tu leas e,
Chaidh t' uair-sa seachad
Mu 'n d' fhuair thu i.

Iain mac Eachainn,
If you carried them off
To prevent sin
And remove temptation,
If you took them,
You had no need to.
You had had your day
Before you found them.

[4] Chaitrìona Ni'n Uilleim,²⁷
Dean briogais do 'n ghille,
'S na cumadh sud sgillin
A 'thuarasdal;
Ciod fhios nach e t' athair
Thug leis i g' a caitheamh,—
Bha feum air a leithid,
'S bha uair dhe sin.

Catherine, William's daughter,
Make some trousers for the lad
And don't take a penny
In payment for them.
Who knows but it was your father
Who took them to wear?
He needed as much and time was
When he would have done it.

[5] Briogais a' chonais,
Chaidh chall air a' bhanais,
Bu liutha fear fanoid
Na tuathag oirr':
Mur do ghlèidh Iain Mac Dhò'll
Gu pocan do 'n òr i,²⁸
Cha robh an Us-mhòine
Na luaidheadh i.

The trousers whose loss
Caused friction at the wedding —
There were more mockers
Than there were patches on them.
Unless John son of Donald kept them
To make pouches for the gold,
There weren't in West Moine
Enough people to waulk them.

[6] Mur do ghlèidh Iain Mac Dhòmhnuaill,
Gu pocan do 'n òr i,
Cha robh an Us-mhòine
Na ghluaiseadh i.
Airson Uilleam MacPhàdruig,
Cha deanadh i stàth dha,
Cha ruigeadh i 'n àird
Air a' chruachan dha.

Unless John son of Donald kept them
To make pouches for the gold,
There weren't in West Moine
Enough people to waulk them.
As for William son of Patrick,
They would be no use to him —
They wouldn't reach
Up to his hips.

[7] Tha duine 'n Us-mhòine
D' an ainm Iain MacSheòrais,
'S gur iongantais dhòmhsa
Ma ghluais e i;
Bha i cho cumhang
Mur cuir e i 'm mugha,
Nach dèan i ni 's modha
No buarach dha.

There's a man in West Moine
Called John son of George,
And I wouldn't be surprised
If he walked off with them.
They were so tight
That unless he alters them,
They will be more like
Cow-fetters on him.

²⁷ This was the wife of Iain mac Eachainn, with whom Rob Donn had long shared an intense mutual dislike. See Morrison (1899: 152); Grimble (1999: 98, 100).

²⁸ This refers to an event in 1746, when a ship carrying French gold to the Jacobite army ran aground in the Kyle of Tongue. Most of the crew and cargo were captured by the local Hanoverian sympathizers, but one chest of gold was broken and another went missing. See Grimble (1999: 84). John son of Donald had obtained some of the gold, but bragged of it too openly, and was summoned to Tongue House and forced to relinquish it by Lord Reay. See Morrison (1899: 153 n. 1).

[8] Na leigibh ri bràigh' e,
'M feadh bhios e mar tha e,
Air eagal gu 'n sàraich
An luachaire e.
Na leigibh o bhail' e
Do mhòinteach no coille,
Mu 'n tig an labhallan,
'S gum buail i e.

[9] Cha 'n 'eil fitheach no fannaig,
No iolar no clamhan,
No nathair a' ghlinne
Na cuachanan;
No smagach an luisean
Ged 's graneal an cùspar,
Nach b' fheàrr leo no musaidh

Do shuaitheadh riubh.

[10] Na 'm faiceadh sibh 'leithid,
Bha bann oir' do leathair;
Bha toll air a speathar
'S bha tuathag air;
'S bha feum aic' air cobhair,
Mu bhrèidean a gobhail,
Far am biodh am ball odhar
A' suathadh rith.

[11] Ach Iain Mhic-Choinnich,²⁹
'S ann ort a bha 'n sonas,
Ged 's mòr a bha dhonadas
Sluaigh an so;
'N uair bha thu cho sgiobalt,
'S nach do chaill thu dad idir,
'S gur tapaidh a' bhriogais
A bhuannaich thu!

Don't let him out on the braes
In his present condition,
For fear he will be vexed
By the bulrushes.
Don't let him leave home
For the moors or the woods
Lest the water-shrew come
And nip him.

There's not a raven or crow
Or eagle or buzzard
Or serpent of the glen
In its coils,
Nor creeping things in the plants —
Though the subject's disgusting —
That they wouldn't prefer to the nasty
fellow
Rubbing against them.

If you saw any like them,
They had a leather belt.
There was a hole on the fly
And a patch on it,
And it needed repairs
To the cloth of the breech
Where the dun member
Used to rub against it.

John, son of Kenneth,
You're the one who was lucky —
Though there were a lot
Of bad people here —
When you were so adroit
That you never lost a thing
And so smart over the trousers
You won.

²⁹ The bridegroom. Morrison (1899: 155).

17. CHRISTIAN BRODIE TO COLONEL MACKAY³⁰

Sèist:

'S olc a dh' fhàg an uraidh mi,
An uraidh, 'n uraidh, 'n uraidh mi,
'S olc a dh' fhàg an uraidh mi,
An uraidh dh' fhalbh an gille uam.

[1] Cheart cho luath 's a dh' imich thu,
'S an tìr shuas gu 'n d' innis iad;
'S ged bha do ghaol mar theine dhomh,

Cha 'n fhaiceadh càch mi sìleadh leis.

[2] 'S e thug dhòmhs' sud iomrachadh,
Eagal mo chliù a mhilleadh leis;

'S ged bheirinn èigh a chluinneadh tu,

Gu 'm faiceadh càch nach pilleadh tu.

[3] Nis o 'n chaidh thu às an tìr,
'S iad do dhaoine' a 's fine leam,
Gur h-e do ghaol is tinne dhomh,
'S do chliù o chàch a 's binne leam.

[4] Tha mi 'g athchuing' ort bhi tigh'nn,
Mu 'n dean a' ghrian milleadh ort,
Mu 'm faigh thu biadh ni tinneas duit,
'S mu 'm faic thu òigh nì mire riut.

Chorus:

It's terrible what happened last year to me,
Last year, last year, last year to me;
It's terrible what happened last year to me;
Last year my lad went away from me.

No sooner had you left
Than it was reported up the country
And although your love was like a fire within
me,
Others would not see me weeping on that
account.

What made me mention that
Was fear lest my reputation should suffer
from it:
And even if I let out a cry that you could
hear,
Others would see that you did not come
back.

Now, since you went away from the land,
Your people are as my own kindred.
It is your love that is closest to me
And your reputation amongst others that is
sweetest to me.

I am praying that you will come back
Before the sun harms you,
Before you take food that makes you ill,
And before you see a girl who flirts with
you.

³⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 399-400) and the translation from Grimble (1999: 60). The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 216) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 74-75).

Christine (or Christian) Brodie was the youngest daughter of the Rev. George Brodie, minister of the parish of Eddrachillis (whose manse was located in Badcall just south of Scourie) until his death in 1740; she was also the grandmother of Rob Donn's first editor, the Rev. Dr. Mackintosh Mackay. See Grimble (1999: 57-58, 102). Colonel MacKay was Iain mac Eachainn's son Hugh, who did in fact marry another woman in Jamaica, as Rob Donn had predicted, before his return to Durness many years later as a widower (Grimble 1999: 58, 62). The poem was apparently composed in the early 1740s. See Grimble (1999: 57-58).

18. THE LASS WITH THE YELLOW PETTICOAT³¹

Sèist:

A nigh'neig a' chòta bhuidhe,
Chòta bhuidhe, chòta bhuidhe,
A nigh'neig a' chòta bhuidhe,
Dean do shuidhe cuide rium.

[1] Chi mi thall ud 'n a suidhe,
A' chailin leis a' chòta bhuidhe;
'S ged bhiodh an amhuinn fo lighe,
'S ann mar rithe bhithinn thall.

[2] Ged a bhithinn 'n am sgiobair luinge,
Cha 'n iarruinn gu àilghios mo chridhe,
Ach cùl do chinn air bac mo ridhe,
'S do chòta buidhe bhi fo m' cheann.

[3] Na 'm faighinn òrdugh na clèire,
'N dèigh cur dhiot do chòta fèille,
'S dìleas luidhinn leat 'n ad lèine,

'S gu dearbh cha 'n èireamaid ach mall.

[4] Nam bithinnse dol, 's a' tighinn,
'S a' faicinn seallaidh do 'n nighean,
'S e bu shùgradh do m' chridhe,
'N còta buidhe bhi dhomh teann.

[5] Trian do m' chodal, 's da thrìan bidhe,

'S e bhi mànràn riut, 's a' bruidhean,
'S ann ort fèin 's do chòta buidhe,
Tha cion mo chridhe air faighinn rum.

[6] Mur b' e dhomhsa eagal t' athar,
Is do mhàthair bhi 'g ad ghleidheadh,
'N dèigh cuir dhiot do chòta daithte,
'S ann leam a b' ait thu luidhe leam.

[7] Ged bu leam Leòghais agus Uithist,
Bheirinn fein iad seachad rithist,
Do chionn tè a' chòta bhuidhe,
Bhi 'n suidhe an taice rium.

[8] Nighean donn a' chòta bhuidhe,
Da 'n tug mi trom ghràdh mo chridhe,
B' e mo thaitneas an nighean
A bhi tric a' bruidhean rium.

Chorus:

Lass with the yellow petticoat,
Yellow petticoat, yellow petticoat,
Lass with the yellow petticoat,
Make your seat beside me.

I see her sitting over there,
The girl with the yellow petticoat;
And even if the river were in flood,
I would join her on the other side.

If I were the skipper of a ship,
I would seek my heart's desire,
With your head in the crook of my arm,
And your yellow petticoat beneath me.

If I took the orders of a cleric,
After taking off your festive coat,
Faithfully I'd lie down with you in your
shift,
And surely we'd arise but slowly.

If I were coming and going,
And could catch a glimpse of the girl,
It would be a joy to my heart
To be near the yellow petticoat.

A third of my sleep and two thirds of my
food
Is conversing in dalliance with you,
With you and your yellow petticoat,
My heart's love has found its place.

If I were not afraid of your father,
And your mother protecting you,
After taking off your colored coat,
Gladly would I lie down with you.

If I owned Lewis and Uist,
I would give them up again,
For the sake of the yellow petticoat,
To be sitting leaning against me.

Brown-haired girl of the yellow petticoat,
To whom I gave the deep love of my heart,
It would be my delight for the girl
To speak to me often.

³¹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 203-05) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 100-02) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 70).

[9] Ged bhithinn air bòrd 'n am shuidhe,
Far am biodh ceòl 's bruidhean,
B' annsa no clàrsach agus fiodhull,
'N còta buidhe maille rium.

If I were sitting at a table
With music and conversation,
My desire would be neither harp nor fiddle,
But the yellow petticoat near me.

19. TO JOHN SUTHERLAND³²

- [1] Chiad fhear a shiùbhlas do Chata,
 Thoir fios gu Iain Thapaidh nan rann,
 Nach bòidheach 's nach dealbhach a choluinn,
 'S gur mi-thapaidh 'n t-anam a th' ann;
 Mhol bladaidh nan glog-shùilean mìodhoir,
 Bha tur air a' lìonadh le sannt,
 An sgròg-thoineach cab-phliadach, griamach,
 'S bu dearbhta do cheud e bhi meallt'.
- [2] 'S e chanas gach breitheamh a 's àirde,
 Gu 'n robh an fhìor bhreug ann do bhus;
 'N uair a shaoil leat a thogail mar chràobh,
 'S ann a rinn thu a chrìonadh mur lus;
 Cluinnear 's gach àite m' ur timchioll,
 Ur n-alladh 's ur n-iomradh aig cus,
 Cha chreid duin' ac' thus' mach o esan,
 'S cha mhol duin' ac' esan ach thus'.
- [3] Bu bhaoth dhuit a bhi ga mo leantuinn,
 'S nach robh ann ad chantuinn ach craos;
 Bha thu 'n toiseach 'n ad spleadhaidh cailte,
 'S a nis 'n ad sheann ghloichd leis an aois
 Am barail gach breitheimh tha fiùdhail,
 'S e chuireas mo chliù-s' ann am prìs,
 Gu 'n robh 'm fear a bheum mi le spealadh,
 Cho bhreugach 's gun mhol e fear Chraoich.
- [4] Nis a Rob Ghré, ma phòs thu,
 'S e Iain t' aon òglach 's an àm;
 'S e 's urrainn thoirt meas air do bheusan,
 Le 'mhiodal, le 'théis, is le 'rann;
- First man who travels to Sutherland,
 Take word to Clever John of the verses,
 Isn't his body handsome and shapely,
 And deformed the soul within it;
 The flatterer of the avaricious hollow eyes,
 Completely filled by greed,
 Praised the shrivel-assed, splay-footed,
 lichen-covered old person,
 And was proved to a hundred to be false.
- And each highest judge will say,
 That the real lie was in your mouth;
 When you thought to raise him like a tree,
 You made him wither like a weed;
 One hears everywhere around you,
 Your excellence and renown among many,
 Not a man among them will believe you
 except he,
 And not a man among them will praise him
 except you.
- It was foolish for you to follow me,
 As there was nothing in your singing but a
 big mouth.
 At first you were a damned tale-teller,
 And now age has made a fool of you
 In the opinion of every worthy judge.
 And it will add to the value of my
 reputation,
 That the man who taunted me with
 cutting words,
 Was so false that he praised the man of
 Creich.
- Now Rob Gray, if you married,
 Iain is your only offspring;
 He can honor your virtues
 With his flattery, his music and verse.

³² The text is from Morrison (1899: 184-86) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 78-80) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 44).

This is one of ten satires composed by Rob Donn at the expense of Iain Tapaigh (John Sutherland), onetime schoolmaster, precentor and poet in Tongue, who had moved to Invershin near Lairg in the southeast part of Sutherland by the time this song was composed. See Morrison (1899: 112); Grimble (1999: 203); A. S. Cowper, *SSPCK Schoolmasters, 1709-1872* (Edinburgh: Scottish Record Society, 1997), p. 100. The wealthy drover John Gray, who died in 1766, inspired competing elegies by Rob Donn and Iain Tapaigh; this song is round three, i.e., Rob Donn's reply to Iain Tapaigh's response to Rob Donn's original elegy (# 92 in this appendix). The identities of John Gray of Rogart and Rob Gray of Creich, his heir, are discussed in the notes to that poem. The other Iain Tapaigh poems discussed in this thesis are #48, #75, and #89.

Ni e Sagart do dhuine gun chràbhadh,
 'S ni e deadh chlàrc do fhear meallt',
 Ni e stiùbhard do theaghlach gun iochd,
 Is fear-foghlaim do 'n t-sliochd nach bi ann.

He will act as priest for a man without
 piety,
 He will make a good clerk for a deceitful
 man,
 He will act as steward for a family without
 compassion,
 And a man of learning for a line that has
 none.

[5] Shaoil leam gun chranaich mi tric dhuit,
 Bhi glacadh nan sgriobtuir ad dhòrn
 Ach 's ann a tha 'n t-amadan dàna,
 Sìor bhriseadh 'n treas àithne d' a dheòin;

I thought that I often rebuked you
 For grasping the scriptures in your fist,
 But it is the presumptuous fool
 Who always willfully breaks the third
 commandment.

Mar sin 's ann is soilleire chithear,
 Gur sailche a chridhe na thòn,

Thus it is seen most clearly
 That his heart is more defiled than his
 backside,

'S gur h-ann a tha 'fhoghlaim 'n a theangaidh,
 'N dearbh alt am bheil bruidhean aig eòin.

And his education and his eloquence
 Are on the same level as the speech of
 birds.

[6] Ged a leig sinn ar pearsanna taitneach,
 Ann an pòsadh gu liobasda leibh,
 Na saoilibh 'n uair thoilleas sibh masladh,
 Gu 'n coisinn sud maiteachas duibh;
 Is ni e tha cinnt mu ar càirdean,
 Ged a rinn iad ar fàgail a thaoibh,
 Nach tig iad a chaoidh fo ar cliù-sa,
 'S nach mò ni iad sibhse ni 's naoimh'.

Although we gratefully agreed
 To an awkward arrangement with you,
 Don't think when you deserve disgrace,
 That it will earn you forgiveness.
 And the sure thing about our relatives,
 Although they made to leave us a place,
 They will never undermine our reputation,
 Or make you any saintlier.³³

[7] Rinn sinn do sgiùrsadh mur thros, g,
 Mach thar a' Chrasg leis a' ghaoith;
 Ach stiùireadh le d' mhaighstir féin thu,
 Gu àit anns an séideadh tu 'n daoibh;

We scourged you like a stupid fellow,
 Out over the Crask with the wind;
 But you were led by your own master
 To a place where you would flatter a
 rogue;

Cha 'n fhaighear fear fileanta focail
 An Cata, an Ros, no 'n dùthaich 'C-Aoidh;
 Ach Iain, gu moladh Rhob Grè,
 'S ann 's còir dha do ghleidheadh a chaoidh.

A man fluent with words will not be found
 In Sutherland, Ross, or Mackay Country,
 Except Iain, praising Rob Gray —
 It is right for it to be preserved forever.

[8] Cha 'n fhaighear do leithid do shiomlaich,

Your kind of chicken-heartedness will not
 be found

Ged a dh'amhaircteadh timchioll a' ghlob;
 Ma leanas tu 'n còmhnuidh ri t' eucoir,
 Masgul is breugan nach ob,—
 An uair a théid t' anam gun reuson,
 Mach a dh' aon leum air do ghob,
 Bidh tu anns a' chuideachd an còir dhuit,
 An Donas, is Ròghard, is Rob.

If one searches around the globe;
 If you continue dwelling in injustice,
 Flattery and falsehood not shunning,
 When your soul departs, senseless,
 Out at one leap from your mouth,
 You will be in the company you deserve —
 The Devil, and Rogart, and Rob.

³³ This refers to Iain Tapaich's father, Donald Sutherland of Tongue, known as the "Happy Catechist" and something of a satirist in his own right. Rev. John MacInnes, *The Evangelical Movement in the Highlands of Scotland: 1688 to 1800* (Aberdeen: 1951), p. 201.

20. TO MARY MACKAY OF BIGHOUSE³⁴

[1] Cho fad 's a tha cliù nan Reul tuath', Thar gach reannag tha shuas a' toirt car, Cha lugha tha Màiri NicAoidh, Toirt urraim os ceann Mairi Carr.	As far as the North Star is renowned Beyond every star that revolves above, No less is Mary MacKay Honored above Mary Carr.
[2] Cha'n ann ged tha 'sùilean mar innleachd, Gu smùsachadh inntinn nam fear, Air chor 's gu 'n robh mòran 'g a h-iarruidh, O dheas, is o' n iar, is o' n ear.	Not only because her eyes contrive To extract the juice from the minds of men, It was right that many sought her From the south and the east and the west.
[3] Ach oir a tha feartan 'n a h-aodan, Mar tha anns a' ghrèin 's i 'n a teas; Mu 'n aon fhear a sheallas gu dùr oirr', Bheir ceudan an sùil' air an ais.	But because there are virtues in her face As in the sun and she the warmth; On account of the one man that looks attentively at her, Hundreds will take back their eyes.
[4] Cha mhò tha do neart anns a' chanon, Chur ghaisgeach le 'anal air falbh, Na 'n cumhachd th 'aig Mairi gu 'n tarruing, Le 'seallaidhnibh banaile, balbh'.	Neither is your power in the cannon, To blow away a warrior with its blast, Rather the power of Mary is to attract By looks modest and mute.
[5] 'S ann tha luchd-oifig is beathach' Is àireamh d' an leithidibh sin, A' ruith ann an cùisibh a 's dàcha Bhi fiùghail air Màiri mar bhean.	A number of officials, And poor creatures of that sort, Are conducting their affairs To be worthy of Mary as a wife.
[6] 'S caomh leis a' Chaiptein an oifig, Cha 'n ann air son gnothuich an Rìgh, Ach gus am bi 'onoir ni 's àirde, 'S gu 'm buinig e Màiri NicAoidh.	The Captain loves the office, Not for the King's business, But to increase his honor So he can win Mary MacKay.
[7] Buinidh do 'n Bhàillidh mòr cheartas A thoirt do gach neach thig 'n a ghaoith; Ach cluichidh e <i>trick</i> air a nàbaidh, G' a philleadh o Mhàiri Nic Aoidh.	It pertains to the great Magistrate of justice To give to each person who comes in his vanity, But he will play a trick on his neighbor, On his return from Mary MacKay.
[8] Am fear 's tha cho sona 'n a phòsadh, 'S gu 'n chothaich e 'n òigh s, thoirt a mach, 'S e beath' na ris-sa am farmad,— Tha esan gun fharmaid ri neach.	This man is so happy in his marriage, That he succeeded in gaining this young woman; His life is to be envied, But he envies no one.

³⁴ The text is from Morrison (1899: 298-300) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 264-66) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 62-63).

Morrison states (1899: 298) that the song was composed "[o]n the occasion of her marriage with William Baillie of Ardmore."

[9] An Caiptein a dhearbh leis na sheinn e,

Gu 'n robh e gu tinn ri car seal,
Dh' fhòghnadh dha sealladh d' a h-aodan,
Gu 'leighis o ghaol Màiri Carr.

[10] Ged chuireadh fortan ceud fàilt' air,

'N a stòras, 'n a chairdean, 's 'n a mheas;

Cha 'n urradh mi mholadh ni 's cruaidhe,

Na innseadh gun bhuannaich e is'.

[11] Ach ged a tha Màiri cho cliùteach,

'S e 'n ni a chuir crùn air a sealbh,

An cothachadh treun rinn Gleann-Iughair,

'N uair thug e a piuthair air falbh.

[12] Oir tha i cho fiùghail air dànaibh,

'S a bheireadh r' a dheanamh do *Phope*,³⁷

Tha i nis bliadhna 'n a màthair,

'S e sud a dh'fhàg Màiri 'n a *top*.

The Captain proved by what he
proclaimed,

That he was sickly for a while;
A look at her face sufficed for him
To recover from loving Mary Carr.³⁵

Although fortune would bestow a hundred
salutations on him,

In his goods, in his friends, and in his
esteem;

I could not praise anything more
enthusiastically,

Than saying that he won her.

But although Mary is so renowned,

The crowning glory to her fortune

Is the strong support from Glenure

When he took away her sister.³⁶

Because she is so worthy of poetry,

It deserves to be made by Pope;

She is now a year a mother,

It is that that left Mary the top.

³⁵ Mary Carr must have been the bridegroom's first wife, who left him widowed.

³⁶ This refers to the marriage, in 1749, between Colin Campbell of Glenure and Mary MacKay's elder sister Janet, which dates the poem to the period between 1749 and 1752, the year of Colin Campbell's murder (the event that plays a leading role in Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *Kidnapped*). See Grindle (1999: 104).

³⁷ This refers to Pope, the poet (Morrison: 300 n.1).

21. DAVIE³⁸

Sèist:

Hei 'm fear dubh, ho 'm fear dubh,
Hei 'm fear dubh feadh a' bhaile;
Hei 'm fear dubh, ho 'm fear dubh,
Hei 'm fear dubh feadh a' bhaile.

[1] Chrèid iad uile 'n tòs,
Gur h-e 'm pòsadh a bha air 'aire;
Ach eadar magadh 's gàire,
Chaidh Daibhidh gu fire-faire.

[2] Dh' aithnicheamaid sliochd Dhaibhidh,
O 'm pàrantaibh thaobh na fola,
Bus-dubh, cas-dubh, ceann-dubh,
Bitheadh a chlann-san measg na cloinn' eile.

[3] Tha Ni-'ic-Dhò'uill, 'ic-Hùistein,
A's triùir dhiu air-sa mar eire,
Ealasaid is Pàileag,
Is Bàbaidh Nic-Ille-mhoire.

[4] 'S ann a smuainich Bàbaidh,
Mu Dhaibhidh gun robh e smiorail;
Ach fhuair i mach nach tilg e
Cho cuimseach ri Iain Caimil.

[5] 'S comharradh ro chinnteach,
Air daoine bhi dol an gainnead,
Ceathrar a bhi co-strì
Mu 'n t-iunnsair aig Daibhidh tarr-fhionn.

Chorus:

Hey, the dark man, ho the dark man,
Hey, the dark man round the village;
Hey, the dark man, ho the dark man,
Hey, the dark man round the village.

They all believed at first,
That he intended marriage;
But between mocking and laughter,
Davie got himself in a fix.

We can recognize Davie's line
From their parents by the blood:
Dark of mouth, foot and head
Are his children among the others.

The daughter of Donald son of Hugh
And three of you are his burden:
Elizabeth and the Phail woman,
And Barbara Morrison.

Barbara believed
That Davie was manly;
But she learned that he did not aim
As unerringly as John Campbell.

It is a very sure sign
Of the shortage of men,
That four are competing
For the chanter of white-bellied Davie.

³⁸ The text is from Morrison (1899: 344-45), with my translation. Mackay (1829: 114-15) published a sanitized version, with the word "pòsadh" instead of "t-iunnsair" in the last line.

As explained by Mackay (1829: 114) and Morrison (1899: 344), the song concerns one David Sutherland, who had become involved with four women, two of whom were pregnant, and three of whom were noted in the records of the Kirk Session in 1765. One, Barbara Morrison, had already borne an illegitimate child to another man named John Campbell. It is not clear why there was a shortage of men at this time, as the Seven Years' War had ended in 1763, and the American Revolution did not begin until 1776.

22. THE GRANGES³⁹

Sèist:

Tha mi ro bhuidheach
Air chomhairl' nan breitheamhnan,
Dh' òrduich gach dithis dhiu
Bhi le aon chèile;
Faodaidh sliochd tighinn
An deigh na buidhinn so,
Fathast a bhitheas 'n an
longantas fèille.

[1] Chunna' mi crannanach
Cuimir ri ceannaireachd,
'N *Acha-na-h-annaid*,
Cur feannag à chèile;
Sheall mi le annas air,
'S shìn mi ri teannadh ris,
Thug mi mo bhoineid dhìom,
'S bheannaich mi fèin da.

[2] Chaidh mi air m' aghairt,
Is shàruich e m' fhoighidinn,
Feuchainn le a lughad
C' ait' am faighinn da cèile;
Fhuair mi 'n tigh Choinnich i,
C' uime gu 'n ceilinn i,
'S a h-aparan deiridh
Cho ghorid r' a fhèileadh-s'.

[3] Tòmas is Dòmhnall,
Seòras is Alastair,⁴⁰
'S coltach 'n an colluinn
A' cheathrar r' a chèile:
B' fheàrr leam tè thapaidh
Bhiodh seachad air leth-cheud,
Na a faicinn air leth-trath,
Aig fear dhiubh mar chèile.

Chorus:

I am very thankful
At the counsel of the judges
Who ordered each pair of you
To be with a single spouse.
Offspring may come
After this advance,
Who will still be
A marvel at the fair.

I saw a ploughman
Well-proportioned for his task,
In *Acha-na-h-annaid*,
Breaking a rig asunder.
I viewed him with delight
And proceeded to approach him;
I took off my bonnet
And I greeted him myself.

I went ahead,
And it exhausted my patience,
Trying at a minimum
To locate a spouse for him.
I found her in Kenneth's house —
Why would I conceal her —
And her apron in the back
As short as his kilt.

Thomas and Donald,
George and Alastair,
So similar in appearance
The four to one another:
I would prefer a strong woman
Over fifty years of age,
Than to see on half-rations
Any one of them as a spouse.

³⁹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 166-70) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 25-28) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 85-86).

Morrison notes (1899: 166): "These were Campbells, and their descendants are in Durness still. George Campbell, alias Grange, was Church-officer. He was collector of the fines imposed upon delinquents by the Kirk-Session." As with many of Rob Donn's topical satires, the meaning of the poem is obscure because the incidents upon which he comments are now largely untraceable.

⁴⁰ Morrison further notes (1899: 167, nn. 1-4) that each of the four brothers had a child baptized between 1768 and 1772, according to the Parish Register, which dates the poem to about 1770. Alasdair was apparently the brother living at *Acha-na-h-annaid* who is mentioned in verses 1-2 as well as Morrison (1899: 167 n.4).

[4] Tha iomadh sgeul eile
 Tha againn gu barantach,
 Naidheachd 'g a h-aithris
 A baile Dhun-èidinn,
 Nach 'eil uile cho ait'
 Ann an oibrichibh Freasdail,
 Ri faicinn nam peasan
 A' *maitseadh* a chèile.

There are many other stories
 Whose veracity is assured,
 News that is reported
 From the city of Edinburgh.
 Isn't it all so strange
 In the works of Providence,
 To see the sorry little fellows
 Matching each other.

[5] Tha mise fo chachdan,
 Nach urradh mi leasachadh,
 Nach fhaigh mi aon fhear dhiu
 Ni *maitse* do Chèitidh.
 Tha truas aig mo chridhe
 Ri seasgaich' na h-ighinn,
 Nach faigh sinn aon leighich,
 Chuireas dithis ri chèil' diu.

I am chagrined
 That I could not cultivate,
 That I could not get any of them
 To make a match with Katie.
 It is my heartfelt sorrow
 At a barren girl,
 That we do not get a single doctor
 That will put the two of them together.

[6] Cuirear do 'n eilean⁴¹ iad,
 'S thugar mìr fearuinn dhoibh,
 'S bheir iad an air'
 Air na gearrain 's a' chèitean.
 Air eagal am pronnaidh
 Ri fiodh no ri balla,
 Ni 'n tub aig a Mhorair
 Dhoibh talla le chèile.

They will be put on the island,
 And a bit of land given to them,
 And they will oversee
 The geldings and the coalfish.
 In fear of their pounding
 Against wood or a wall,
 The lord's vat will make
 A hall for them together.

[7] Tha agam-sa tuilleadh
 Do leithid an fhirionnaich s';
 'S air chor as gu 'n cluinnear iad,
 Seinneam air tèis iad,
 Dòmhnall beag biorach,
 Air pòsadh an uraidh,
 'S tha dithis de 'n fhine
 Aig a' mhinisteir fèin diu.

I have more than enough
 Of the likes of those men;
 And so they can be heard,
 Let me sing them an air.
 Little sharp-pointed Donald
 Married last year,
 And a pair of his kindred
 Are at the minister now.

[8] Na grèisichean beaga,
 Oir 's iad is maoir eaglais,
 Tha dùil ac' mo thagradh,
 Air son magaidhnean beumnach.
 Bithidh mise fuidh eagal,
 'N uair chluinneas mi 'm bagradh,
 O 'n thachair mi eadar
 Air sagart 's an clèireach.

The little Granges,
 Because they are church officers,
 Expect my apology
 For sarcastic mockery.
 I will be so terrified
 When I hear their threat,
 Because I happened between
 The priest and the minister.

⁴¹ Morrison states (1899: 168, n. 1) that the island mentioned is Hoan, at the mouth of Loch Eriboll.

[9] Tha dùil a'm gur duilich leis
 Mis' chur an cunnart,
 'S gu 'n do chaomhain mi 'n cuilean,
 'S gu 'm bu mhuileach leis fèin e.
 'S ma chreideas mi 'm ministear,
 An dèigh 's na dh' innis e,
 'S e 'm *moncaidh* an uraidh,
 Mu mhire na 'n Grèibhear.⁴²

[10] Tha sgeula r' a h-aithris,
 Mu *Bhaile-na-Cille*,
 Gu 'n robh iad fo iomas
 An uraidh le chèile.
 Am bliadhna tha 'n dithis,
 E fèin 's an cù buidhe,
 Gun triall ac' gu uidhe,
 Ach 'n suidh' aig na h-èibhlean.

[11] 'S bòidheach am baganach
 Seòras na h-eaglais,
 Chualas na creagan
 Toirt freagairt d' a èigheachd.
 Shamlaich mi 'm fleasgach ud
 Ris a' gharra-ghartan,
 Cho bìogach r' a fhaicinn,
 'S cho neartmhor r' a èisdeachd.

[12] Tha Curstaidh fo chachdan,
 Mar bhailich mi 'macan,
 Gu 'n abrainn garra-gartan
 Ri fleasgach cho treun ris.
 Seas thusa fa 'chomhair,
 Is amharc a chrodhan,
 'S an tè thug an dreobhan air,
 Thomhais i fèin e.

It will be unfortunate for him
 Who put me in danger,
 And that I protected the puppy,
 So he would be valued for himself.
 And if I believe the minister,
 After all that he said,
 It is last year's monkey
 Fooling around in Gravir.

There is a story circulating
 Around Baile-na-Cille,
 That they were in trouble
 Last year with each other.
 This year the two of them,
 He himself and his yellow dog,
 Are not traveling anywhere,
 But sitting at the fireside.

The little glutton is handsome,
 George of the church,
 The rocks were heard
 Answering his shouting.
 I compared that young man
 To the corn-crake,
 So tiny to be seen
 And so powerful to listen to.

Kirsty is vexed
 Because I used her wee son badly,
 That I would describe as a corn-crake
 A youth as strong as he.
 You stand before him
 And look at his paw,
 And the woman that took a thorn to him,
 She herself took his measure.

⁴² I assume that this is a place-name, since it is capitalized and does not appear in Dwelly, and there is a Gravir in Lewis, which may be the same word.

23. THE DREAM⁴³

Part I [The Married Men]

[1] Chunnaic mise bruadar,
Fhir nach cuala, thig is cluinn;
Ma 's breisleach e, cur caisg air;
'S ma tha neart ann, bi 'g a sheinn.
Na 'm b' fhìor dhomh fèin gu 'm faca mi,
Am Freasdal, 's e air beinn;
Gach ni is neach 'n a amharc,
Is e coimhead os an cinn.

I saw a vision —
O man that did not hear, come and listen;
If it is a nightmare, put a stop to it;
If it has force, proclaim it.
If what I saw was true,
Providence is on a mountaintop,
Each thing and being within his purview,
While he looks over them.

[2] Chunnaic mi gach seòrsa 'n sin,
A' tigh'nn 'n an cròthaibh, cruinn;
'S na 'm b' fhìor dhomh, gu robh mòran diubh,
A b' eòl domh ri mo linn;
Ach cò a bha air thòs dhiubh,
Ach na daoine pòsd' air sreang,—
'S a' cheud fhear riamh thuirt focal diubh,
Cruaidh chasaid air a mhnaoi.

I saw every kind there,
Approaching in their forms, assembled;
And if it was true, there were many of them
Who were known to me in my day;
And who was at the forefront
But the married men in a line,
And the first of them who said a word
Harshly accused his wife.

[3] Labhair glagair àraidh ris,
“S tu leig mo naimhdeas leam,
'N uair phòs mi ghobach, àrdanach,
Nach obadh cnàmhan rium.
'S e 's cainnt an taobh mo leapa dhi,
An uair is pailte rùm,
Gu cealgach, feargach, droch-mheinneach,
“S an droch-uair, teann a null.”

One particular blusterer complained:
“Permit me my enmity,
When I married an arrogant prattler,
Who fed me only bones.
And this is our bedside conversation,
When there is plenty of room,
Hypocritically, angrily, grudgingly,
‘It’s a bad time, move over.’”

⁴³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 67-74), with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 266-72) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 46-48). At 25 eight-line verses, it is one of Rob Donn’s longest poems.

Mackay (1829: 266) describes it as: “Oran anns am bheil am bàrd a’ toirt achmhasain do chaochladh neach air feadh na dùthcha, air nach ruigeadh e gu socrach air mhodh eile”) (i.e., a song in which the bard gives a rebuke to a variety of people throughout the district, whom he could not reach easily in another way). This is too generic a description, as the poem deals specifically with the topic of gender relations between married men and women. The form is that of a religious vision containing a series of dialogues between Providence and several men and women who are bemoaning their respective fates. But the poet’s sympathies seem to lie primarily with the women, as he criticizes the men for complaining selfishly and unfairly about their long-suffering wives, suggesting proto-feminist tendencies in our 18th-century bard.

It is interesting to speculate on the relationship between this poem and that of the same title by the religious poet Dugald Buchanan. Since Buchanan (1716-1768) was almost an exact contemporary of Rob Donn (1714-1778), there is no simple way to determine which was composed first. Buchanan’s book of *Spiritual Songs* was published in 1767, so Rob Donn could have heard Buchanan’s “Am Bruadar” before he composed his own, although the reverse is equally possible. (For Buchanan’s dates, see Ronald Black, *An Lasair* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), p. 484). Since Rob Donn generally created his verse in response to external stimuli, and at least one other long poem, “To Winter”, is clearly a response to Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair’s poem “To Summer”, it seems more likely that Buchanan’s poem came first. In fact, I wonder if Rob Donn composed these unusually long, serious poems in response to challenges or commissions set for him by his friends and patrons. Given his competitive nature, that would seem entirely in character. If these inferences are correct, this is probably a late poem, composed after 1767.

[4] “Their i rium, gu h-ain-meinneach,
'N uair dh' èireas fearg 'n a sron,
Gu 'm b' olc mi ann an argumaid,
'S nach b' fheàrr mi thogail sgeòil,”—
“Cha b' ionnan duit 's do—c' ainm e sud,

'S deadh sheanachaidh e 'n tigh-òsd',

O! 's buidhe dhi-s' thug dhachaidh e,
B' e fèin am fleasgach còir.”

[5] “'N uair chlosas mis' ag smuaineachadh,
Gach truaighe thug mo shàr;
Their i, sgeigeil, beumnach, rium,
Gur ro mhaith dh' èisdinn sgeul,
Is their i ris na labhras mi,
Gu 'n canadh clann ni b' fheàrr:
Aon ghnìomh, no cainnt, cha chinnich leam

Nach dì-mol i le 'beul.”

[6] Fhreagair Freasdail reusonta,
“'S e 's feumail dhuit bhi stuaim',
'S a liuthad là a dh' èisd mi riut,
Is tu 'n ad èigin chruaidh.
Mu 'n d' chumadh còt, no lèine dhuit,
Bha 'n cèile sin riut fuaight',
Is ciod iad nis na fàthan,
Air am b' àill leat a cur uat?”

[7] “'S e theireas i gu 'm b' eudach sud,
'S e gu 'n robh thu breugach, meallt',
Is bheir i ort mar b' àbhaist di,
Nach can do 'bheul-sa drannd.
Tha 'n adharc sgorrach, èitidh;
Ach o 'n 's èigin di bhi ann,
O! ciod e 'n t-àite 'n càra dhi
Bhi fàs, na air do cheann.”

[8] Thubhairt fear de 'n àireamh ud,
Bu tàbhachdaiche bh 'ann,
“A Fhreasdail, rinn thu fàbhor dhomh,
Am pàirt 'n uair thug thu clann;
Ge d' thug thu bean mar mhàthair dhoibh,
Nach dean gach dàrna h-àm,
Ach h-uile gnìomh a 's tarsuinn,
Mar a thachaireas 'n a ceann.”

[9] “Nach bochd dhomh, 'n uair thig
strainnsearan,
Bhios ceòlmhor, cainnteach, binn,

“She will say to me, churlishly,
When anger rises within her,
That I would be terrible in an argument,
And no better at telling a story.
It was not the same for you and for
what's-his-name,
He was renowned as a good storyteller
in the inn.

Oh! If only he had taken her home;
He was a fine young bachelor.”

“When I am taking it easy, brooding
About every jerk who ever annoyed me,
She will say to me, mocking and sarcastic,
That the story I heard was very good,
And she will comment on whatever I say,
That children would speak better;
There's not a single word or deed that
springs from me
That she won't criticize with her mouth.”

Wise Providence responded:
“You should count your blessings;
So many days I listened to you
When you were in sorry straits,
Before a coat or a shirt was shaped for you
That your spouse had stitched.
Now what are the reasons
You want to take it off?”

“She will say that was jealous,
And that you were lying, deceiving,
And she will give you her usual —
You can't get a word in edgewise.
The horn is pronged and sharp;
Except for the difficulty she would be in,
Oh! What better place for it
To grow than on your head?”

One of that number said,
The most substantial of them:
“Providence, you did me a favor,
In part, when you gave me children;
Although you gave me a wife as their mother
You will not make a second time;
All the most ill-humored deeds
Come to fruition in her head.”

“Isn't it pitiful for me, when strangers visit,
Who are musical, talkative, and convivial,

'N uair 's maith leam a bhi fialaidh riuth',
 'S ann bhios i fiata ruinn?
 'N uair dh'òlas mi gu cùirteil leath',
 'S e gheibh mi cùl a cinn,
 'S bitheadh mise 'n sin 'n am bhreugadair,
 Ag ràdh gu 'm bheil i tinn."

When I should be hospitable to them,
 She will be unsociable towards us?
 When I would drink courteously with them,
 She will turn away from us,
 And then I would be a liar,
 Saying that she is unwell."

[10] "Cha tàmh i 'm baile dìthreibh leam,
 Cha toigh leath' gaoth nam beann,
 An t-àite mosach, fàsachail,
 Am bheil an cràbhadh gann;
 'S ged chuir mi làmh ri eaglais i,
 Cha 'n fhada dh' fhanas ann,—
 'An t-àite dona, tàbhurnach,'
 Bidh sluagh cur neul 'n a ceann."

"She will not live in a remote spot,
 She dislikes the mountain wind,
 The rough, desolate place
 In which piety is scarce.
 And although I put her near the church,
 She will not stay there long —
 'The evil, tavern-like place,'
 People put a cloud in her mind."

[11] Ach sin a thubhairt Freasdal ris,
 "S e thig do 'n neach ni chòir,
 A bhi ni 's dlùith' ri dhleasdanas,
 Mar 's truime crois 'g a leòn;
 Ged a shaoileadh tu gu 'm maithteadh dhuit,
 Na pheacaich thu gu h-òg;
 Cha 'n fhear gun chamadh crannchur thu,
 Fhad 's bhios a' cham-chomhdh' l s' beò."

But then Providence said to him:
 "It will come to the person who does right
 To be closer to his duty
 The heavier the cross that wounds him.
 Although you believe that the sins
 Of your youth will be forgiven,
 You are a man with a twisted fate,
 As long as this ill-advised interview lasts."

[12] "Cha 'n fhac thu fèin o rugadh tu,
 Aon cheum do m' obair-s' fiar,
 Ged chunnaic mi mar chleachdadh tu,
 Do dhreachdan 's do chiall.
 Cia h-iomadh *tric* gu beartas,
 Bh' air an dìtheadh steach 'n ad chliabh,
 Nach fhaic thu gur h-aon aisinn dhìot,
 A chum air ais sud riamh."

"You yourself have never perceived
 A single step of my subtle work,
 Although I saw how you behaved,
 Your dishonesty and your intentions.
 How many tricks to wealth
 You accumulated inside your creel;
 You will not see that it is your own dream
 That always held you back."

[13] "Aidich fèin an fhìrinn,
 Agus chi thu 'n sin mar bha,
 A' mheud 's a ghabh mi shaothair rith',
 Gus an caoch'leadh i ni b' fheàrr;
 Dh' fheuch bochdas agus beartas dhi,
 Is euslaint agus slàint',
 Is thàinig mi cho fagus dhi,
 'S a bagairt leis a' bhàs."

"Admit the truth yourself,
 And then you will see how it was,
 The extent to which I took her labor,
 Until she changed for the better.
 Poverty and riches tested her,
 And sickness and health,
 And I came so near her
 That I threatened her with death."

[14] "'N uair a dh'fheuch mi bochdas dhi,
 'S ann ortsa chuir i 'm fàt;
 'S cha mhò a rinn an t-socair i
 Ni b' fhosgailtich' ri càch;
 Le h-euslaint, 'n uair a bhuin mi rith',
 'S ann frionasach a dh' fhàs;
 An t-slàinte uam cha 'n aidich i,
 'S cha chreid i uam am bàs."

"When I tested her with poverty,
 It is with you she placed her fate;
 And it scarcely encouraged her
 To be more open to others.
 When I burdened her with ill-health,
 She became peevish;
 She will not acknowledge that I bestow
 Good health and death alike."

[15] Cò sin a chithinn tighinn,
 Dol a bhruidhean ris gu teann,
 Ach duine bha cruaidh chasaid
 Air a' mhnaoi bu ghasd' a bh' ann,
 'S e 'g ràdh, " 'N uair thèid mi 'n taice rith',
 'S ann bhios oirr' gart is greann,
 'S 'n uair their mi chainnt a 's deala rith',
 Gu 'n cuir i car 'n a ceann."

[16] "Gur h-e trian mo dhìthidh oirr',
 Nach bi i faoilidh rium;
 Ni i sgeig is fanaid orm,
 Gun ghàir' a' tigh'nn à cuim.
 'N uair bhitheas sinn 'n ar n-áonar,
 Bidh 'cainnt 's a h-aogas trom,

Ach 'n uair thig na fir—gu fuirmeil,
 Gheibh sinn òl, is cuirm, is fonn."

[17] "A Fhreasdail, rinn thu seirbhe dhomh,
 'S ann orm a chuir thu chuing,
 'S gu 'm b' eòl duit gu 'n robh m' aimsir,
 Is mo mheanmnadh air an claidh;
 B' fhuasd' duit 's na bliadhnaibh ud,
 Mo riarachadh le mnaoi
 Bhiodh ùmhail, càirdeil, rianail dhomh,
 'S nach iarradh fear a chaoidh."

[18] Cha do ghabh am Freasdal
 Ris a chasaid ud ach màll,
 Air fios dha gur e lapachas
 Na dhleasdanas a bhann.
 Ars eise "Cha mho an t-alghios
 Do na mhnaoi tharlas air fear fann,

Ged gheibh i cead bhi garachdaich
 Ri cach gach dara h-àm."

[19] "Dh'fhaodainn-sa do phòsadh
 Ris an t-seòrsa tha thu 'g ràdh,
 Ach 's aona as a' cheud dhiubh.
 Bheireadh riarachadh dhuit ràidh;
 An tè de 'n nàdur neònach ud,
 'S nach toireadh pòg gu bràth,
 Am biadh no 'n deoch cha 'n òlar leath',
 'S cha dheònaich i do chàch."

Who is that I saw coming,
 Going to speak to him eagerly,
 But a man that cruelly accused
 The most excellent wife there was,
 Saying: "When I go to help her,
 I get surliness and angry looks,
 When I speak the friendliest word to her,
 She turns her head away."

"It is a third of my reproach to her
 That she will not be cheerful to me;
 She ridicules and mocks me
 Without a laugh coming from her chest.
 When we are by ourselves,
 Her conversation and countenance are
 oppressive,
 But when the men come, briskly
 We will have drink, and a feast, and a tune."

"Providence, you treated me bitterly;
 You put a yoke on me,
 And you knew that my life
 And my spirit were afflicted.
 During those years you could easily
 Have pleased me with a wife
 Who was attentive, kind, and well-disposed,
 And not always seeking another man."

Providence accepted
 That accusation only reluctantly,
 Knowing the feebleness
 Of the marital bond.
 He said: "No greater is the pleasure
 For the wife who is stuck with a feeble
 husband,
 Although she obtains permission
 To be useful to others half the time."

"Your marriage could be
 Of the type that you say,
 But it is one of a hundred.
 You should be satisfied for a season;
 The woman of that unusual nature
 Who would never give a kiss,
 She will not consume the food and drink,
 And will not be unfaithful."

Part II [The Married Women]

[20] Air an dara dùsal dhomh,
 'N dèigh dùsgadh as mo shuain,
 Chunnaic mi na daoine sin,
 Ag sgaoileadh mach mu 'n cuairt,

In my second spell of drowsiness,
 After waking from my slumber,
 I saw those men
 Dispersing all around,

'S na h-uile bean bha posda sin,
A' dol 'n dùnaibh suas,
Ach 's aonan as an fhichead dhiubh,
Bha buidheach leis na fhuair.

[21] Labhair aon bhean ionnsuicht' dhiubh,
Bu mhodha rùm na càch,
"Am biadh, an deoch, 's an aodaicheadh,
Cha 'n fhaodainn bhi ni 's sàthaicht':
Ach gu m' fhàgail trom, neo-shunndach,
Cha 'n eòl domh punc a 's dàch',
Na gealltanais mo thoileachadh,
Gun choimhlionadh gu bràth."

[22] "An duine sin tha mar rium,
Tha sìor ghearan air mo shunnd,
Dhearbhainn fèin air 'fhiacaill,
Ged nach d' iarr mi, nach do dhiùlt.
Bitheadh mòran diubh mi-reusonta,
'N uair gheibh thu 'n sgeul gu grunn,
Tha dùil ac' gu 'n ghluais mireag riuth',
An spiorad nach 'eil annt'."

[23] 'S neònach leam an dràsda 'n so,
Sìor àbhaist nam fear pòsd',
Their gu ladarn' dàna,
Nach do thoirmisg àithne pòg.
Cia mòr an diùbhras beusan
Th' eadar eucoir agus còir,
Cha 'n eòl domh àite-seasaimh,
Air an aon chois no dhò.

[24] Chunnaic mi 's an àite sin,
Nì àbhachdach gu leòir,
Is shaoil mi gu 'm bu reuson e,
O 'n tigeadh eudach mòr.
Ciod bh' ann ach fear gun chomas,
'G iarraidh comunn tè gun chòir,

'S bha fìor dhroch bheachd aig cuid dheth,
'S a bhean fèin 'g a chur an spòrs.

[25] Chuireadh e neul 'n am eanchainn-s',
A bhi 'g ainmeachadh le cainnt,
A' mheud 's a bh' ann do dh' argumaid,
'S do chomunn gearrta greann'.
Bha na milltean pears' an sud,
'N an seasamh ann an *ranc*,
'S bha casaidean aig ceudan diubh,
Ma 'n aon bha tabhairt taing.

And all those married women
Going up into their fortresses,
But only one out of twenty of them
Was pleased by what she got.

One knowledgeable woman spoke,
In a larger room than the rest:
"Food, drink, and clothing,
There could be nothing more satisfying
Than leaving me pregnant and out-of sorts.
I know no predicament more likely
Than promising my happiness
Without ever fulfilling it."

"That husband of mine
Is constantly complaining about my temper;
I could prove on his teeth,
Although I did not seek, I did not refuse.
Many of them are unreasonable
When you get to the bottom of the matter,
They want a playful girl approaching them,
The spirit that they lack."

It's amazing to me here and now,
The perpetual habit of married men,
They will complain shamelessly
But will still demand a kiss.
How great is the difference in virtue
Between injustice and justice;
I know not where to stand,
On one foot or on two.

I saw in that place
Something humorous enough,
And I thought he would be reasonable
From whom great jealousy came.
What was it except an incompetent man
Seeking the company of a woman without
integrity,
And some had a very poor opinion of him,
His own wife making fun of him.

It would put a cloud in my mind
To be mentioned in idle conversation,
The scope that was in it for argument,
And for mean, satirical company.
There were thousands of people there,
Standing in their ranks,
And hundreds of them were complaining,
If one was giving thanks.

24. TOWN AND COUNTRY LIFE⁴⁴

Mary:

[1] Cia b' e dheanadh mar rinn mis',
Bu mhisd se e gu bràth,
Dhol do 'n bheinn, an aghaidh m' inntinn,
Mhill e mi mo shlàint';
Pàirt de m' acain, Bà-theach Mheirceinn,
'S àit gun mharcaid e,
Ach spàin is copraich, 's ba-theach fosgailt',
'S gràine shop ri làr.

Anyone doing as I have done
Would be eternally the worse for it,
Going to the mountain against my will
To the ruin of my health.
Part of my grievance is the Merkin upland;
It is a place without a market,
But spoons and coppers and open byre,
And grain chaff on the floor.

Isabel:

[2] Cha 'n 'eil seòmar aig Rìgh Bhreatainn,
'S taitneich' leam na 'n Càrn,
Oir tha e uaignidheach do ghruagaich,
'S ni e fuaim 'n uair 's àill;
Feur is coille, blàth is duille,
'S iad fo iomadh neul,
Is is' *echo* mar na teudan,
Seirm gach tèis a 's feàrr.

The King of Britain has no chamber
More delightful than the Cairn is to me,
For it is private for a young girl
And there are sounds when you desire them;
Grass and trees, blossom and leaf,
And many hues upon them,
And she and echo like harp strings
Playing the loveliest airs.

Mary:

[3] Cha b' àite còmhnuidh leam air
Dhòmhach,
A bhi 'n ròig no 'n càrn,
Oir mur robh strianach ann air bhliadhna,

Cha robh riamh ni b' fheàrr.
Fuaim na beinne 's gruaim a' ghlinne,

'S fuathach leinn a' ghàir;
O! cràdh mo chridhe, reubadh lighe
An t-àit an tiughe 'm feur.

It was not a congenial place for me on
Sunday,
To be in a cave or a cairn,
For unless there was a badger in it during
the year
There was never anything better.
Sounds of the mountain and gloom of the
glen —
The din is hateful to us.
O torment of my heart, raging flood
In the place where the grass is thickest!

Isabel:

[4] Ciod am fàth mu 'n tug thu fuath,
'S ann do na bruachaibh àrd'?
Nach fhaic thu fèin 'n uair thig an sprèidh,
Gur feumail iad le 'n àl?
Cha chràdh cridhe, air làrach shuidhe,
Fuaim na lighe làin,
Do 'n gnàth bhi cladhach roimh a h-aghaidh,
Is feur a dèigh a' fàs.

What reason have you for your antipathy
To the high slopes?
Do you not see how useful they are
When the cattle arrive with their young?
It is no hardship to sit in a spot
In the roar of the full flood
Digging out its usual course,
Its favorite grass growing.

⁴⁴ The text is from Morrison (1899: 119-21) and the translation from Grimble (1999: 13-17) except as noted; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 280-82) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 74).

The poem takes the form of a dialog between two sisters, daughters of Iain mac Eachainn, discussing the respective merits of town and country life. It must have been composed when both were teenagers, sometime before Isabel's marriage in 1747. See Grimble (1999: 97).

[5] Na tha firinneach de t' amhran
'N fhad 's bha 'n samhradh blàth,
Ni e an tionndadh oidhche-Shamhna,
'S bheir an geamhradh 'shàr.
Duille shuidhicht' bàrr an fhiodha,
Dh 'fhàs i buidhe-bhàn,
'S tha sealladh 'n t-Srath air call a dath,
Le steall de chathadh-làir.

What *is* true in your song
During the warmth of summer
Will change at Halloween,⁴⁵
 And winter will come to extinguish it.
 The foliage of the tree-tops
 Has turned to russet,
 And the beauty of the strath has lost its hue
 With the onset of ground-drift.

Isabel:

[6] Gleidhidh 'n talamh chun an t-samhraidh;
Sin a chrann e 'n dràsd;
Beith is calltuinn latha-Bealltuinn
Gealltanach air fàs.
Bidh gruth is crathadh air na srathaibh,

'S teirgidh 'n caitheadh-làir.
'S nach binn an sealladh, glinn a' stealladh
Laoigh is bainne is bàrr!

The land will bide until summer;
It is hibernating now.
Birch and hazel on the day of Beltane
Will be showing promise of growth.
There will be curds and churning in the
 straths
And melting of the snow-drifts.
How sweet the spectacle, glens spouting
Calves and milk and cream.

Mary:

[7] 'S barail leamsa gun do chaill sibh,
Air na rinn sibh chàis;
Dhol do shliabh, gun chùr, gun chliathadh,

'S nach robh biadh a' fàs.
B' fheàrr bhi folluiseach an Galladh,
Na bhi 'n comunn ghràisg,
Le deatach connaidh air mo dhalladh
Làimh ri balla fàil.

It is my own opinion that you have a deficit
In your cheese-making.
If your hills were left without sowing,
 without harrowing,
Then there would be no produce.
Better to move openly in the Lowlands
Than to be in the company of a rabble
With the smoke of the fire blinding me
Beside a divot wall.

⁴⁵ Grimble (1999: 15-16) translates these three lines in the past tense to reflect Mackay (1829: 281).

25. TO A CRONIE⁴⁶

Cia b’e dheanadh mar rinn thus’,
Bu mhisd’ se e gu bràth;
Chaidh thu latha tharruing mòine,
’S ghabh do sgòrnan blàth’s.
Ghabh thu pathadh air an rathad,
’S rinn thu caitheamh bàth;
’S d’ a’ mheud ’s a shluig thu,
Aon neach cha tuigeadh
Diog a bha thu ’g ràdh.

Whoever would do as you did
Would be eternally the worse for it;
You went today to carry peat,
And your throat became warm.
You took a thirst on the way,
And you quenched it extravagantly;
And given the amount you swallowed,
No one could understand
A syllable you were saying.

⁴⁶ This text — an obvious parody of the previous song — is from Morrison (1899: 446) with my translation. It also appears in Mackay (1829: 273).

According to Morrison (1899: 446), this was a verse for a friend who, “in place of going to the hill for peats, as he was on his way to do, adjourned to the inn with the poet, whom, when he became a little elevated, he beseeched to make a verse for the occasion.” For this spur-of-the-moment composition, Rob Donn used the first two lines, and almost certainly the same tune, as the dialogue song he composed for Mary and Isabel MacKay about the respective benefits of town and country. It is likely that both were composed about the same time, during the 1740s.

26. TO MAJOR MACLEAN⁴⁷

[1] Ciod a dh'fhairich sibh, bhàirde,
Anns na h-àitibh s', 's gur balbh sibh,
Gun bhi cleachdadh bhur tàlann
Mu na Ghàidheil a b' fheàrr dhiu.
Fhuair sinn naidheachd à Sasunn,
Gun chaill sinn fleasgach 's a' Ghearmailt,
Am Màidseair òg Mac Illean,
Bu tearc a leithid 's an armailt.

What were you thinking, bards,
In these parts, and you silent,
Without using your talent
Concerning the best Gael among them?
We got the news from England,
That we lost a young man in Germany,
The young Major MacLean,
His equal was rare in the army.

[2] Ma gabhas mis' orm a' dh' aodann
Dhol a shìneadh mar cheud fhear,⁴⁸
'S e aon aideachadh ni mi,
Gur beag a chì mi do 'n b' fhiach thu.
Fhir fhuair comasan inntinn,
Gu gnothuch cinnt o na cìochaibh,
Nach fhaic sibh 'leithid a rithis,
Air ochd thar fhichead do bhliadhnaibh.

If I assume the impudence
To reach out like the first man,
The only confession I will make
Is that I see few of your worth.
Man who received faculties of mind
Without a doubt from the breast,
You will not see his like again
At the age of twenty-eight.

[3] Gur h-e 'n t-aobhar mu 'n d' shìn mi,
Ri bhi 'g innseadh do bheusan,
Do chur beagan 's a' Ghaidhlig,
De 'n chuir càch anns a' Bheurla,
Air chor 's gu 'n cluinneadh ar n-àlach
Am measg an àraichear treun fhir,
An cliù acaineach àrd sin,
Thug Prionns' *Ferdinand* fein ort.

The reason I made the effort
To describe your virtues
Was to put a little in Gaelic
Of what others put in English,
So that our tribe would hear
Among whom heroes are reared,
That high distressing reputation
That Prince Ferdinand himself gave you.

[4] Gum bheil t' athair 's do mhàthair
Gu ro chràiteach 'g ad ionndrain,
Tha do phiuthair 's do bhràthair,
'S cha 'n e mhàin ach na prionnsa;
C' àit' an cuala sibh sgeòil
Tha cho neònach r' an cluinntinn,
Ri aobhar cumh' agus àrdain,
Bhi aig càirdean mu 'n aon fhear.

Your father and your mother
Are missing you terribly,
Your sister and your brother,
And not only the princes;
When did you hear a tale
That is so strange to ponder —
Reason for lament and pride alike
By the relatives of the same man.

⁴⁷ The text is from Morrison (1899: 62-64), with my translation: it also appears in Mackay (1829: 4-6) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 58).

This is an elegy in honor of a young officer who was killed in action at the age of 28, on September 21, 1762, at Brücker Mühle, Germany, under the command of Prince Ferdinand. See Morrison (1899: 62-63); Mackay (1829: 40); Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 58). One interesting aspect of the poem is that Rob Donn apologizes for his delay in composing it, noting that another poet had already composed an elegy in English, but finally deciding that he should add something in Gaelic to what had already been said in English. The date places the event during the Seven Years' War, when Rob Donn himself was serving in the Sutherland Fencibles, and the text of the poem reveals the bilingual context of military service at the time.

⁴⁸ Presumably this refers to "the first man" who composed an elegy after the major's death.

[5] Bha na h-uile ni moltach
Dh'fheudtadh chantuinn mu d' dhèighinn;
Bha do mhàthair is t' athair,
An àirde breith 's am foghlum.
Bha thu bhrod Chlann Illeain,
'S bu chinneadh leathan bha treun iad;
Ach thog do chleachdaidhean beatha,
Os cionn an leithid gu lèir thu.

[6] 'S iomadh neach do nach b' eòl thu,
Tha ro bhrònach 's cha 'n ioghnadh,
Mu aon gun samhail an catha,
Gu do thalcuis a dhioladh.

Mar chraoibh a dh'fhàs ann an starradh,
'S a chaidh ghearradh gun chrìonadh;
Meanglan òg ann an laithibh,
'S gaisgeach catha an gnìomh thu.

[7] Gum bheil eachdraidh an àrmuinn,
Dol ni 's airde na m' eòlas;
Bha e 'n a onoir do dh'Alba,
Ged a dh' fhalbh e 'n a òige.
'N uair a bhithear a leughadh
Sgeul a bhàis is a bheò-sa,
Ciod a 's faisge d' a chèile,
Na aobhar gàire agus bròine?

[8] 'S tus', a bhàis, nach eil dìomhain,
A' deanamh dìobhail 'n ad bhoillsigibh,
'S gann gur urrainn do naimhdeas
Dol ni 's àirde na rinn e.
Cuiridh bith-bhuantachd imrich
An saoghal cuimrigeach caillte,
Mu 'n tuit leat ach tearc leithid,
Mhic Illeain do shaighdeir.

Every praiseworthy thing
Could be said about you;
Your mother and your father
Were of the highest birth and education.
You were the pride of Clan MacLean,
A strong and extensive kindred,
But your habits of life raised you
Completely above your peers.

Many a person who knew you not
Is sorrowful and no wonder,
About one who was unmatched
At avenging an affront done to you in
battle.

Like a tree who grew in a sudden spurt,
And was cut down without decaying,
You were a branch young in days,
And a war hero in deed.

While the history of the warrior
Extends well beyond my ken,
He was an honor to Scotland,
Although he left us in his youth.
When the story of his life and death
Is read aloud,
What could be closer together
As cause for laughter and sorrow?

And you, death, are not idle,
Wreaking destruction in a flash,
And rarely can your enmity
Go higher than it did.
Eternity will transform
The fallen, troubled world
Ere befalls again but rarely
The likes of MacLean, soldier.

27. JOHN MACLEOD⁴⁹

Sèist:

Gaol currachd, gràdh currachd,
Gaol currachd, currachd mhaol;
Gaol currachd, gràdh currachd,
Gaol currachd, currachd mhaol.

[1] Dh'fhàg an cogadh fleasgaich gann duinn,
'S tha na bantraichean fo chaoir;
'S cha 'n eil nighean aig Rob Friseil,
Nach toir meas air Iain maol.

[2] Ged tha 'n naidheachd so ro bhrònach,
Ni e spòrs' do phàirt de 'n tìr;

'N tè a dhiult an uraidh 'n gobhann,
Ruith an lobhair, Iain maol.

[3] Thog na nigheanan *collection*,
A chur deis' air Iain maol;
'S gur h-e na rinn an t-airgiod uile,
Gruag, is currachd, agus cìr.

[4] 'S iomadh tè their riut am bliadhna,
Dearbh gur maith is fhiach thu gaol,
Chanadh an uraidh riut le fuath-chainnt,
Sud an spuaic an deachaidh 'n t-aol.

[5] Cainnt gach maighdin, cha ruig aithis,
Air do bhathais, fhir mo ghaoil;
Far am b' fhionnach, cha bu ghagach,
Far 'm bu charrach, cha bu mhaol.

[6] Fhuair sinn reitheich' thar Port-Phàdruig,
Agus tarbh na dhà thar tìr;
'S e mo dhùil nach fhaigh sinn tuilleadh,
Beathach firionn, ach fear maol.⁵⁰

Chorus:

Beloved one with a cap (3x),
Headdress of a bald man.

The war left young men scarce among us,
And the widows are aflame;
And every daughter of Robert Fraser
Is paying attention to bald Ian.

Although this news is very sad,
It creates a diversion for part of the
country;
The woman who refused the blacksmith
last year,
Pursued the disgusting wretch, bald Ian.

The girls took up a collection
To put an outfit on bald Ian;
And it is he that made all the money,
A wig and a cap and a comb.

And many a woman who says to you this
year
That you are well worth love indeed,
Spoke to you last year with disgust:
"There is the crust left by the lime."

Talk of every maiden, who will not find a flaw
In the crown of your head, my dear fellow;
Where you were hairy, you had no torn
skin,
Where you were scabby, you were not
bald.

We got a ram via Port Patrick
And a bull or two overland;
I don't expect we'll get any more
Male animals except a hornless one.

⁴⁹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 329-30) with my translation: it also appears in Mackay (1829: 42-44) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 80).

Morrison explains (1899: 329) that this song was composed for a bald man named John Macleod, for whom a wig was provided by the young women of the district while the men of the place were away with the Earl of Sutherland's regiment. This would date the poem to 1759-1763.

⁵⁰ According to the note in Mackay (1829: 80): "Am Morair Mac-Aoidh air faotainn anns an àm sin dà reithe mhaol a Eirinn, agus dà tharbh mhaol a Siorrachd Ionar-àire" (Lord Reay having obtained at that time two hornless rams from Ireland, and two hornless bulls from Inverary).

[7] 'S e mo bharail, do thaobh nàduair,
Gu 'm bheil gnè anns na fir mhaol',
Cheart cho meamnach ri fir eile,
Chaidh na 'm fanadh iad cho chaol.

It is my opinion, as a matter of nature,
That the character of bald men
Is just as lusty as other men,
Forever lamenting that they remain so
small.

28. THE POLLA FLITTING⁵¹

[1] Dhuine, thoir domh cairtealan,
'S an tigh a thog mo làmhan,
Agus bi rium lachasach,
Gus an deasaich mise m' àirneis.
'S na bi rium cho tartarach,
Le t' fhocalan mar b' àbhaist,
No bheir mise 'n t' aiseag orm,
Gu d' chasaid, do Cheann-tàile.

[2] Neart cha 'n 'eil 'n ad phearsa dhomh,
No d' chasaidean bu dàine,
Pronnaidh mi do chathraichean,
Do shrathraichean, 's do phlàtan;
Cuiridh mi do chisteachan,
A chlisgeadh ort 'n an clàraibh;
'S chleachdaidh mi mo chomas,
Gus am Polla a chur fàs ort.

[3] A dhuine, na gabh eagal,
Mar nach biodh agam càirdean;
Ged a dheanainn fhathastaich,
Treis tamhachaidh 'n am làraich,
'S gu 'n cuir mi mo chuid bheathaichean,
Air astar thun a' bhràighe;
'S na h-uile dad a ghabhas i
A *stobhaigeadh* 's a' bhàta.

[4] Siubhail gu grinn tapaidh,
Is cuir air t' eachaibh t' àirneis,
Thabhair a' bheinn ghlas ud ort
Is suidh air achadh àiridh;
Mu 'n tig an ruaig gu h-aithghearr ort,
O 'n fhear a 's treise pàirtidh;
Is nach bi ball beairt agad,
Nach cuir e mach gun dàil ort.

[5] A dhuine, dean air t-adhais,
Agus labhair rium gu fàilteach,
'S cuir an aghaidh fhathail ort
Ri m' leithid-sa, mar b' àbhaist;
Ged nach 'eil aois lathachan,
Air caitheamh do dhroch nàduir,

Man, give me lodgings
In the house my hands built,
And be indulgent to me,
Until I get my furniture ready.
And don't be so vociferous to me
With your usual words,
Or I will take myself, in return
For your grumbling, to Kintail.⁵²

Your person has no force for me,
Nor your boldest complaints,
I will smash your chairs,
Your pack-saddles and your mats;
I will place your chests
On the decks right now;
And I will use my authority
Until Polla is rid of you.

Man, don't worry,
As if I had no relatives;
Although I would remain still
For a little while in the place,
I will send my animals
Away to the brae,
And everything that will fit
I will stow in the boat.

Depart cleanly and quickly,
And put your furniture on your horses,
Head for that gray mountain,
And sit on a field with a shieling;
Before the most powerful man in the party
Runs you out in a hurry,
And you will not have a contract
To prevent your immediate removal.

Man, take it easy,
And speak to me hospitably,
And put on a noble face
To the likes of me, as always;
Although age is not responsible
For your evil disposition,

⁵¹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 163-65) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 83-85) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 79).

Morrison (1899: 163) describes the song as a "dialogue between the man who was leaving the house and the man who was entering into possession, the latter hurrying the former's departure." Polla is at the head of Loch Eriboll.

⁵² This refers to Kintail MacKay, the area around the chief's seat in Tongue, and may imply a complaint to Lord Reay or his factor.

Cìod fhios nach fhaicinn fathast thu,
A' crathadh do chuid àirneis.

[6] Dh' iarr mi fèin gu taitneach ort,
Dol a mach an ceud uair,
'N uair a bha àm ceart agad,
Gu farsuing is gu rianail;
Nach fhaic thu an laoch ladarn ud,
'S e o cheann fad air liathadh,
Leis an teann-chaoir bhagraidh air,
Is e gun eagal Dia air.

[7] Rianalas bu fhreagarraich',
Na 'n tigeamaid gu ràiteach,
Mur biodh duine cuide ruinn,
Cha togamaid an t-sràbhard;
Faodaidh tusa fanadh
Anns a' bhaile so air shàbaid;
Siùbhladh Rob mur thogras e,
Le 'bhogais do Cheann-tàile.

[8] Chruinnich agus chorruidh iad,
'N uair chunnaic iad mar thàrladh,—
Dagachan is gunnachan,
Culaidhnean is càbuill;—
'N duine sin a' mionnachadh,
Mus buineadh e do 'n fhàrdoich,
H-uile fear a dh' fhuiricheadh
Gu 'n lunnadh e gu bàs iad.

Who knows I won't see you yet
Brandishing your own furniture?

I myself asked you politely
To leave in the first place,
When it was the proper time
Openly and in due order;
Don't you see that shameless fellow,
His head entirely gray,
With the pincers threatening him,
And he without fear of God.

It would be a more suitable method
If we could come to an agreement,
If no one was with us,
We would not raise the quarrel.
You could wait
In this homestead on Sunday;
Rob would travel if he pleases,
With the boxes to Kintail.

They gathered and became angry,
When they saw what happened —
Pistols and guns,
Boats and horses —
That man swearing,
Before he would deal with the dwelling,
That he would pummel to death
Every man who stayed.

29. TO LADY REAY⁵³

[1] Failt ort fèin, a Bhain-tighearn,
Agus taing dhuit chionn do bheus;
'S e mis a bhi mì-nàdurach,
Mur cuirinn pàirt dheth 'n cèill;
'S e b' fhasan do na phàirtidh sin,
A thàrladh tu 'n an clè ,
An cliù 's an onoir àrdachadh,
Air chost an càirdean fèin.

[2] Am bràthair leis am b' àill a bhi
Am Pàrlamaid an rìgh,
Chaidh dhearbhadh le do chàirdeas,
Ni nach fàiling air a chaidh;
Cia mar air bith a phàighear dhuit
Am fàbhor s' le Mac-Aoidh,
Bha gnìomh 's an uair sin dèanta leat,
Nach b' àbhaist bhi le mnaoi.

[3] Bu shubhach sinne shuas an so,
'N uair chuala sinn an tùs,
Gur h-ann a thaobh do chuartachaidh,
A bhuannaich iad a' chùis;
Le cothachadh nam Baran sin,
Chuir onoir air do chliù,
Ni b' fhaide on a' bhaile,
Na chuid eile de na chùirt.

[4] Cha 'n ainmich mi na puinncean so,
'S nach cuimhnich mi an còrr,
Oir rinn thu o cheann seachduin,
Ni bha taitneach na bu leòir;
Am prìosanach a stopadh
Dh' easbhuidh leth-trom thoirt do 'n chòir;
'S a' phàirtidh bhi gun lethsgèul,
Ach a' ghreis a rinn iad òl.

Welcome to your Ladyship,
And thank you for what you did.
It would be unnatural
If I did not relate some of it.
It was the custom of that party
With which you have become involved
To increase their renown and honour,
Even at the expense of friends.

The brother who desired to enter
The Parliament of the King,
Received evidence of your friendship,
A thing that will never fail him.
How will you be repaid
The obligation by the Chief of Mackay?
What you did then was a deed
Not to be expected of a wife.

We were happy hitherto
When we heard the beginning,
That through your intervention
They gained the day.
Through the support of those barons/votes
Honour was added to your reputation —
A quality more distant from the village
Than other things of the court.

I will not mention these points
Without recalling others,
For you did something a week ago
That was more praiseworthy still —
Stopping the capture
Without any injury to justice,
And the party that had no *excuse*⁵⁴
Except the time they spent *drinking*.⁵⁵

⁵³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 106-08) and the translation from Grimble (1999: 125-29) except as noted; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 193-95) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 82).

As explained by Morrison (1899: 106), the poem honors "Christian, daughter of Sutherland of Proncy. She was received by the Clan Mackay with marked disfavour as their Chief's second wife. When, however, Lord Reay's brother, the Hon. George Mackay of Skibo, stood as candidate for Parliament for the county, her ladyship's influence secured him the seat. This raised her in the estimation of the Mackays. Shortly after, a young man of the name of Kenneth Sutherland ran away from his regiment and sought refuge in Durness, where, however, he was arrested. Lady Reay entertained his captors to a dance with her servants, and the flowing quaich having its usual influence, the deserter disappeared and was not again heard of. The poet commends her ladyship for both of these actions." Grimble (1999: 125) dates these events to 1747 and 1748.

⁵⁴ Grimble (1999: 127) has "pretext" here; "excuse" makes more sense. See Dwelly (2001: 582).

⁵⁵ Grimble (1999: 127) has "from drink" here, which does not make sense at all.

[5] Thainig fleasgach tapaidh,
Agus Cataich air a thòir;
'S mus cluinnteadh fuaim gu 'n glactadh e,
Mu gheat a' Mhorair òig,
'S tearc a bha 's a' bhaile s',
Dh' aithn'eadh 'bhoneid seach a' bhròg,
Chaidh phàirtidh chur à 'm faireachadh,
'S chaidh Coinneach uath' do rhòig.

[6] Bha mire 'n sin 's bha tàbhurn,
Eadar fir, is mnàibh, is clann;
Bha daoine tapaidh, teann, an sin,
A' danns' nach tuigeadh fonn.
Chluinnteadh fuaim nan rotaichean,
Aig lobhtachan fo 'm bonn;
Gach dara fear a' tuiteam dhiubh,
'S e na chothrom aig Rob Donn.

[7] Bha bean ri taobh na starsnaich ann,
Rinn seasamh tapaidh, garbh,
Cha b' aithne dhomhs' am *pass*,
An deach e às, ged bhi'dhn e marbh;
Ach eadar chasan boirionaich,
Gun bhonaid 's e gun arm;—
Glè fhaisg do 'n alt an d' rugadh e,
Siud thugadh e air falbh!

The alert young man arrived
With the Sutherlanders at his heels,
And before a word that he'd been seized
Near the young Lord's gate,
A few in that village
Who could tell a bonnet from a shoe
Made the party stand on their guard
While Kenneth took off to a hiding-place.

There was merriment there and festivity
Amongst men and women and children,
There were alert, eager men there,
Dancing to a tune they didn't know.
You could hear the storms of noise
From the boards beneath their feet,
Every other man amongst them stumbling —
It was a theme for Rob Donn.

There was a lady beside the threshold
Standing there, alert, formidable.
I don't know the pass
He went out by, on his life.
But between a woman's legs
Without bonnet or weapons,
Very near the fissure where he was born,
There he made his escape.

30. JAMES MACULLOCH⁵⁶

[1] Fàilte dhuit, a Sheumais,
'N dèigh cur nan snaidhmean trom',
O 'n 's leat do bhean, 's do mhàthair,

Cum an ràidheal⁵⁷ air a bonn.
'N dèigh gach comhairl' stopaidh,
Bha t' aghaidh bhos is thall,
Gur a tapaidh fhuaradh tu,
'N uair bhuannaich thu do chall.

[2] Tha mis nis 'g ad mholadh,
Le dànaibh milis, ciùin,
'S thusa 'g a mo dhi-moladh-s',
Do dh' iomadh, air mo chùl.
'S e their gach brithe 's àirde ruinn,
Da 'm b' eòl ar ceàird 's a' chùis,
Gum bheil sinn anns an àite so,
Cho breugach air gach thaobh.

[3] Thàinig mise mar aon ghnothuch,
Thabhairt comhairl' ort o 'n t-Srath;
Tha cuid, o 'n rinn thu 'n ceangal-s',
Cur an amharus do rath;
Cuir do stoc fo thaoitearachd,
'S tu 'g inntreachduinn 's a' chath,
'S leat gach ni a dh' fhàsas ort,
Mar thàrlas duit gu maith.

Greetings to you, James!
After tying the oppressive knots —
Now that your wife and mother-in-law
are yours,
Keep the reel steady.
After all the advice to refrain
That reached you from near and far,
How clever you were
When you won your loss.

I am now praising you
In sweet gentle songs
And you dispraise me
To many behind my back,
And every highest judge will say
Who knows our profession in the business,
That we in this place
Are most mendacious on all sides.

I came on purpose
To give you advice out of the strath.⁵⁸
There are some since your marriage
Who are doubtful of your prospects.
Put your stock in the hands of executors
When you enter the fray;
Everything will accrue to you
If things fall out well for you.

⁵⁶ The text is from Morrison (1899: 214-17); the translation is from Grimble (1999: 190-94), except the last six lines of the final verse, which he omits and I attempted to translate. It also appears in Mackay (1829: 117-20) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 33).

Morrison explains (1899: 214) that "James was a weaver, and resided at Ceannabin. He had a son, Donald, baptized 30th January 1766, and a daughter Christian, 16th November 1768." He continues:

Lady Reay was extremely anxious that James should marry one of her maids, in order to save the character of one or other of her friends, but the minister, the Rev. Murdoch Macdonald, declined to perform the marriage ceremony until the woman satisfied the session as to her condition at the time. Lady Reay sent for Mr. Forbes, then Sheriff-substitute, but his threats had no weight with Mr. Murdoch, who compelled the woman to appear in church, where he solemnly rebuked her, as well as those who had endeavored to shield her misdeeds. . . . The song following this deals freely and sharply with the leaders of society in the country at this time.

Grimble (1999: 190) identifies the woman as "Barbara Miller, a common Caithness name that may indicate her origins". He also remarks (pp. 194-95) that, "[e]ven by Rob Donn's standards, the candour of this poem astonishes, especially in the verse in which he advises the weaver that there is only one way in which to retain the fidelity of a nymphomaniac".

Since the older sons of this marriage were about the same age as Rob Donn's daughters (two of whom married in the early 1770s), the poem must date to sometime in the 1740s. See Grimble (1999: 198).

⁵⁷ Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 33) explain that this term refers to a "rioghall figheadair" (a weaver's reel).

⁵⁸ In other words, Rob Donn made a special trip from Strathmore, where he was living, to Ceannabeine, just east of Durness, to visit his friend James and give him unsolicited advice. See Morrison (1899: 215 n. 1).

[4] Bheir mi fathast seòladh dhuit,
A 's neònaich' leat gu lèir,
'S a 's durra dhuit a mhothachadh,

'S a 's motha tha thu 'm feum.
Feuch an toir thu chreidsinn
Air do nàdur laigseach fèin,
Nach 'eil t' aobhar eudaich-s',
Ri crèutair tha fo 'n ghrèin.

[5] 'N uair a shìneas mulad ort,
'S nach urrainn thu do dhìon,
'S ged robh thu sìleadh tuirseach,
Gus am fàs do shùilean blion,
Thoir t' aghaidh 'n àird air flaitheanas,
Iarr maitheanas gu dian,
Do gach neach riamh bu choireach

Ri do tharruing anns an lìon.

[6] Ged nach urrainn t' innleachd
A toirt a dh' aon leum gus a' chòir,
Faiceam-sa gu 'n glac thu i,
'N a tarsantas cho mòr;
Ged dhèan i a ceann a chrathadh riut
Le spreaghadh, mar ni bò,
Na fuiling breug no eitheich dhi,
'S an latha, mach o chùig.

[7] Nach faic thu fear Port-chamuill,
'G a do chronachadh o leisg,
Uaislean a' toirt misnich duit,
Ged nach tèid mis ni 's faisg.
Ged robh na ceudan turraban
Ad chulaidh 's i air faist,
'S ann ortsa thig na pàisteachain,
Gu pàigheadh 'n airgid-bhaist.

[8] 'S ann diubhsan tha am Foirbeiseach,⁵⁹
Thug tairgse gu do leòn,
'N uair fhuair thu rian air cìoslachadh,
Gach miann a bh' ann gun chòir,
'N uair dhèanadh e *protestigeadh*,
Gu t' fhaicinn-sa bhith pòsd',
Air chor 's gu 'm biodh tu t' aparán
Aig peacaich an Tigh-mhòir.

I will give you further advice
That you will find strangest of all,
That you will find most difficult to
appreciate,
And that you most need.
Try to instill a belief
In your own weak nature
That there is no need for you to be jealous
Of any creature under the sun.

When sorrow lies upon you
And you cannot find relief,
And though you were weeping sadly
Until your eyes were dim,
Turn your countenance to heaven,
Praying fervently for salvation
For every guilty person who was
responsible
For drawing you into the net.

Though your skill cannot make her
Achieve righteousness at one bound,
Let me see you catch her
In her peevishness so thoroughly;
Though she shakes her head at you
With a sudden movement as a cow does,
Do not allow her to lie or perjure herself
More than five times a day.

Do you not see the laird of Port Chamil
Rebuking you for idleness,
The gentry giving you encouragement —
Though I won't go into further detail?
Although hundreds were fucking
Your piece tethered there,
You will be responsible for the children
When it comes to paying the baptismal
fees.

One of them is Forbes
Who intended harm to you
When you found a means of overcoming
Every unrighteous desire he had,
When he protested
That he would see you married
So that you might be a screen
For the sinners of the big house.

⁵⁹ This was Mr. Forbes, the Sheriff-substitute, who helped pressure Macculloch into the marriage (Morrison 1899: 216 n. 1).

[9] 'S h-aon eile dhiubh a' bhana-Mhorair,
 'S e dearbhta gur h-i rinn,
 'S a' chuideachd gu do ghlacadh,
 Ann ad lapachas le foill;
 Bean thoimhseil, thapaidh, thàbhachdail,
 Rug 's a dh' àraich clann,
 Gu 'm b' fheumail dha do chèile-s' i,
 Gu brèid chur air a ceann.

And the other one of them is her Ladyship;
 It's certain that she did it,
 Catching you before witnesses
 In your weakness by deceit;
 A quick-witted, clever, influential woman
 Who has given birth to and reared children.
 She did your partner a good turn,
 Putting the head-dress of a married woman
 on her head.

[10] Nach fhaic thu 'm baiteal Tòmasach,
 Air fòghnadh thoirt do chus,
 Cha 'n fheàrr am baideal Tormaideach,⁶⁰
 adept
 Gu bristeadh arm' is lus;
 Feuch gu 'n cleachd thu argamaid,
 A dhearbhas air a bus,

Haven't you seen how the rampant Thomas
 Has got the better of many?
 The rampant Norman is just as

At crushing corn and herbage.
 See that you use an argument
 Which will prove to her despite her
 protests
 That she never kept company
 With anyone more potent than you.

Nach robh i riamh an comunn,
 Ris ni 's comasaich' na thus.

[11] Chaile chrosta, ghròcach, chraosach,
 Ann an trod 's an gaortachd beòil,
 Breugach, briste, gearrasanta,
 Do gach neach a dh' fhalbhas fòd.
 'S tu 'n urra choimheach, mhi-rùnach,
 Thug dùlan grid gach seòrs,
 'N uair mhùch thu 'n t-at le glùineagan,
 Air aisinn brù Nic-Leoid.

O bad-tempered, scolding, gluttonous
 hussy,
 Fond of quarrelling and filthy talk,
Lying, broken, cutting,
To anyone who leaves a peat.
You are a barbarous, malicious person
Who defied every good quality,
When you pressed the swelling with your
knees
On a rib of the belly of MacLeod's
daughter[?].⁶¹

⁶⁰ Morrison claims (1899: 217 n. 1): "Thomas and Norman were young men who were at one time admirers of the woman whom James married." This is possible, but — given the subject matter — it seems much less plausible than Grimble's translation above. "Baideal" means a pillar. Dwelly (2001: 58).

⁶¹ The last two lines of this verse are puzzling. They may refer to an illicit sex act, to abortion or infanticide, or to an assault on another woman (MacLeod's daughter?) who was pregnant at the time. This is the portion of the poem that Grimble omits, perhaps because he was also unsure of its meaning. However, if Barbara Miller had committed a crime, one would expect her to have been prosecuted, and there is no mention of this — instead, the law officer, Forbes, was trying to marry her off, and apparently Rev. MacDonald did eventually perform the marriage. In either case, Rob Donn may be exercising a bit of poetic (or pornographic) license.

31. THE POET'S WIFE⁶²

Feuch am faigh mi iachdair,
No riachlaid de chòta,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg
Ma 's a bi an t-iasg,
A' biastadh na pròis orm,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.
'S a liuthad maighdean àluinn
Is Sàlaidh air thòs orra,
Bheireadh dhomh an làmhan,
Is pàirt 'g a mo phògadh,
Ged tha mi 'n trath-sa
Na 'm thràill an tigh Seònaid,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.

See that I get a coat
Or a tattered jacket of a coat,
 You lovely, comely young lady,
Lest the fish should be
Mangling the bait on me,
 You lovely, comely young lady.
Considering there were so many lovely girls
And Sally chief among them
Who would give me a hand —
And some of them would give me a kiss —
Though now I am
A thrall in Janet's house,
 You lovely, comely young lady.

⁶² The text is from Morrison (1899: 436) and the translation from Grimble (1999: 222); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 274) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 26). The song, of course, is an obvious parody of his song to Sally Grant (#50), and thus dates to shortly after his return from military service in 1763.

32. THE YOUNG LOVERS⁶³

[1] Fheara òg' leis am miannach pòsadh,
Nach 'eil na sgeòil so 'g ur fàgail trom?
Tha chuid a 's dìomhair' tha cur an lìn diubh,

Cha 'n 'eil aon trian diubh a' ruigheachd fuinn.
Tha chuid a 's faighreachail' air an
oighreachd s'
O 'm bheil am *prise* a' dol air chall,
Mar choirean làidir, cur maill' air pàirtidh,
Tha barail chàirdean, is gràdh gun bhonn.

[2] Tha fear a' suiridh an diugh air inighean,
Gun bharaill iomraill nach dean e tùrn;

Bha i uair, 's bu chumha buairidh
A ghuth d' a cluais, is a dhreach d' a sùil.

An sean ghaol cinnteach bha aig ar sinnsir',
Nach d' fhuair cead imeachd air feadh
na dùthch',
Nach glan a dhearbhadh i, gu 'n deach'
mharbhadh
Do ni si bargan an uair thig fear ùr.

[3] 'S iomadh caochladh thig air an t-saoghal,
'S cha chan an fhìrinn gu 'm bheil e ceart
Na h-uile maighdean a ni mar rinn i,
Tha fois a h-inntinn an cunnart feasd.
An duine treubhach, mur 'eil e sprèidheach,
A dh' aindeoin eud, tha e fèin 'g a chasg,
'S le comhairl' ghòraich a h-athair dhòlum,
'G a deanamh deònach le toic, 's le trosg.

[4] O 'n tha 'n gaol ac' air fàs mar
Fhaoilleach,
Na bitheadh strì agaibh ri bhi pòsd',
'A seasmhachd inntinn cha 'n 'eil sibh,
cinnteach
Rè fad h-aoin oidhch' gu teach an lòn.
An tè a phairticheas riut a càirdeas,
Ged 'eil i 'g ràdh sud le cainnt a beòil,

Young men who desire to marry,
Isn't this news leaving you discouraged?
The most secretive bunch is feeding you
the line

That not a third of you will achieve happiness.
There are some who are long-established
on this estate
From whom the prize has been withheld,
As strong claims create impediments
In the opinion of relatives, and love
receives no support.

Today a man is courting a girl,
Without even a thought he will not
succeed;

She was once in a state of temptation,
His voice at her ear and his form in her
eye.

The old committed love of our ancestors,
Who lacked permission to travel
throughout the country —
Didn't she prove sincere, who destroyed
him
To make a bargain when a new man came
along.

Many changes will come upon the world,
And scripture will not say that it is wrong.
All the maidens will do as she did;
Peace of mind is in constant danger.
The ardent man, unless he has many cattle,
Despite his zeal, finds himself barred,
By the foolish advice of her mean father,
Who makes her consent to a puffed-up
fool.

Since their love has become like
February,⁶⁴
Do not struggle to be married,
Her commitment to you is not assured

Even for the length of one night.
The woman who promises you affection,
Although she says that with the speech of
her mouth,

⁶³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 97-100) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 44-46) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 60-61).

⁶⁴ According to Dwelly (2001: 413), am Faoilleach was proverbial for its variableness, just as women are proverbial for their fickleness (ann am barail nam fear, co-dhiù).

Fuidh cheann seachduin, thig caochladh
fleasgaich
'S cha 'n fhaigh thu focal dhith rè do bheò.

[5] Ach 's mòr an gabhadh bhi 'g an
sàruchadh,
Oir tha pàirt dhiubh de 'n inntinn stòlt',
Mach o phàrantan agus o chàirdean,
Bhi milleadh ghràidh sin tha fàs gu h-òg.
Mur toir i àicheadh do 'n fhear a 's feàrr leth',
Ged robh sud cràiteach dhi fad a beò,

Ni h-athair feargach, a beatha searbh dhi,
'S gur feàrr leis marbh i, na 'faicinn pòsd'.

[6] Faodaidh reuson a bhi gu trèigeadh
An fhir a 's beusaich a thèid 'n a triall;
Ged tha e càirdeach, mur 'eil e pàgach,

Ud! millidh pràcais na th' air a mhiann.

Tha 'n duine suairce, le barrachd stuamachd,
A' call a bhuannachd ri tè gun chiall;
'S fear eile 'g èiridh, gun stic ach lèine,

'S e cosnadh gèill dhith mu 'n stad e srian.

[7] Mur 'eil stuamachd a' cosnadh gruagaich,
Och! ciod a' bhuaidh air am bheil a geall?
Nach mor an neònachas fear an dòchais so,

Gun bhi cnòdach ni 's modha bonn.

Fear eile sìneadh le mire 's taosnadh,

Le comunn faoilteach, no aigneadh trom,

'S cia maith na trì sin gu cosnadh aontachd,
Cha 'n 'eil a h-aon diubh nach 'eil na chall.

[8] Ma tha e pàgach, ma tha e sgàthach,
Ma tha e nàireach, ma tha e mear;
Ma tha e sanntach, ma tha e greannair,
Ma tha e cainnteach, is e gun chron;
Ma tha e bòidheach, ma tha e seolta,
Ma tha e còmhnard, ma tha e glan;
Ma tha e dìomhain, ma tha e gnìomhach,
Ud, ud! cha 'n fhiach le a h-aon diubh sin!

At the end of a week, a variety of
young men will appear,
And you cannot get a word from her
while you live.

But great is the effort to satisfy them,
Because some of you have sober minds,
Aside from parents and friends,
Who nip young love in the bud.
If she does not refuse the man she prefers,
Although she would be miserable for the
rest of her life,
It will mke her father angry, and her life
bitter for her,
And he would prefer her to be dead than to
see her married.

There may be reason to abandon
The most virtuous of eligible bachelors;
Although he is kindly, if he is not
demonstrative,
There! Idle talk will destroy everything he
desired.
The man who is serious and overly modest
Loses his advantage with a silly woman;
And another man shows up, without a
stitch but a shirt,
And he will earn a promise from her before
he stays his bridle.

If sobriety does not earn a young woman,
Oh! What is it that wins her promise?
Isn't it very strange that one man with this
hope,
Without being industrious will obtain the
greatest reward.
Another man will exert himself with
flirtation and horse-play,
With hospitable company or melancholy
temper,
And however well he can unite those three,
All of them are wasted.

If he is a kisser, if he is bashful,
If he is embarrassed, if he is merry,
If he is lustful, if he is lively,
If he is loquacious, and he is without flaw;
If he is handsome, if he is cunning,
If he is even-tempered, if he is pure,
If he is secretive, if he is industrious,
There, there! Not one of them is any use!

[9] Ma tha e pàgach, tha e gun nàire,
 'S ma tha e sgàthach, cha bheag a' chrois;
 Ma tha e gaolach, tha e 'n a chaore,
 'S ma tha e faoilteach, tha e 'n a throsg;
 Ma tha e gnìomhach, their cuid,
 "Cha 'n fhiach e,
 "Tha 'm fear ud mìodhair, 's e sud a chron."
 'S ma tha e fàilligeach ann an àiteachadh,
 Cha bhi bàrr aig', is bitheadh e bochd.

[10] Cò an t-aon fhear air feadh an t-saoghail,
 A tha nis cinnteach gu 'n dean e tùrn;
 'S nach 'eil a h-aon de na tha mi 'g innseadh,
 Nach 'eil 'n a dhìteadh dha air a chùl.
 An duine meanmach, 's e toimhseil, ainmeil,

Cha chluinn thu 'ainm ach mar fhear gun diù;
 'S nach fhaic thu fèin, air son iomadh reusoin,

Gu 'n deach' an sprèidh os ceann cèille 's cliù.

[11] Tha fear fòs ann, a dh' aindeoin dòchais,
 A dh' fhaodas pòsadh gun mhòran char;
 Na biodh do chiall aig' na dh' aithnich riamh,
 Gu 'n d' èirich grian anns an àirde 'n ear;
 Dean 'n a dhuaire e, a rugadh 'n cuaran,

Thoir baile 's buar dha, is treabhair gheal;

Leig labhairt uair da, ri athair gruagaich,
 'S bheir mi mo chluas dhuit gu 'm faigh e bean.

If he is a kisser, he is shameless,
 If he is shy, he is a glutton;
 If he is amorous, he is a firebrand,
 If he is hospitable, he is a stupid fellow;
 If he is hard-working, some will say:
 "It's not worth it,
 That man is miserly, that is his fault."
 And if he fails at farming,
 He will have no crop, and he will be poor.

Who is the only man in the whole world
 Who is now sure to achieve success?
 And not one bit of what I am saying
 Is not condemned by him behind his back.
 The imaginative man, who is sensible and
 well-respected,
 He is dismissed as a man without worth,
 And can't you see for yourself, for many
 reasons,
 That stock is placed above intelligence and
 reputation.

There is yet a man, despite expectations,
 Who could marry without much difficulty;
 Even if he never had the sense to realize
 That the sun rose in the east.
 Make him a coarse person, who was
 born in a sock,
 Give him land, and a herd of cattle and a
 fine farmstead,
 Let him speak once to a girl's father,
 And I'll give you my ear he'll get a wife.

33. THE HERD AND THE WEAVER⁶⁵

Sèist (Chorus):

Tha 'n gille maith ruagh, 's e làidir, luath,
Cha 'n urr' e bhi suas 's nach d' fhuair e i;
Tha 'n gille maith ruagh, 's e làidir, luath,
Cha 'n urr' e bhith suas 's nach d' fhuair e i.

He's a good fellow, red-headed, strong, swift —
He cannot be uppermost since he didn't get her (2x).

[1] Fhleasgaich tha 'g imeachd an aghaidh na gaoith',
Gun dùil aig mo nighean thu thighinn a chaoidh,
Gu 'm b' fheàrr a bhi shuas leat am buaile Mhic-Aoidh,
Na fleasgach na fighe, le fichead bò laoigh.

O champion who is taking his course against the wind
Without any expectation on my *girl's* part that you will ever return;⁶⁶
It would be better to be up with you in the Chief of Mackay's cattlefold,
Than a champion weaver with twenty head of cattle.

[2] Cha 'n urradh mi dhearbhadh mar chearb air bhur clann,
Gur ann anns na càirdean thu mhèirl' air am fonn,
'N uair thèid gach mearachd a chronachadh thall,
Bidh fuigheall an innich 's an ime cho trom.

I cannot prove, as a defect in your children,
That thieving is inherent in kinsfolk.
When each error is reprimanded over yonder,
The amount of cloth and butter left over will be very substantial.

[3] Tha Seumas Mac-Cullach 'n a dhuine a bheil spèis,
Tha onoir o 'leanabas ga dhearbhadh 'n a bheus;
Tha fear anns a' bhaile-s' gun chal ach an sprèidh,
Tha 'n uidheam na goide nas faide no èis'.

James MacCulloch is a man highly esteemed —
Honour is attested in his conduct since childhood.
There's not one in this township without a worry except the cattle —
He has wider means than obstacles to pilfering.

⁶⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 386-87) and the translation is from Grimbale (1999: 198-99) except as noted. The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 177-78) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 48).

Morrison explains (1899: 386): "The herd, who was in love with the daughter of Lord Reay's dairymaid, was being supplanted by a local weaver." The weaver was a son of Rob Donn's friend James MacCulloch, and his disreputable wife, Barbara Miller, leading to the bard's speculation on the effect of this mixed heritage in the next generation. This dates the poem to roughly 1770, since the children of Rob Donn and James MacCulloch reached marriageable age at about the same time. See Grimbale (1999: 198).

⁶⁶ Grimbale (1999: 198) has "daughter" here, despite his suggestion that she was probably not one of Rob Donn's own daughters, so I have changed it to "girl."

[4] Comh'rl' ort a nighein, na suidhich do bhonn,
Air rud bhios 'n a pheanas 's 'na mhearachd dhuit thall,
That dùil agad achdaidh ri beartas 'n a steall,
Le fuighleach an innich, 's cha chinnich e ball.

Some advice to you, lassie — don't settle for something
That will be injurious to you and ultimately a mistake.
You confidently expect wealth in plenty
From what's left of the cloth, but it won't make a single garment.

[5] Na 'm faiceadh sibh na fleasgachain tapaidh a th' againn,
Ag iomart an casan mu seach air na maidean,
Le 'iteachan innich a' tilleadh 's a' glagartaich,
Cnap aig a' mhùidh, 's an t-slinn a' feadaireachd.

You should see the stalwart champion we have,
The feet operating the loom in turn
With the bobbins for the wool moving noisily backwards and forwards,
A boss on the outside and the reed whistling.

34. TO JOHN MACKAY MACDHOMHNUILL⁶⁷

[1] Ged fhuair thu a' mhàileid,
 Leis an d' thàinig O'Brian,
 Cha bu mhiste do nàmhuid,
 Ach 's mòr a b' fheàirde do Thriath;⁶⁸
 'N uair a thèid thu gu cràbhadh,
 'N dèigh cur t' fhàdoich air rian,
 Feuch an cuimhnich thu Teàrlach,
 Gus an tàinig an cliabh.

Although you got the suitcase
 With which O'Brian came,
 Your enemy was no worse off
 But much the better was the King.
 When you depart piously
 After putting your house in order,
 Try and remember the Prince
 Before the chest arrived.

[2] Thàinig ionmhas am fuadach,
 Thar a' chuan anns an luing,
 Ged tha pàirt do na fhuair e,
 Nach bi buaidh air a chaoidh,
 Cha 'n 'eil dha-s' ann ach bruadar,
 Dh' fhalbh am fuaim ud le gaoith,
 Mach o 'fhàgail am buaireadh,
 'S ann thuit a' bhuaidh le Mac-Aoidh.⁶⁹

A treasure was driven off course
 Over the ocean in the ship,
 Although he got part of it,
 It will never do him any good,
 For him it is only a dream,
 An echo gone with the wind,
 Except for leaving him in trouble,
 The benefit accrued to MacKay.

[3] 'S i mo bharail ort, Iain,
 Nach d' rinn thu eitheach ro mhòr,
 Ged a mhionnaich thu 'n Tunga,
 Nach do chunnt thu an t-òr.⁷⁰
 Seall air t-ais air na tìoman,
 'N robh teachd-an-tìr anns na clòir,
 'S feuch 'n do gleidh thu do 'n chrabhach,
 Na cheannuicheas Dabhach an Stòir.⁷¹

In my opinion, Iain,
 You committed only a little perjury,
 Although you swore in Tongue
 That you did not count the gold.
 Look back on the old times,
 Wasn't there a living in the staves?
 And try to save for the pious
 If you buy a dabach in Stoer.

⁶⁷ The text is from Morrison (1899: 224-25), with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 31-32, and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 38).

The poem concerns the local aftermath of a military encounter during the '45, when an armed vessel called the Hazard carrying 120 men and 13,000 pounds of French gold to the Jacobite army ran aground on the shoals in the Kyle of Tongue while attempting to flee the British naval vessel Sheerness. The local Hanoverian forces killed five men, took the rest prisoner, and recaptured most of the money, although one of the chests broke and another went missing. Lord Reay then put all the prisoners and the gold on the Sheerness and personally escorted them back to Edinburgh. Grimble (1999: 84-85). The subject of the song had gotten hold of some of the missing gold but was unable to hold his tongue and "boasted of the properties he would be able to buy, until his story reached the ears of the Chief, who summoned him to the Bighouse and compelled him to disgorge his loot" (Grimble 1999: 100). According to Rob Donn, however, the story was a bit more complicated.

⁶⁸ "Triath" can mean either "Lord, king, chief" etc. or "Hog, sow, boar". Dwelly (2001: 970). This implies a pun aimed at King George, and the remainder of the first stanza also suggests a degree of sympathy with the Prince's plight waiting in vain for the French gold to fund his campaign.

⁶⁹ I.e., Iain got in trouble with the Chief, and the Chief got credit with the government for returning the captured gold and prisoners.

⁷⁰ I.e., Iain returned some but not all the gold.

⁷¹ Iain was a cooper, and Rob Donn implies that he was better off making an honest living at his trade than buying land with stolen gold. A "dabhach" can be a vat or tub, or a unit of land sufficient to support 60 head of cattle. Dwelly (2001: 305).

[4] B' fhrasd Iain a riarachadh,
Ann an cliamhuin do 'n òigh,
Gus 'n do sgiùrsaig O'Brian air,
Làn cliabhain do dh' òr.
'S dearbh nach tugadh e 'n trath-s i
Do mhac tàileir tha beò;
'S cha dùraichdeadh 'màthair i,
Do mhac Nèill 'Ic Dho'uill òig.

[5] Ged a bhiodh sibh 'g a riaghladh,
Còrr is bliadhna do dh' aois,
Ged thèid a nighean ni 's ciallaich',

Thèid an cliabhan ni 's ils'.
Ach na 'n deònaichdeadh Iain
Màm à meadhon a' mhaois,
A toirt do dhuine, cia òg i,
Cha chaill i ròinnean d' a prìs.⁷²

It was easy to satisfy Iain
With a son-in-law for his daughter,
Until O'Brian afflicted him
With baskets full of gold.
He certainly would not give her before
To the son of the living tailor,
And her mother would not wish her
To the son of young Neil MacDonald.

Although you will be governing her
For many years at her age,
Although his daughter will do the most
prudent thing,
The baskets will do the lowest thing.
But what Iain will be prepared to give
To someone, however young,
Is a handful from the middle of the basket;
It has lost no part of its value.

⁷² I.e., Iain still plans to add some of the Prince's gold to his daughter's dowry.

35. A DROVER TO HIS SWEETHEART⁷³

[1] Ged is socrach mo leabaidh,
Cha 'n e 'n codal bh' air m' ùigh,
'S tric mo smuaintean a' gluasad,
Do 'n Taobh Tuath leis a' ghaoith;

'S mòr a b' annsa bhi mar-riut,

Ann an gleannan nan laogh,
Na bhi cunntadh nan Sàileach
Ann am pàirceachan Chraoibh.

[2] 'S mòr mo cheist air an nighean,
A gheibhteadh cridheil 's a' spòrs,
I gun fhiaras gun àrdan,
'S i gun bhàith' no gun phròis.
Ged a bhithinn air feallachd,
Is leth-cheud fear air mo thòir,
Gheibhinn dìon ann ad chùl-tigh,
'N uair bu dlùith' iad teachd orm.

[3] Bitheadh mi nis a' dol dachaidh,
Dh' fheuch am faic mi bean t-àilt',
Leamsa b' aoibhinn bhi 'm fagus
Do 'n euchdaig leadanaich bhàin;
B' e mo roghainn-s' gu fiadhach,
A' Chreag-riabhach 's an t-Sàil,
'S an àm an fheasgair 'g an slaodadh,
Le Càrn-a'-phiobair a mhàn.

[4] Bu toigh leam càradh na frìdhe,

Ged tha mi 'n Craoibh air bhòrd lom;
Eadar Badaidh-nan-caorach,
Agus aonach nan tom;
Is na h-Ursannan riabhach,
'N tùs na bliadhn' am bi chlann,

'S a bhi fo spìcean nan creagan,—
Bu shaor mo leabaidh dhomh ann.

Although my bed is comfortable,
I did not want to sleep;
Often my thoughts steal
On the wind towards the northern
Highlands.

How much better I should prefer to be
beside you
In the little glen of the calves,
Than to be counting the Sàl cattle
In the parks of Crieff.

*Great is my regard for the lass
Who is cheerful and playful,
Without perverseness or pride,
Without folly or flattery.
Even if I were betrayed
And fifty men pursuing me,
I would find shelter in your back room
When they were close behind me.*

*I am anxious to go home now,
To try and see a woman of your beauty,
What a joy to me to be near
The fair-haired charmer.
My choice is to be hunting the deer,
The grizzled rock and the Sàl pastures,
And in the evening to drag them
Down by the Piper's Stone.*

Dear to me is the environment of the
deer forests —
Although I am in Crieff on a bare board —
Between sheep thickets
And the hillocky upland;
And the multi-colored doorways
In the spring of the year where the children
are;
And beneath the peaks of the crags —
Freely I made my bed there.

⁷³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 145-47), and the translation is from Grimble (1999: 17-19) except as noted; I have translated verses 2 and 3. The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 32-34) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 62).

The poem was composed for Ann Morrison, Rob Donn's first love, who married another. See Grimble (1999: 21). As Rob Donn himself married about 1740, this song must date to the 1730s. Mackay (1829: xxi.).

[5] 'S mòr mo cheist air a' ghruagach
A tha 'n taobh shuas den a' Bhàrd,
Gheibht' gu h-anmoch 's a' bhuaile,

'N uair thigeadh 'm buar às gach àird;

'S mise fèin nach tug fuath dhuit,
Ge fada uait tha mi 'n trath-s',
'S tric a chaill mi mo shuain riut,
'S bu mhòr mo bhuannachd do phàg.

[6] Mhic-ic-Uilleim, o 'n uair sin
Fhuair thu uaigneas gu leòir,
'S thu mu thimchioll na gruagaich,
Is i 'na buanaiche fèidh;
Ged a gheibht' thu 'n a caidreamh,
Cha b' e t' eagal bhiodh orm,
On a dh' fhàs thu cho suairce,
'S nach cluinnteadh bruaillean do bhèoil.

[7] Fhleasgaich òig tha dol dachaigh,
'S tu nach acain mo chall,
Ged a dh' fhanainn 's a' bhaile-s',
Gu àm tarruing nan crann;
Naoghais òig Mhic 'Ic Alasdair,
Dèan-sa fanadh a-nall,
'S na cuir èis air ar comunn,
An dèigh gach gealladh bha ann.

Deep are my feelings for the lass
Who lives beyond the Bard,
Who is to be found of an evening in the
fold
When the cattle would return from every
airt.

Indeed I had no aversion for you,
Far distant though I am from you now.
Often I lost my sleep on account of you
And great was the reward of your kiss.

Son of William's son, since that time
You had plenty of privacy
And you close to the girl
While she was reaping hay.
Though you were caught in her company
I wouldn't worry about you,
Since you've become so polite,
That we wouldn't have heard a murmur
from your mouth.

Young stalwart on your way home,
Without any regret over my absence,
Even if I were to remain in this town
Until ploughing-time comes,
Young Angus son of Alasdair's son,
Keep your distance
And don't *interfere* with our association,⁷⁴
After all the promises between us.

⁷⁴ Grimble (p. 19) has "put any hindrance on" here, which is literal but awkward in English.

36. GLEN GOLLY⁷⁵

Sèist:

Gleanna-Gallaidh, Gleanna-Gallaidh,
Gleanna-Gallaidh nan craobh;
Cò a chì e nach mol e,
Gleanna-Gallaidh nan craobh.

[1] Ri faicinn crìoch àrdain,
'G a mo bhreugadh gu taobh,
'S ann a smuainich mi fanadh,
An Gleanna-Gallaidh nan craobh.

[2] Cha 'n àill leam bhur n-airgiod,
'S ri bhur n-arm cha bhi mì;
Cha diùlt mi bhur drama,
Ach ri tuilleadh cha bhith.

[3] Ged a gheibhinn gu m' àilghios,
Ceann-taile MhicAoidh,
'S mòr a b' annsa leam fanadh
An Gleanna-Gallaidh nan craobh.

[4] Fonn diasach, 's mòr a b' fhiach e,
Gu fiadhach, 's gu nì,
Aite sìobhalt ri doinionn,
Is nach criothnaich a' ghaoth.

Chorus:

Glen Golly, Glen Golly,
Glen Golly of the trees,
Who can see and not praise it,
Glen Golly of the trees.

Seeing regions of hauteur
Enticing me away,
I considered I'd stay there
In *Glen Golly* of the trees.

I don't care for your silver,
And your army's not for me,
I'll take your dram when you give it
But that's as far as I'll go.

Though I got all I wanted
Of Mackay's Kintail land,
I would much rather wait here
In *Glen Golly* of the trees.

Land of worth and of seed-corn,
Fit for hunting and for stock,
A place sheltered when storms come,
Not shaken up by wind.

⁷⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 314-15), and the translation from Derick S. Thomson, *Gaelic Poetry in the Eighteenth Century* (Aberdeen: 1993), p. 125 (although I have used the English spelling of "Glen Golly"). The text also appears in Grimble (1999: 2, 6, 171); Mackay (1829: 258) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 24). Grimble suggests (1999: 170-72) that it was composed in the late 1750s, after Rob Donn was removed from Strathmore for poaching, but the reference to the army in verse 2 suggests that it was composed even later, after he returned from the Sutherland Fencibles in 1763.

37. THE HARD TASK-MISTRESS⁷⁶

[1] Gu 'm bheil mis air mo phianadh,
Fad na bliadhn' anns an t-sabhull,
Tha gach rud a' tigh'nn teann orm,
'S tha 'n Teine-fionn fa mo chomhair.
'N uair a shìneas mi crann dhi,
Gun ghin ann gu mo chobhair,
Cha dèan Alastair puinc dhomh,
Le sìor chomh-stri a' Ghobhainn.

*What a torment I suffer
All year round in the byre,
Everything comes pressing on me,
And the White Fire is before me.
When I follow the plough for her,
Without anyone there to help me,
Alastair will not outdo me
By always quarreling with the smith.*

[2] 'N uair thèid am fodar thoirt dachaigh,
Is a steach chun na sprèidhe,
Gum bi ise 'g a shireadh,
Aig a' mhionaid 's an lèir dhi.
Ma bhios bad ann gun bhualadh,
Ann am buaireadh gu 'n leum i,
'S gu 'm bi sud ann mo choinneamh-s',
Mur dèan na bollachan èirigh.

When the fodder is taken home
And carried in for the cattle,
Herself will be examining it
At the first opportunity.
If there should be a sheaf unthreshed,
What a rage she will fly into,
And I will be for it
If the bolls do not increase in number.

[3] Ma thèid gràine dheth 'n diuchaidh,
Na bheireadh luchag do 'n chailbhe,

If a grain of it is destroyed,
Or if a small mouse takes it into a wattle-
wall,

Canaidh ise le as-caoin,
Gu 'm bheil rud as d' a cuid arbhair.
Bitheadh mi fèin is mo Chaiptein,
Ann an tarsunnachd shearbha,
'S ged nach fhaighinn ach fòrlach,
Bhithinn deònach air falbh uaith'.

She says angrily
That some of her corn is missing.
I and my captain will be
Bickering bitterly,
And though I only got a furlough,
I would gladly leave her.

[4] 'N uair a chunntas i suas dhomh,
Na h-uile suanach is teadhair,
'S mise dh' fheumas bhi cuimhneach
Mu na buill sin a ghleidheil.
'N uair a shìn i le ruathar,
Is mi shuas ann an cathair,
Ghabh mi aithreachas gàbhaidh,
'S ann a dh' fhàg mi a gleadhar.

When she makes an inventory
Of all the plough reins and tethers,
It's up to me to remember
To look after all those ropes.
When she launched an attack on me
As I was sitting in a chair,
I was filled with alarm
And I fled from her din.

[5] Ach na 'n tigeadh am foghair,
Cha bhiodh draghais na sùist orm,
Cha bhiodh cùram à ceannachd,

But if autumn would come
I would not have the drudgery of the flail;
There would be no concern about
commerce,

Ged nach biodh bonnach 's an dùthaich.

Even if there weren't a bannock in the
land.

⁷⁶ The text is from Morrison (1899: 237-39). The translation of verses 2 to 5 is from Grimble (1999: 11-13); the remainder is mine. The poem also appears in Mackay (1829: 143-45) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 36).

Grimble argues (1999: 26 n. 24) that this poem was aimed at Catherine MacKay, Catriona Nighean Uilleim, the wife of Iain mac Eachainn, composed when Rob Donn was living in their household as a servant and still young enough to be intimidated. As Mackay indicates (1829: xxi) that Rob Donn had ceased living with the family by 1737, the song must date to the late 1720s or early 1730s.

Cha bhiodh eadar a' Ghlais-bheinn,

Agus Eas-coire-Dhughail,
Ceum nach fhaodainn-s' a shireadh,
Maille ri Uilleam Mac-Hùistein.

[6] Guidheam soraidh dhuit, Uilleim,
Gu siubhal beinne do dhùthcha,
Bhithinn cinnteach à sealg,
'N uair bhiodh tu 'falbh air do ghlùinean,—
'N uair a chluinnteadh do theine,
Dh' fhaodtadh sgìonan a rùsgadh,—
Chaill an cròcach a sheasamh,
Ann an lasadh an fhùdair.

[7] Agus Iain Mac Naoghais,
Duine suidhichte, teann e,
Cha bu bhreugach m' a thimchioll,
Ged a thiomsaichinn rann da.
Duine foghainteach, sliosmhor,
'S deas thig crios agus lann da;
Sùil chinnteach ri gunna,
Do luchd-tuinidh nam beanntan.

[8] 'N uair thig deireadh na bliadhna,
B' e mo mhiann bhi 'n a chuideachd,
'S a bhi mar-ris na h-òganaich,
Ghabhadh spòrs dhe na h-iongaich,
'S iomadh eilid luath, lomsgarr,
A chuir do chuims-s'-sa o shiubhal,
Agus damh le do luaithe,
Chaidh 'n a chuachaibh le bruthach.

There would not be a step between the
Grey Hill

And the waterfall in Dougall's Corrie
That I wouldn't be at liberty to follow
With William, Hugh's son.

*I wish you success, William,
Traversing the mountain of your country;
I would be confident about your hunting
Even if you went on your knees.
When your shot was heard,
The knives would be skinning;
The antlered one lost his footing
In the flash of the powder.*

*And Iain Mac Naoghais,
A determined, rigid man,
There is no flattering him
By composing him a verse;
A brave, showy man who comes
Sporting belt and blade;
A sure eye with a gun
For the dweller of the mountains.*

*When the end of the year comes,
My desire was to be in your company,
And to be with the young fellows
Taking sport with the hoofed ones;
And many a quick, impetuous doe
Your aim stopped in her flight,
And a stag by your lead
Went downhill into his hollow.*

38. BONNIE JANET⁷⁷

Sèist:

Dheanainn sùgradh, sùgradh, sùgradh,
Dheanainn sùgradh ri do cheann dubh;
Dheanainn sùgradh, sùgradh, sùgradh,
Mire 's sùgradh ri do cheann dubh.

[1] Gum bheil Seònaid bòidheach, greannair,
Co nach dùraigeadh bhi 'n gleann leath',

Faileas fithich air a ceann-dubh,
Bràghad fionn a 's gille na 'n gruth.

[2] Faileas dubh am bàrr a gruaige,
Is dreach na h-ubhail air a gruidhean,
Mala chaol is i gun ghruaimean,
Gu 'n tarruing suas, gun deòin leath' bhi riu.

[3] Cha 'n 'eil suiridheach òg no càdaidh,
Eadar Huilleum is Carn-àgadh,
Nach bi ruith na h-ighne cheann-dubh,

Air feadh a' bhàird, 's cha 'n fhuirich i riu.

[4] Cuiribh fichead mu na bràighibh,
Cuiribh ceathrar air na h-àthaibh,
Sgaoilibh faoghaid 's a Choir-fhearna,
Sparraibh sàs i anns a' Bhlàr-dhubh.

[5] 'N saoil sibh fèin nach mòr an spòrs e,
'S ann tha chò-stri aig na h-òig-fhir,
An tarbh donn, 's an tarbh steòcach,
'S tric iad a' cròic ris an tarbh dhubh.

[6] Gum bheil Uilleam mòr cho sanntach,
'S nach 'eil feum bhi deanamh rann da,
'S o 'n a loisg iad oidhche Shamhn' e,

'S obair theann a chumail an cruth.

[7] 'N saoil sibh fèin nach mòr an sùsdal,
Bhi cur phrìneach' anns na gùintibh;
A dà làimh bhi anns na sgiùrdaibh,
'S a ceann rùisgte mhàn ris an t-sruth.

Chorus:

I would flirt with you, black-haired one.

Janet is lovely and charming,
Who wouldn't want to be in the glen with
her?

Image of the raven on her black hair,
Pale throat whiter than the curds.

A black shadow atop her hair
And the image of the apple on her cheeks,
Her narrow, unfrowning eyebrows
Lifted unintentionally.

There is not a young bachelor or a ghillie
Between Huilleum and Carn-àgadh
Who will not be pursuing the black-haired
girl

Throughout the countryside, and she will
not stay with them.

Put twenty around the braes,
Put four at the fords,
Spread the hunt in the Alder Corrie,
Drive her into custody in the Black Field.

Don't you think it would be great sport,
A contest among the young men,
The brown bull and the strutting bull
Are often raging against the black bull.

Big William is so lustful,
There is no use to make a verse for him,
And since they inflamed him on
Halloween,

It is tense work to keep his countenance.

Don't you think it would be a great stunt
To put pins in her gowns,
Both her hands in her skirts,
And only her bare head against the current.

⁷⁷ The text is from Morrison (1899: 160-62) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 34-36) and Gunn and MacFarlane twice (1899: 30 & 73). According to Morrison (1899: 160), Janet was a young lady who, "while receiving the attentions of a large number of young men, would not engage to marry any of them". It seems likely that this Janet was the woman Rob Donn later married (see verse 8), although none of his editors makes this suggestion. If so, this is an early poem (c. 1740).

[8] 'S mairg a chreideadh briathran beòil uait,

'N dèigh mar bhailich thu mac Sheòrais;
'N uair a shaoil leis a bhi pòsd' riut,
Thog thu do shròn an aghaidh an t-sruth.

[9] Ged nach 'eil annadsa do dh' uislinn,
Uiread 's tha 'n leannan Hùistein,
O 'n a thair mi thu 's a' chùl-tigh,
Ni mi sùgradh ri do cheann dubh.

[10] Bha mi uair air bhairil bargain,
'S tha mi nis air call na dh' earb mi;
Tha mi fèin a' gabhail farbhais,
Gur e dath dearg a 's feàrr na dath dubh.

It is a pity if the words of your mouth
are believed,

After the way you mistreated George's son,
When he expected to marry you,
You lifted your nose against the stream.

Although it is not in you to be as flirtatious
As Hugh's sweetheart,
Since I found you in the back room,
I will sport with your black head.

I once expected a marriage contract,
And I have now lost what I relied on;
For my part, I have concluded
That the color red is preferable to black.

39. TO THE POET'S DAUGHTERS⁷⁸

Sèist:

Hi ri choll o bhi h-iùraibh o,
Hi ri choll o bhi h-oirionn o,
Hi ri choll o bhi h-iùraibh o,
Thòmais, bi cuir t-iùlas⁷⁹ oirnn.

[1] Gur buidheach mi do Iseabail,
Ged dh' fhalbh i 'n dè gun fhios domh,

Thug Barb'ra Muilleir misneach dhi,
'S tha dùil 'am fhèin nach misd' i sud.

[2] Gu dearbh cha b' aobhar-caoinidh dhuit,
Ged chaidh thu dheanamh còbhrach ri,
Is ged chuir i anns na gabhraidh thu,
Ciod fhios nach toir i Tòmas duit?

[3] Tha m' inghinean-sa gun ionmhas ac',
Ri gnìomh na tuath 'g an ionnsachadh;
Ma tha do mhic-s' 'g an sanntachadh,
Thoir leat iad fhad 's a chunntar iad.

[4] Gach cupall mar bhios dìongmhalt' diubh,
Na caithear tìom an dìomhanas;
'S fèarr an cur do shìolachadh,
Na olc sam bith a ghnìomh'rachadh.

[5] Tha mis' a' faicinn fìor-mholtach,
Nam fleasgach ud a mhiannaich sibh;
Cha chuir luchd-ceàirde mì-thlachd oirbh,

Oir fighidh iad na shnìomhas sibh.

[6] Gur fortanach mo phàisteachain-s',
Bitheadh Seòras leis na spàlan aic',

Chorus:

[vocables]

Thomas, keep us informed.

How thankful I am to Isabel
Although she went away yesterday
without my knowing.
Barbara Miller gave her encouragement
And I hope she is none the worse for that.

*Indeed you have no reason to complain,
Although you were made to help her,
And although she sent you to the goats,
Who knows that she won't give you
Thomas?*

My lassies are without wealth,
Learning the tasks of farming.
If your sons are desirous of them,
Take them away for what they're worth.

*Each pair of them that is suitable,
Let them not waste time in idleness,
It is better to put them to breeding,
Than to any evil doings.*

I am seeing the true worth
Of *those* stalwarts who desired you.⁸⁰
Craftsmen will not be a source of vexation
to you,
For they will weave as much as you spin.

How fortunate my child is,
That George would have the shuttle for
her.

⁷⁸ The text is from Morrison (1899: 231-33). The translations of verses 1, 3, 5-6, and 11-13 are from Grimble (1999: 199-201) and the rest are mine. The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 138-40) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 57).

The song speculates on the marital prospects between Rob Donn's daughters (Isabel, Mary and Christine) and the sons (Thomas, George, James and William) of weaver James MacCulloch and his wife, Barbara Miller — none of which actually came to fruition. See Morrison (1899: 231) and Grimble (1999: 199). Since Isabel and Christine married in the early 1770s, the song must date to the 1760s. Grimble (1999: 198).

⁷⁹ This is a variant of "eòlas" ("knowledge") per Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 121).

⁸⁰ Grimble (1999: 200) has "these" for "ud"; this must be a typographical error.

Bitheadh crodh is eich air àiridh aic',

Bitheadh biadh maith prais is làgan aic'.

She would have cattle and horses at the
shielings;

She would have good food in the pot and
sowens.

[7] Bitheadh 'n fhuin' aig Beataidh Sutharlan,
'S bitheadh Barb'ra deanamh bruthais duinn;
'S bitheadh Seumas a' cur subhaich' oirnn',
Ri feala-dhà, mar dubhairt iad.

*The baking would be Betty Sutherland's
And Barbara would make brose for us,
And James would make us happy
With jokes, as they said.*

[8] Tha suiridheich cur ri briosgantaich,
Na th' eadar so is Ruspan diubh;
'S e 'm fear a thig gu piseach dhiubh,
'M fear a 's breagha siosta-còta.

*Wooers increase liveliness,
Those who are between here and Rispond,
And the man that most impresses us
Is the man in the best-looking doublet.*

[9] Ge tapaidh 'n suiridheach eileineach,
Le peitidh dubh na Canainich,
Gu 'm faigh i fear 's a' bhaile-sa,
Air bheil fhad 's a leud do bhealabhaid.

*Although handsome the wooer of the
islands,
With a dark Chanonry waistcoat,
She will get a man in the village,
Covered his length and width by velvet.*

[10] Cha 'n iognadh dhi bhi eagalach,
'N uair thig na suiridheich fagus di,
Seumas gliongach, cnag-shuileach,
Is Uilleam puinnseach, rag-bheartach.

*It is no wonder that she is fearful
When the wooers come near her,
Prattling, beady-eyed James,
And vindictive, obstinate William.*

[11] Cha toir mi stocan fada dhuit,
'S lughad an àireamh th' agam dhiubh,
Tha fortan gu bhi fagas duit,
Nuair gheibh thu Seòras Breabadair.

*I will not give you long stockings —
And small is the number I have of them.
A fortune will be yours
When you marry George the Weaver.*

[12] Ged chaillinn fèin an t-àl tha 'n sud,
Dearbh cha bu mhòr an càs leam e;
Na 'm biodh rian do chàch agam,
Gun gabhuinn fear do Mhàiri dhiubh.

*Though I myself should lose the brood that
is yonder,
Indeed it would be no great hardship to me.
If I could dispose of the others,
I would take one of them for Mary.*

[13] 'S fleasgaich tapaidh, seanagar, iad,
Is goididh iad am meanbh-chrodh dhi;
Na 'n tugainn òrd no teanachair di,
Gu 'n spadadh Màiri 'n eanchainn asd'.

*They are clever, sagacious champions
And they will steal the goats for her.
If I gave her a hammer or vice,
Mary would knock the brains out of
them.⁸¹*

⁸¹ A distinctly unromantic view of married life!

40. TO A YOUNG FRIEND⁸²

[1] Gur muladach mi 'n còmhnuidh,
Measg cuideachd 's mi m' ònair,
'S ged bheir mi greis air spòrs,
Bidh mi trom, trom, trom.

I am always sad in company
Since I am alone,
And while I engage in pastimes,
I am heavy of heart.

[2] Ach ged 'eil mi ro ghnìomhach,
Mu 'n nì mu 'm bheil mi miannach,
Gidheadh cha neil mo chrìochan
Dol leam, leam, leam.

Although I am very diligent
In seeking what I desire,
Nevertheless, my intentions
Are not bearing fruit.

[3] Gach seachduin dhomh mi-fhaoilteach,
Gach là a' deanamh saothrach,
'S gach oidhche luidhe m' aonar,
An rùm, rùm, rùm.

Every week feels joyless,
Every day tedious,
And every night I lie alone
In my room.

[4] Di-sathuirn bidh mi gruamach,
'S Di-dòmhnach bidh mi smuainteach,
'S air moch-a-thràth Di-luain,
Thèid mi null, null, null.

On Saturday I am gloomy,
On Sunday I am pensive,
And all day on Monday,
I go over.

[5] Ged ruigeas mi gu h-anmoch,
'S ged fhairich mi mo mheanmuinn,
Cha 'n fhaigh mi cainnt à Barabra,
Ach gann, gann, gann.

Although I arrive in the evening,
And I feel optimistic,
I cannot speak to Barbara
Except occasionally.

[6] Le iomadaidh luchd mì-ruin,
Cur bacadh air ar miannaibh,
'S 'g a folach-sa à m' fhianuis,
Gu teann, teann, teann.

With so many malicious people
Obstructing our wishes,
She is hidden from my sight
Very closely.

[7] Sin 'n uair labhair Bàbaidh,
"Tha roghainn diubh a b' fheàrr leam,
Na 'm faighinn sud gu m' àilghios,
'S an àm, àm, àm.

Then when Barb says,
"I have chosen the one I prefer,
If I could get my way
In the meantime.

[8] "O athair, na biodh fearg ort,
Tha 'n roghainn ud neo-chearbach,
Am fear a 's fhaid' bha 'g earbsadh,
Leig leam, leam, leam."

"Father, do not be angry,
That choice is sound,
The man I have trusted the longest,
Allow to me."

[9] Mo bharail air do rannsachd,
Is t' fhanadh anns an aon stagh,⁸³
Nach 'eil thu 'g a mo chunntadh,
Ach gann, gann, gann.

My opinion of your search,
And your stubbornness in the matter —
It counts for me
But little.

⁸² The text is from Morrison (1899: 296-97) with my translation: it also appears in Mackay (1829: 241-42) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 27).

This is one of many poems in which Rob Donn expresses his sympathy with the frustration of young lovers who want to marry but are being prevented by their parents (usually the girl's father).

⁸³ Literally, this means something like "remaining in the same stay (i.e. rope on a sailing vessel)".

[10] Do dh'innseadh dhuit nach fìor sud,
Thoir dhomhsa pears' an lìon-anart,
Is gleidh do chuid is t' ìomhaigh,
Gu àm, àm, àm.⁸⁴

You were misinformed;
Give me the appearance of a shroud,
And keep your portion and your
countenance
In the meantime [?].

⁸⁴ The last verse is obscure, especially the second line. My translation assumes that the father is speaking in verse 9 and the daughter in verse 10, and that they have reached a stand-off in their dispute about her choice of a husband.

41. TO HUGH MACKAY⁸⁵

[1] Hùistein, soraidh le t' iomradh,
O 'n chaidh t' iomchair air fàradh;
Hùistein òig sin mhic Reabairt,
Tha do leabaidh 's na clàraibh.
Anns an dearbh bhairil againn,
Cha b' ann abuich a bha thu;
Ach 's e breitheamh nan uile,
Ghlac 's a' chumadh a b' fheàrr thu.

[2] Co an nàbaidh no 'n caraid,
A chuir aithn' air do bheusaibh,
Do nach b' aobhar gu osnaich,
A luaith'd 's a choisinn an t-eug thu.
Fhir bha gealltuinn le d' chomas,
Bhi do 'n fholluiseachd feumail;
Bha thu treun ann am pearsa,
'S ni bu treis' ann an reuson.

[3] A bhi 'g innseadh do chliù-sa,
Thug sud dùbhlàn do m' gheurad,
Lughad àireamh do laithean,
Agus feabhas do bheusan.
Fhuair thu comain o 'n Ard-Rìgh,
Air nach d' ràinig na ceudan,
O 'n là dh'fheuch iad am brod⁸⁶ duit,
Cha robh stad ann ad fhoghlum.

[4] O 'n uair 's an d' thàinig am fleasgach,
Gu àm cleachdaidh a thuigse,
Cha do shuidh e mu bhòrd,
Nach tugadh 'fhoghlum gu meas e.

Bha e 'n a ghaisgeach neo-spòrsail,
Is 'n a phòitear neo-mhisgeach,
Ciod a' chuideachd a chunntar,

As nach ionndrain a nis e.

Hugh, farewell to your memory,
Since your bier has departed;
Young Hugh son of Robert,
Your bed is the coffin.
In our sincere opinion,
You were not yet mature,
But it is the judge of all
Who seized you in comeliest form.

What neighbor or relation
Who recognizes your virtues
Will not have reason to sigh
At the swiftness of your death.
Man who promised by your abilities
To be so manifestly useful;
You were strong in person
And even stronger in reason.

Recounting your reputation
Challenges my conciseness;
Short the number of your days,
And excellent your virtues.
You received communion from the Lord,
Which hundreds did not achieve;
Since the day you began the alphabet,
Your education did not cease.

Since the young man reached
The age to use his understanding,
He did not sit at a table
Where his learning did not bring him
respect.
He was a humble hero,
A moderate drinker,
Who could be counted among his
companions
That does not miss him now?

⁸⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 11-13) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 1-3) and in Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 52).

This is Rob Donn's earliest datable elegy, composed in 1746 to honor a son of tacksman Robert MacKay, the Tutor of Farr, who died young from an unspecified illness. See Morrison (1899: 11); Grimble (1999: 8).

⁸⁶ Morrison notes (1899: 12 n. 1) that *Am Brod* was a horn-book used to teach school-children their ABC's.

[5] Fhir nach d'fhuair sinn ach ias'd dhiot,
Ann am bliadhnachaibh goirid;
Fhir a thiorcadh na dh' earbadh,

'S fhir a dhearbadh na theireadh.
Fhir bu mheasa do d' nàmhaid,
'S fhir a b' fheàrr do charaid,
Tha do chliùth-sa cho làidir,
'S nach do bhàsaich e mar riut.

[6] 'S beag a dh' fhoghnadh do chainnt
dhomh,

Gu do rann dheanamh soilleir,⁸⁷
Oir cha d' rugadh o 'n uair sin,
Duin' a b' uaisle na chailleadh.
Bha thu mach air an tritheamh,
O Mhac Aoidh ri do shloinneadh,
'S o thaobh eile do dhaoine,
Do fhuil dhèireich Mhic Coinnich.

[7] Gabham leithsgeul an cumha,
A lion 's a liuth' rinn thu fhàgail,
Ged a bhiodh tu 'n an caidreamh,
Uin' a b' fhaide na bha thu;
'S mairg a chunnaic do leithid,
Air cho beag laithean 's a dh'fhàg thu,
Gun do mhac no do nighean
Gu bhi 'n suidh' air do làrach.

[8] Buinidh dhuinne bhi umhail,
Ri bhi cumhadh na chaill sinn,
Agus labhairt gu tairis
Air a' ghalair a chraidh sinn;
Gun bhi casaid gun reuson,
Air an eug a thug uainn thu;
'S an àm taghaidh nan daoine,
Co nach sìneadh mar rinn e.

[9] 'S goirt an naigheachd so thàinig,
Chum na dh'fhàg thu 's an dùthaich;
Air mìos deiridh a' gheamraidh,
Cha bu ghann duinn ar ciùrradh;
'S iomadh comharradh cianail
Bh' air a bhliadhn' an d' fhalbh Hùistean,
Air dà fhichead 's a sèa dhiu,
Thar seach ceud agus sùsdan.

Man who was only loaned to us
For a few short years;
Man who delivered what was entrusted to
him,
Man who did what he promised.
Man well-respected by your enemy,
Man most generous to a friend,
Your reputation is so strong
That it did not die with you.

Only a little discussion with me

Sufficed to make your verse clear,
Because no better man has since been born
Than the one who was lost.
You were descended in the third generation
From the first Lord Reay,⁸⁸
And on the other side your people
Were from solid MacKenzie blood.

Let me be excused for the lament
That filled so many on your departure,
That you could not be in their company
Longer than you were.
Woeful are those who saw you,
How few days were left to you,
Without a son or a daughter
To be seated in your place.

It is fitting for us to be humble
In mourning what we lost,
And to speak gently
Of the illness that tormented us;
Without accusing unreasonably
The death that took you from us;
In the time of reckoning,
Who will not be stretched out as he was?

And painful the news that came here,
To those you left behind;
In the last month of the winter,
Our losses were not few;
And the year that Hugh departed
Left many a sorrowful mark —
1746.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ This is one of several poems where Rob Donn mentions that he tutors others in composing verse.

⁸⁸ See Grimble (1999: 8).

⁸⁹ The most interesting aspect of this poem is the oblique reference in the final verse to Culloden and its aftermath. Presumably it was clear enough to be understood by his listeners, but not inflammatory enough to get him in renewed trouble with the Hanoverian clan hierarchy, which included the Tutor of Farr himself, a leading member of one of the cadet branches of the MacKays. Grimble (1999: 8).

42. JOHN MACLEOD⁹⁰

Sèist:

Agus a sheann duine,
'S fhada leam a tha thu agam;
Agus a sheann duine,
'S fhada leam tha thu beò!

[1] Iain 'Ic Leoid, laogh mo chridhe,
B' fheàrr leam èin gu 'm biodh tu tighinn,
Gu 'n rachadh Alastair do dh' Uibhist,
'S gu 'm biodh Naoghas fuaidh na bhòrd.⁹¹

[2] Ged bhiodh fiachan, 's ged bhiodh
reasd orm
'S ged nach pàighinn leth nan clachan,⁹²
Chionn 's gu 'n cluinninn e thigh'nn dachaidh,
Bheirinn lach do dh' Iain MacLeòid.

[3] Dheanainn òl, 's dheanainn caithris,
Chionn gu 'm faicinn Iain mar-riut,
Alastair an cùl an doruis,
'S e na dhonas bochd fuaidh sglèo.

[4] Gur i Eòraidh bha gun athadh,
Dhol a chumail tigh le h-athair,
Fhuair i Alastair gu brath air,
'N uair a chaith i Iain MacLeoid.

[5] Ach a dhearbhadh gun robh teas oirr,
Cha robh Sagart, 's cha robh Parson,
Nach d' ràinig i air a casan,
Eadar Crespull 's cul Tigh-Leoid.

Chorus:

Old man, I never imagined
That you would be with me;
And old man, I never imagined
That you would be alive!

John MacLeod, calf of my heart,
I wish that you would come back,
That Alastair would go to Uist,
And that Angus were in the grave.

Even if there were debts and I was
arrested,
And I could not pay half the dues,
If I could hear him coming home,
I would laugh joyfully for John MacLeod.

I would prepare drink and keep watch,
Until I saw John with you,
Alastair behind the door,
And the poor devil amazed.

It is Eòraidh that was shameless,
Going to keep her father's house,
She got Alastair forever,
When she wore out John MacLeod.

But to prove that she was in a fever,
There was not a priest or a parson
That she did not reach on her feet
Between Crespull and the back of
MacLeod's house.

⁹⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 404-05) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 246-47) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 64).

John MacLeod, the subject of this song, "had left his wife and was thought to be dead. His wife having married, it became the talk of the country that John was returning to his home." Morrison (1899: 404). Unfortunately, we have no further information about how this delicate situation was handled by either church or state.

⁹¹ The cast of characters is somewhat confusing. Eòraidh must be the unwitting bigamist who wishes Angus dead and Alastair in Uist. The fourth verse seems to imply that Alastair was her second husband, with whom she was now stuck; perhaps Angus was her father.

⁹² The dues were butter and cheese owed to Lord Reay. Morrison (1899: 404).

43. TO LORD REAY'S FACTOR⁹³

Sèist:

'S cian fada, 's cian fada,
'S cian fada gu leòir,
O'n a bha mi air acair,
'S mi 'g iarraidh fasgaidh fo sgòid;
Nis ma 's èiginn dhomh teicheadh,
'S nach 'eil leithsgeul a' m' chòir,
C'uime 'n caomhnainn bhur sgobadh,
'N diugh 's mi togail nan seòl.

[1] Iain 'Ic Naoghais 'Ic Uilleim
A dhòirt iomadaidh fola,
C' uime 'm biodh tu ga 'm aicheadh,
An diugh aig beul-thaobh a' bharraidh;
'S e mo bharrail gu 'm b' fheàrr dhuit,
Sineadh an argumaid eile,
Oir bha thu 'g am marbhadh,
O 'n la dh' fhalbhadh tu 'm baile.

[2] Ach ma 's obair mi-dhiadhaidh
Bhi marbhadh fhiadh anns na gleannaibh,
'S iomadh laoch dhe do theaghlach
A thuit gu trom anns a' mhealladh;
Bu daoine fuilteach o 'n d' fhàs thu,

'S cha b' fheàrr càirdean do leannain;

'S ma 's peacadh sud tha gun mhaitheanas,
Bithidh tus gun mhaitheanas damainte.

Chorus:

It is a long time, a long time,
A tediously long time,
Since I was at anchor
And seeking shelter beneath the sail.
Now if I am forced to flee
And no excuse will avail me,
*Why should I refrain from stinging you
Today as I hoist the sails?*⁹⁴

John son of Angus son of William,
Who spilt plenty of blood,
Why are you persecuting me
This day in front of the bar?
In my opinion it would be better for you
To follow the other argument,
For you were killing them
Since the day you could get around.

But if it be ungodly work
To kill the deer in the glens,
Many a worthy member of your family
Has fallen into grievous error.
You are descended from men who shed
blood
And the kinsfolk of your spouse are no
better,
And if that be an unforgivable sin,
You yourself will be condemned without
forgiveness.

⁹³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 141-44), and the translation is from Grimble (1999: 161-65, 172) except as noted. The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 30-32) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 18-19).

This song describes an occasion on which Rob Donn, an inveterate poacher, was formally prosecuted for illegal hunting and threatened with removal from Strathmore to the coast. However, his editors disagree on when the threat was carried out. Mackay (1829: 30) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 18) both say that Rob Donn composed the poem at the time he was evicted from his land for killing deer. Morrison (1899: 141) says that he only received a warning at that time, and Grimble (1999: 170) argues that he was not actually removed until at least a decade later, after Iain mac Eachainn's death in 1757. Thus Grimble (1999: 161-63) dates the poem to the period between 1738 and 1748, when Iain mac Eachainn was still alive to protect his protegee, Hugh of Bighouse was cast as Dr. Boerhaave, and the third Lord Reay was cast as King Ahab. The subject of the poem, John MacKay son of Angus son of William, was once a noted poacher but was now the bailiff (Morrison 1899: 141 n.1). William Mackay of Melness, a great-grandson of the first Lord Reay, is accused of complicity in the crime (Grimble 1999: 7, 164). Donald Sutherland, Dòmhnall Thapaiddh, was the catechist in Tongue and father of Iain Tapaiddh, the schoolmaster at Tongue and the favorite subject of Rob Donn's satires (Grimble 1999: 165).

⁹⁴ Grimble (1999: 161) has "Why should I spare to sting you this day/As I hoist the sails" which seems more like Gaelic than English.

[3] Gum bheil tinneas na bliadhna,
Dol ni 's piantaich 's ni 's cràiteich',
Ach mu ni sinn foighidinn chiallach,
Thig an riaghladh ni 's feàrr oirnn;

Thig an cumant gu socair,
'N uair theid stopadh air Ahab,
'S bidh sinn a' feuchainn ar lotan,
Air beul-thaobh Dhochtair Bohàbhairn.

[4] Ach a Dhochtair Bohàbhairn,
Thug mi dàn duit nach tuig iad;

O 'n tha mis' air bheag airgid,
Buinidh oircheas do t' obair;

Tha mo dhùil ri do phlàstair,
'N uair tha càch 'g a mo bhioradh,
'S mur a 's fhaid' thu 'g a chàradh,
'S ann a 's feàrr e 'n uair thig e.

[5] Iain Mhic Eachainn 'Ic-Iain,
'S tu thiorc mi 'm meadhon mo dhragha,

Bheireadh teist gu mo chliù orm,
Air mo chùlaobh 's ri m' aghaidh;
Le do chomhairlean rùnach,
Bheireadh dùbhlàn luchd-lagha,
Bha do chuid 'g a mo chobhair,
'S cha b' i do chomhairl' bu lugha.

[6] Uilleam Mheilinis, thair leam
Nach seas càirdeas air aon-chois,
'S maith a chumadh tu làmh rium,
Gus 'n do thàir thu mi 'm plundar;
'N uair a chunnaic thu 'n sàs mi,
Fuidh àrd smachd an Tigh Thunga,
Dh' fhàs thu tolla-chluasach bodhar,
'S cha do chobhair thu 'n cunntair.

This year's distemper
Is becoming more painful and grievous
But if we exercise a sensible restraint
We will get an improvement in the
administration.

The settlement will come quietly
When Ahab is restrained,⁹⁵
And we shall be displaying our wounds
In the presence of Dr. Boerhaave.⁹⁶

But, Doctor Boerhaave,
I made a poem for you that they do not
understand.

Since I have precious little money,
Your work must be tempered with
kindness.

I have expectations from your plaster,
When others are stinging me,
And the longer the cure takes
The better it will be.

Iain mac Eachainn 'ic Iain,
You rescued me in the middle of my
troubles,

You testified to my character
Behind my back and before my face.
With your trusty counsel
You would challenge the lawyers,
Your substance came to my aid,
And your advice was no less.

William of Melness, it seems to me
That friendship does not stand on one foot.
You kept well in with me
Until you got me the plunder.
When you saw me ensnared
Under the high authority of Tongue House,
You grew hard of hearing
And you did not help the examiner.

⁹⁵ Ahab was a king of Israel, married to Jezebel, rebuked by the prophet Elijah for worshipping Baal. I Kings 16-22.

⁹⁶ Dr. Herman Boerhaave (1668-1738) was an eminent Dutch physician whose name became familiar in Strathnaver via local military recruits returning from service in Holland. See 'Herman Boerhaave,' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, <<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Herman-Boerhaave>> [accessed 21 June 2015]; Grimble (1999: 162-63).

[7] Ma chaidh mo chàirdeas am fuairead,
Ri daoine uailse na dùthch-sa,
'S èigin nis dol a dh' iarraidh,
Rathad fiar nach robh dùil a'm;
Far 'm bheil seann Dòmhnall Thapaigh,
Leughadh charaids' an Sgùdaig,
Dh' fheuch am prèisg e 's na geataibh-s',
A' chùigeamh athchiung' do 'n ùrnaigh[.]⁹⁷

Since my friendship has grown cold
Toward the gentry of this country,
It is necessary for me now to seek
The crooked road I didn't wish for
To where clever old Donald is,
Reading the catechism in Sgudaig,
To see whether he will preach in these
quarters
The fifth petition of the Lord's prayer.

⁹⁷ That is: "Agus maith dhuinn ur ciont mur mhaitheas sinn dhoibhs' a chiontaicheas ar n' aghaidh"
(Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us). Morrison (1899: 144 n. 3).

44. ISABEL MACKAY⁹⁸

ÙRLAR (A)

Is'bal Nic-Aoidh aig a' chrodh laoigh,
Is'bal Nic-Aoidh, 's i 'n a h-aonar;
Is'bal Nic-Aoidh aig a' chrodh laoigh,
Is'bal Nic-Aoidh, 's i 'n a h-aonar;

Isabel MacKay with the calving cows,
Isabel MacKay all alone;
Isabel MacKay with the calving cows,
Isabel MacKay all alone;

Is'bal Nic-Aoidh aig a' chrodh laoigh,
Is'bal Nic-Aoidh, 's i 'n a h-aonar;
Seall sibh Nic-Aoidh aig a' chrodh laoigh,

Isabel MacKay with the calving cows,
Isabel MacKay all alone;
Look at MacKay's daughter with the
calving cows,

Am bonnaibh na frìdh, 's i 'n a h-aonar.

At the foot of the deer forest all alone.

SIUBHAL (B)

Mhuire 's a Rìgh! A dhuine gun mhnaoi,
Ma thig thu a chaoidh, 's i so do thìom,
Nach faic thu Nic-Aoidh aig a' chrodh laoigh,

Mary and God! Man without a wife,
If you ever come, this is your time,
Don't you see MacKay's daughter with
the calving cows,

Am bonnaibh na frìdh [repeat ad lib.]
'S i 'n a h-aonar.

At the foot of the deer forest,
And she all alone.

Mhuire 's a Rìgh! A dhuine gun mhnaoi,
Ma thig thu a chaoidh, 's i so do thìom,
Nach faic thu Nic-Aoidh aig a' chrodh laoigh,

Mary and God! Man without a wife,
If you ever come, this is your time,
Don't you see MacKay's daughter with
the calving cows,

Am bonnaibh na frìdh [repeat ad lib.]
'S i 'n a h-aonar.

At the foot of the deer forest,
And she all alone.

Comharradh dhomh nach 'eil gu math,
Air fleasgaich amh bhi feadh a so,
'N uair tha bean-tigh air Riothan nan Damh,

To me, it reflects poorly
On the young bachelors of this vicinity
When a young homemaker is out on Riothan
nan Damh

Muigh aig a' chrodh [repeat ad lib.]
Gun duine mar-rithe.

With the cattle
But without a husband.

Comharradh dhomh nach 'eil gu math,
Air fleasgaich amh bhi feadh a so,
'N uair tha bean-tigh air Riothan nan Damh,

For me, it reflects poorly
On the young bachelors of this vicinity
When a young homemaker is out on Riothan
nan Damh

Muigh aig a' chrodh [repeat ad lib.]
Gun duine mar-rithe.

With the cattle
But without a husband.

⁹⁸ This version of the text is from Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 88-89) with my translation. I have typed out all the repeats that correspond to the music in Gunn and MacFarlane, except the single lines marked "repeat ad lib." and the "ÙRLAR", which is repeated in full where shown. This highly repetitive structure is based on the pìobaireachd form. The versions in Mackay (1829: 72-74) and Morrison (1899: 181-83) contain no music and abbreviate the repeats, so they provide much less information about the actual structure of the song. Since Isabel married in 1747 (Grimble 1999: 97-98), the song must date to the mid-1740s.

ÙRLAR (A)

SIUBHAL (B)

Seall sibh bean-tigh air Riothan nan Damh

A muigh aig a' chrodh, gun duine mar-rithe;
Seall sibh bean-tigh air Riothan nan Damh
A muigh aig a' chrodh [repeat ad lib.]
'S i 'n a h-aonar.

Duine 'sam bith th' air son a' chluich,
De chinneadh math, le meud a chruidh,
Deanadh e ruith do Riothan nan Damh,
Gheobh e bean-tigh [repeat ad lib.]
'S cuireadh e rithe.

Duine 'sam bith th' air son a' chluich,
De chinneadh math, le meud a chruidh,
Deanadh e ruith do Riothan nan Damh,
Gheobh e bean-tigh [repeat ad lib.]
'S i 'n a h-aonar.

ÙRLAR (A)

SIUBHAL (C)

Nach faic sibh an aibseig
Tha coslach ri glacadh,
Am bliadhna 'g a cleachdadh
Ri crodh agus eachaibh [repeat ad lib.]
Air achadh 'n a h-aonar.

Nach faic sibh an aibseig
Tha coslach ri glacadh,
Am bliadhna 'g a cleachdadh
Ri crodh agus eachaibh [repeat ad lib.]
Air achadh 'n a h-aonar.

'S nèonach am fasan
Do dhaoineibh tha dh'easbhuidh
Nan nithean bu taitnich'
Dhaibh fèin a bhi aca,
Bhi fulang a faicinn
Am bliadhna 'g a cleachdadh
Ri crodh agus eachaibh [repeat ad lib.]
Air achadh, 's i 'n a h-aonar.

'S nèonach am fasan
Do dhaoineibh tha dh'easbhuidh
Nan nithean bu taitnich'
Dhaibh fèin a bhi aca,

Look at the young homemaker on Riothan
nan Damh

Out with the cattle without a husband;
Look at the woman on Riothan nan Damh
Out with the cattle
And she all alone.

Any man who is in the game,
Of good family, with a portion of cattle,
Let him run to Riothan nan Damh,
He will get a wife
And make her happy.

Any man who is in the game,
Of good family, with a portion of cattle,
Let him run to Riothan nan Damh,
He will get a wife
And she all alone.

Don't you see the little sprite,
She is likely to be caught
This year at her usual occupation
With the cattle and the horses
On the field all alone.

Don't you see the little sprite,
She is likely to be caught
This year at her usual occupation
With the cattle and the horses
On the field all alone.

Strange is the tendency
Of men who are lacking
The most pleasant things
For themselves,
To endure seeing her
This year at her occupation
With cattle and horses
On the field all alone.

Strange is the tendency
Of men who are lacking
The most pleasant things
For themselves,

Bhi fulang a faicinn
 Am bliadhna 'g a cleachdadh
 Ri crodh agus eachaibh [**repeat ad lib.**]
 Air achadh, 's i 'n a h-aonar.

To endure seeing her
 This year at her occupation
 With cattle and horses
 On the field all alone.

ÙRLAR (A)

CRUNLUATH (D)

Seall sibh air a' chionnaidheachd
 An iomallaibh nam mullaichean;
 Am bliadhna, 's i gu muladach [**repeat ad lib.**]
 Na h-uile là 'n a h-aonar.

Look at the scene,
 At the edge of the hills;
 This year, she is sad,
 Every day alone.

Seall sibh air a' chionnaidheachd
 An iomallaibh nam mullaichean;
 Am bliadhna, 's i gu muladach [**repeat ad lib.**]
 Na h-uile là 'n a h-aonar.

Look at the scene,
 At the edge of the hills;
 This year, she is sad,
 Every day alone.

CRUNLUATH (E)

Innsidh mis' do dh'iomadh fear
 'S an rannaidheachd 'n uair chluinnear i,
 Gu bheil i air a cumail
 As na h-uile àite follaiseach,
 Le ballanaibh is cuinneagaibh
 An iomallaibh nam mullaichean
 Am bliadhna, 's i gu muladach [**repeat ad lib.**]
 Na h-uile là 'n a h-aonar.

I will say to any man
 When this verse is heard,
 That she has been kept
 Out of every public place,
 With buckets and milk-pails
 On the edge of the hills
 This year, she is sad,
 Every day alone.

Innsidh mis' do dh'iomadh fear
 'S an rannaidheachd 'n uair chluinnear i,
 Gu bheil i air a cumail
 As na h-uile àite follaiseach,
 Le ballanaibh is cuinneagaibh
 An iomallaibh nam mullaichean
 Am bliadhna, 's i gu muladach [**repeat ad lib.**]
 Na h-uile là 'n a h-aonar.

I will say to any man
 When this verse is heard,
 That she has been kept
 Out of every public place,
 With buckets and milk-pails
 On the edge of the hills
 This year, she is sad,
 Every day alone.

ÙRLAR (A)

45. THE BLACK CASSOCKS⁹⁹

[1] Làmh' Dhè leinne, dhaoine,
C' uime chaochail sibh fasan,
'S nach 'eil agaibh do shaorsa,
Fiùgh an aodaich a chleachd sibh;
'S i mo bharail mu 'n deigh,
Tha 'n aghaidh fhèileadh is osan,
Gu 'm bheil caraid aig Teàrlach,
Ann am *Parlamaind* Shasuinn.

May God help us, people;
Why this change to your fashion?
You have lost all your freedom,
Even the clothes you were wearing.
I think this proclamation
Against the kilt and the hose
Shows that Charles has an ally
In the Parliament of England.

[2] Faire, faire! Rìgh Deòrsa,
'N ann spòrs' air do dhìlsean,
Deanamh achdaichean ùra,
Gu bhi dùblachadh 'n daorsa,
Ach oir 's balaich gun uails' iad,
'S feàrr am bualadh no 'n caomhnadh,
'S bidh ni 's lugha 'g ad fheitheamh,
'N uair thig a leithid a rìs òirt.

Fie, fie, King George,
Are you mocking the faithful,
Making new laws
To double their bondage?
Since these fellows are low-born,
Better to strike than to spare them,
And you'll have fewer opponents
The next time there's a Rising.

[3] Ma gheibh do nàmhaid 's do charaid
An aon pheanas an Albainn,
'S iad a dh' èirich 'n ad aghaidh,
Rinn an roghainn a b' fhearra dhiubh.
Oir tha caraid maith cùil ac',
A rinn taobh ris na dh' earb ris,
'S a' chuid nach d' imich do 'n Fhrainc leis,

If your enemy and your friend
Receive the same punishment in Scotland,
Those who rose against you
Made the better choice;
For they have a good friend behind them,
Who stood by those who trusted him,
And those who didn't go to France with
him

Fhuair iad *pension* 'n uair dh' fhalbh e.

Received pensions when he left.

[4] Cha robh oifigeach Gàidhealach
Eadar *Sergean* us *Còirneil*,
Nach do chaill a *chomission*,
'N uair chaidh 'm briseadh le fòirneart.
A' mheud 's a fhuair sibh an uraidh,
Ged bu diombuan r' a òl e,
Bheir sibh 'm bliadhn' air ath-philleadh,
Airson uinneagan *leòsain*.

There was no Highland officer
Between a sergeant *and* a colonel
Who *did not lose* his commission
On their wrongful disbanding.
The pay you received last year —
Although it went quickly in drink —
You will return this year
Through the window tax.

⁹⁹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 82-86); it also appears in full in Mackay (1829: 287-91), Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 9-10), and John Lorne Campbell, *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1933), pp. 236-45. The translation is taken (with some modifications) from Thomson (1993), pp. 112-15 (verses 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 11 & 14), Grimble (1999), pp. 90-95 (verses 3, 12, 13, 15 & 16), and Campbell (1933), pp. 239-43 (verses 4, 5, 6, & 10). Changes from the specified sources are in italics and represent my own modifications designed to achieve an English translation that is uniform in style for all sixteen verses.

This is probably Rob Donn's most incendiary piece of Jacobite verse, composed in 1748 in protest against the Disclotting Act of 1747, which penalized loyalist clans like the MacKays as well as those who had supported the Stewarts. See Thomson (1993: 111). The original poem contained only the first 14 verses, and Rob Donn was summoned to Tongue House to account for his treasonous utterance. On the way, he rapidly composed the last two verses, creating sufficient doubt in the minds of his accusers that he was released without further repercussions. See Grimble (1999: 89-95).

[5] Cha robh bhliadhna na taic so,
Neach a sheasadh mar sgoileir,
Gun *chomission* Rìgh Bhreatainn,
Gu bhi 'na Chaiptein air onoir.
Chaidh na ficheadan as diubh,
Nach do leasaich sud *dolar*,
Ach an sgiùrsaigeadh dhachaidh,
Mar chù a dh' easbhuidh a *choilear*.

[6] Ach ma dh' aontaich sibh rìreadh,
Ri bhur sìor dhol am mugha,
Ged a bha sibh cho rìoghail,
Chaidh bhur cìsean am modhad.
'S maith an airidh gu 'm faicteadh
Dream cho tais ribh a' cumhadh,
Bhi tilgeadh dhibh bhur cuid bhreacan,
'S a' gabhail chasagan dubha.

[7] Och, mo thruaighe sin, Albainn!
'S tur a dhearbh sibh bhur reuson,
Gur i 'n roinn bh' ann ur n-inntinn,
'N rud a mhill air gach gleus sibh.
Leugh an *Gòbharmad* sannt
Anns gach neach a thionndaidh riuth
fèin dhibh,
'S thug iad baoide do bhur gionaich,
Gu 'r cur ann am mionach a chèile.

[8] Ghlaic na Sasunnaich fàth oirbh,
Gus bhur fàgail ni 's laige,
Chum 's nach bitheadh 'g ur cunntadh,
'N ur luchd-comh-strì ni b' fhaide.
Ach 'n uair bhios sibh a dh' easbhuidh
Bhur lainn, 's bhur n-acfhuinn sraide,
Gheibh sibh *sèarsaigeadh* mionaich,
Is bidh bhur peanas ni 's graide.

[9] Tha mi faicinn bhur truaighe,
Mar ni nach cualas a shamhuil,
A' chuid a 's feàrr de bhur seabh'gan,
Bhi air slabhruidh aig clamhan,
Ach ma tha sibh 'n ar leòmhann,
Pillibh 'n dòghruinn s' 'n a teamhair,
'S deanaibh ur deudach a thrusadh,
Mu 'n tèid bhur busan a cheangal.

[10] 'N uair thig bagradh an nàmhaid,
Gus an àit anns do phill e,
'S ann bu mhaith leam, a chàirdean,
Sibh bhi 'n àireamh na buidhne,

Only a year ago
No one was considered a scholar,
Without a King's commission
To be a captain with honor.
They were dismissed in scores
Not the richer by a dollar,
But chased off to their homes
Like a dog with no collar.

But if you genuinely agree
To your continued destruction,
Now matter how royalist you were,
Your taxes went up anyway.
It is certainly worth it to see
The shape of a race so faint-hearted
That you would throw away your plaids
And put on long dark coats.

I am saddened by Scotland!
You've shown clearly your motives:
The way your mind was divided
Has destroyed all your ventures.
The Government read the greed
In everyone who turned to it,

And gave your avarice bait
Till you tore at each other.

Englishmen took the chance
Of weakening you further
Lest you still might be counted
Among those who opposed them.
But when you have surrendered
Your swords and your firearms,
You'll get a charge in your belly,
And a penance that's swifter.

Your misery, I see,
Is quite unprecedented,
When the best of your hawks
Are now chained to a buzzard.
But if you are a lion
Retaliate in due season,
And get your teeth into action
Before your mouths are muzzled.

When the threat of the enemy
Comes again where it turned back,
It would please me, friends,
For you to be among the company,

D' am biodh spiorad cho Gàidhealach,
'S gu 'm biodh an sàr ud 'n an cuimhne,
Gus bhur pilleadh 's an amhainn,
Oir tha i roimhibh ni 's doimhne.

[11] Nis, a Theàrlaich òig Stiùbhaird,
Riut tha dùil aig gach fine,
Chaidh a chothachadh crùn dhuit,
'S a leig an dùthaich 'n a teine,
Tha iad mar nathraichean folaicht',
A chaill an earradh an uraidh,
Ach tha 'g ath-ghleusadh an gathan,
Gu èiridh latha do thighinn.

[12] 'S iomadh neach a tha guidheadh
Ri do thighinn, a Theàrlaich,
Gus an èireadh na cuingean,
Dhe na bhuidheann tha 'n èigin;
A tha cantuinn 'n an cridhe,
Ged robh an teanga 'g a bhreugadh,
"Làn do bheatha gu t' fhaicinn,
A dh' ionnsuigh Bhreatainn is Eirinn."

[13] 'S iomadh òganach aimsichte,
Tha 's an àm so 'n a chadal,
Eadar bràighe Srath-Chluanaidh,
Agus bruachan Loch-abair,
Rachadh 'n cùisibh mhic t' athar,

'S a chrùn 's a chaithir r' an tagradh,
'S a dh' ath-philleadh na Ceathairn,
A dhìoladh latha Chulodair.

[14] Ach a chàirdean na cùirte,
Nach 'eil a' chùis a' cur feirg oirbh,
Na 'n do dh' fhosgail bhur sùilean,
Gus a' chùis a bhi searbh dhuibh.
Bitheadh bhur duais mar a' ghobhair
A thèid a bhleodhain gu tarbhach,
'S a bhith'r a' fuadach 's an fhoghair,
Is ruaig nan gaothar r' a h-earball.

[15] Ma 's e 'm peacach a 's modha
'S còir a chumhachd a chlaoidheadh,
Nach e Seumas an Seachdamh,
Dhearbh bhi seasmhach 'n a inntinn?
C' uim' an dìteadh sibh 'n onoir,
Na bhiodh sibh moladh na daoidheachd?
'S gur h-e dhlùitheachd d' a chreidimh
A thug do choigrich an rìoghachd.

*Filled with the spirit of the Gael,
Who will remember that injustice,
Until you turn in the river,
Because it's deeper before you.*

And now, young Charles Stewart,
You're the hope of the clansmen,
Who went to win you a crown
And set the country *aflame*.
They are like hidden serpents
That cast their skins *a year ago*,
But are sharpening *their* fangs
To rise on your coming.

Many a man is beseeching
You to come, Charles,
To lift the yokes
From those who are oppressed,
Who say in their hearts —
Though their tongues may lie —
"Godspeed till we see you
Back in Britain and Ireland."

Many a daring young hero
Who is now sleeping
Between the braes of Strath Cluanie
And the banks of Lochaber
Would support the cause of your father's
son
In your claim to the crown and the throne,
And the return of the troops
To avenge the day of Culloden.

But, friends of the Court,
Doesn't this rouse your anger,
Are your eyes not *open*
To the cause of your humiliation?
Your reward's like the *she-goat's*
That will be milked to dryness,
And chased away in the autumn,
With the cur-pack behind her.

If it be the greater sinner
Whose power *should* be overthrown,
Was it not James the Seventh
Who proved steadfast in mind?
Why should you impugn honor
Or praise evil?
It was his faith in his creed
That gave strangers the kingdom.

[16] Fhuair sinn Rìgh à Hanobhar,
Sparradh oirne le h-Achd e;
Tha againn Prionnsa 'n a aghaidh,
Is neart an lagha 'g a bhacadh.
O Bhith tha h-urad 'n ad bhreitheamh,
Gun chron 's an dithis nach fac thu,—
Mur h-e a th' ann, cuir air aghairt
An t-aon a 's lugha 'm bi pheacadh.

We acquired a King from Hanover,
Established over us by statute.
We have a Prince opposing him
In defiance of the law.
O God who *judges all*,
Who sees neither as faultless,
Put forward, if he *is not in place*,
The one whose sins are less.

46. MARY OAG AND HER LOVER¹⁰⁰

Sèist:

Mhàiri, ud, ud, ciod a thainig riut,
Nach deach' thu do Sgianaid;
Mhàiri, ud, ud, 'n e nach tig riut,
Croman no cas-dìreach.

[1] Ma tha thu crìochadh dhol a phòsadh,
Tè ni 'n croman is an t-òtrach,

Màiri Ni'n Do'll 'ic Uilleim òig —

Gur maith is eòl di 'n gnìomh sin.

[2] Ciod e bhur barail de an òlach,
Nach gabhadh ise 'n dèigh òrduigh,
'N dèigh a deasachadh an tòs,
Le còcair Mhorair Mhioghraigh.

[3] B' fheàrr duit an fheòil a bh' air
fuaradh,
Fhuair thu o chòcair nan daoine uaisle,
Na 'n ròst a thabhairt o 'n bhuachaill

Tha shuas aig ceann Rìgh-mhìchi.

Chorus:

Mary — oh, no! — who came to you?
Didn't you go to Sgianaid?
Mary — oh, no! — won't he come to you,
Crooked or straight?

If your intention is to marry a woman
Who can handle the shovel and the
dunghill,
Mary daughter of Donald son of young
William
Is well-acquainted with that task.

What is your opinion of the fumbler
Who would not take her after a decree,
After the beginning was prepared
By Lord Reay's cook.

You would have been better off with the
cold meat
That you got from the gentlemen's cook,
Than the roast you got from the
herdsman
Up at the head of Rìgh-mhìchi.

¹⁰⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 359) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 135). The meaning is obscure, however, to say the least. Croman and cas-dìreach are two different types of shovels, one crooked and the other straight. Perhaps Mary was being courted (or seduced?) by Lord Reay's cook (an older man?) but decided to marry a herdsman instead, who then failed to appear at the wedding. But this is speculation. Many of Rob Donn's songs are ephemera of this sort, the tabloid journalism of the day.

47. ISABEL AND ROB¹⁰¹

Sèist:

Iseabail mhìn mheall-shuileach dhubh,
Char thu mi 's ghabh thu Rob tiugh;
Iseabail mhìn mheall-shuileach dhubh,
Rinn thu 'n diugh mo thrèigeadh.

[1] Ma thrèig thu mi gu follaiseach,
'S nach dean tu tuilleadh comunn rium;
'N saoil sibh nach robh dalladh oirr',
'N uair thug i gealladh 'n dè dhomh.

[2] Is olc a fhuair mi bhanais ud,
'N uair chuir an sluagh a' choinneal as,
Chaidh fear a sìos do 'n rainich leath',
Is chuir sud maill' air m' èigheach-s'.

[3] Am faca sibhse a' Chatanach,¹⁰²
A' dol sìos a' Chnaparnach;
Thubhairt iad gu 'm fac iad i,
'S ged fhac', nach beireadh èis oirr'.

[4] Cha bheag na t-aobhar fath-chainnt i,
A' dol a sìos an Clach-rathan,
Bha 'n diollaid air a leath-taobh,
Is a cas an lùb na srèine.

[5] 'S e rinn an saoidh a mhaslachadh,
Am pònaidh donn le 'mhasanaich,
Gliom a thoirt d' a marcaiche,
'S a leigeil as an dèigh sin.

[6] O 'n shìn an gille muilinn ri,
Cha 'n fhàg mi muing no muineal oirr',
Na do dh'earbal cuimir oirr',
Na chumas maide sèisd ri.

[7] Thugaibh dhomhs' mo bhreacanan,
Mo ruibeanan, 's mo dheasachadh,
Gus an cuir mi 'n fhasair
Air an each nach togair leum uam.

Chorus:

Gentle Isabel of the alluring dark eyes,
You tricked me and took fat Rob;
Gentle Isabel of the alluring dark eyes,
Today you forsook me.

If you abandoned me publicly,
And will have nothing further to do with me;
Don't you think she was misleading
When she gave me a promise yesterday?

I lost out at that wedding,
When the crowd put out the candle,
A man went down to the bracken with her,
And that prevented my proclamation.

Did you see the shaggy mare
Going down the Cnaparnach;
They said they saw her
But could not overtake her.

She was quite a cause of ridicule,
Going down the stony path,
The saddle was on one side of her
And her leg tangled in the reins.

The mare disgraced him,
The slow brown pony;
It gave a shake to its rider
And then let him go.

Since the miller lad began pursuing her,
I cannot get a halter or collar on her,
She has such a shapely tail,
A stick will not restrain her.

Bring me my plaids,
My ribbons and my clothing,
Until I put in the pasture
A horse that will not escape me.

¹⁰¹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 171-73) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 36-38) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 76).

Morrison's note explains (1899: 171): "Isabel jilted a young man for Rob's sake, but a twelvemonth later she and her former lover agreed to get married. Just as the marriage ceremony was about to proceed Rob appeared again, and Isabel went off with him for the second time."

¹⁰² According to Morrison, this refers to a mare that ran off with Rob some time previously. The remainder of the poem compares Isabel to a runaway horse.

[8] 'S ann bha chùis ri choireachadh,
'N uair a ghabh iad aithreachas,¹⁰³
'M fear a bha 'n a bharant oirr',
'S e dh' fholach aige fèin i.

There were grounds for blame
When they expressed remorse,
The man that was her surety,
Concealed her himself.

[9] Cha 'n ioghnadh ged nach seasadh i,¹⁰⁴
Bha puinnsean mòr do chasaig air,
Bha bucaill is gramaisean air,
Fuidh bhreacan glas an fhèilidh.¹⁰⁵

It is no wonder she would not stand up,
There was great contempt for his long coat,
He was wearing buckles and gaiters
Under the green plaid of the kilt.

¹⁰³ This may refer to formal penance at a Kirk Session.

¹⁰⁴ Presumably this means to stand up to be married, and the reference is to the rejected bridegroom, who was well-dressed for the occasion.

¹⁰⁵ The reference to the kilt may date this song to before the Disclathing Act of 1747 (unless the bridegroom was in the military or the Act was being ignored in the MacKay country before its repeal in 1782). See Black, *An Lasair*, pp. 455-58, for the dates of the Act and the angry response by Gaelic poets.

48. REPLY TO JOHN SUTHERLAND¹⁰⁶

[1] Moch 's a' mhaduinn, 's mi lan
airtneil,

Tha mi 'g acain aon rud,
Tha trian mo stuic am fiachan cip,
Aig aon a sgiot a chùinneadh;
Cha làimh fir ceàird a rinn an dàn,

Ge glan a dh' fheuch e 'dhùrachd,
Bithidh 'n t-òlach pàidht' air son a ràdh,
Gu 'n robh Balaam ùir ann.¹⁰⁷

[2] Cha b' fhiach do ghnothuch chur an
leabhar,
A dh' iarradh cobhair cuilbheirt,
Gu 'm faic a' chléir, gu 'n chuir iad féin thu,

Anns a cheum nach b' fhiù thu;
'N uair chi thu meall do shaothar rann,
Ma nì do *choinnseas* dùsgadh,
Cha 'n ionnan beath' do dh' fhear do bhreith,
'S do 'n Ti chaidh bhrath le Iudas.

[3] Fhir a shaothraich dheanamh aoire,
Cha robh saoil fir céill' ort,
Coimeas t'aoire ris na daoine
Bh' anns an t-saoghal leughant';
Dean-sa t' fhìrinn air a Bhìobull,
Is cuir ri aodann cléir' e;
'S cha 'n e do thuigse mhill do laigs,

Ach meud do chreidimh féin duit.

[4] Mo bharrail riamh nach robh do chiall,
Cho maith ri trian na h-aois duit;
Do réir mo bheachd air fear do chleachd',

Cha b' ann le ceart a shìn thu.
'S i cainnt do bheoil a dhearbhadh do ghlòir,

'S an àit nach b' eòl do dhaoine' thu,
Culaidh-bhùird na h-uile dùthaich,
Nach fuiling sùgradh inns' duit.

Early in the morning, and I am full of
melancholy,
I am bemoaning one thing,
A third of my grumpiness is due to a verse,
By one that flung about his coinage;
It was not the hands of a craftsman that
made the verse,
However diligently he tried,
The fumbler will be paid for what he said,
That there was a new Balaam.

Your business is not worth putting in a
book,
That would invite help with deception,
That the clergy will see, who themselves
put you
In the rank you do not deserve;
When you see deceit in your versifying,
If it makes your conscience awake,
Life is not the same to a man of your birth,
As to the Lord who was betrayed by Judas.

Man who labored to make a satire,
You did not think like a man of sense,
Comparing your satire to the people
Who were in the world of readers;
Speak the truth on the Bible,
And put it to the face of the clergy;
It is not your understanding that betrayed
your weakness,
But the extent of your belief in yourself.

I never thought that your sense was
As good as someone a third your age;
According to my opinion on a man of your
habit,
It was not with justice that you reached out.
It is the speech of your mouth that proves
your boastfulness,
In the place where no one knows you,
A laughing-stock of every country,
A joke would not suffer being told to you.

¹⁰⁶ The text is from Morrison (1899: 331-32) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 65-66), and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 34). John Sutherland, schoolmaster, session-clerk, precentor, and poet, was Rob Donn's favorite object of satire. See Morrison (1899: 331, n. 2).

¹⁰⁷ Balaam was an Old Testament prophet who refused to curse the Israelites although requested to do so by the king of the Moabites. Numbers 22-24. Nevertheless, Iain's comparison of Rob Donn to Balaam was not intended as a compliment.

49. TO WINTER¹⁰⁸

[1] Moch 's mi 'g éiridh 's a' mhaduinn,
'S an sneachd air a' bheinn,
Ann an lagan beag monaidh,
Ri mhaduinn ro dhoinid,
'S ann a chuala mi 'n lonan,
Chuir an loinid o sheinn,
Is am pigidh ag éigheach
Ris na speuraibh, 's cha bhinn.

I arose early
With the snow on the mountain
In little hillside hollows
On a blustery morning;
And I heard the linnet
Singing on the churn-staff,
And the robin screeching
Unmelodiously to the heavens.

[2] Bidh gach doire dubh uaigneach,
'N dùil fuasgladh o bhlàth;
Bithidh an snodhachd a' traoghadh,
Gus an fhreumh as na shìn e,
Crupaidh chairt ris gu dìonach,
Gus an crìon i gu làr;
'N lon-dubh anns a' mhaduinn,
Sìor sgreadail chion blàiths.

Every dark hidden grove
Awaits relief from warmth;
The wood-sap is draining
Back to the roots,
Shriveling bark offers protection
Until it falls to the ground;
And the blackbird at morning
Ceaselessly shrieks his lack of warmth.

[3] Bithidh am beithe crìon, crotach,
Sìor stopadh o 'fhàs;
Mar-ri gaoth gharbh shéididh,
Agus ioma-chathadh 'g éiridh,
Cròchdan barruich a' géilleadh,
Mìos éigheach an àil:
A' mhìos chneatanach, fhuachdaidh,
Chòimheach, ghruamach, gun tlàths'.

The birch withers, hump-backed,
Wholly unable to grow;
While the fierce wind is blowing
And the snow-drift rising,
The birch branches are breaking.
A terrible time for young animals:
The month of colds and chills,
Barbarous, stern, ungentle.

[4] Mhìos chaiseanach, ghreannach,
Chianail, chainneanach, gheàrrt',
'S i gu clachanach, ciurrach,
Cruaidhteach, sgealpanach, puinneach,
Sneachdach, caochlaideach, frasach,
Reòtach, reasgach, gu sàr;
'S i na caoirneinean craidhneach,
Fad na h-oidhche air làr.

The month surly, gloomy,
Mournful, angry, barren,
Hailing, destructive,
Niggardly, hard-hitting, bruising,
Snowy, fickle, showery,
Frozen, perverse, oppressive;
It is the sheep-dung decaying
All night on the ground.

¹⁰⁸ The text is from Morrison (1899: 206-09); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 108-11) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 15). The translation is largely my own, although I have consulted the translation by Angus Mackay in Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 96-97).

The poem is Rob Donn's response to Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's "Song to Summer" and represents Rob Donn's only venture into this type of formal nature poetry. Aside from his uncharacteristic use of strings of adjectives, his images display vividly his close observation of his fellow creatures during the hardships of a northern winter. Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's poems to summer and winter were published in his 1751 collection, *Ais-èiridh na Sean-Canoin Albannaich*. See Derick Thomson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: 1993), p. 195; Derick S. Thomson, *Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair: Selected Poems* (Edinburgh: SGTS, 1996), p. 37. Rob Donn probably heard the earlier poems either recited or read sometime after 1751 (although it is possible they were already in oral circulation before that date).

[5] Mhios dheitheasach, chaoile,
 Choimheach, ghaothach, gun bhlàths',
 Chuireadh feadail na fuarachd,
 Anns gach badan bu dualaich',
 Dhòirteadh sneachda 'n a ruathar,
 Air gach bruach nam beann àrd',
 'S an àm teichidh na grèine,
 Caillidh *Phoebus* a bhlàths'.

The month like iron, lean,
 Cruel, windy, and chill,
 Sends the whistle of cold
 Into each tiny twisted thicket;
 Snow pours out in a rush
 On each slope of the high mountains;
 In the time the sun flees,
 Phoebus loses his warmth.

[6] 'S ann bhios *Phoebus* 'n a rèdtachd,
 An ceap nam mòr chnoc 's nan gleann;
 Bidh 's an uair sin mar 's neònach,
 Gach eun gearra-ghobach gòineach,
 Spiolach iomall an òtraich,
 Cur a shròin anns an dàm;—
 Còmhradh ciùrrta gun bheadradh,—
 Le bròn is sgreadal 'n an ceann.

Phoebus is frozen
 On the great hills and the glens;
 Then, very strangely,
 Every scruffy, short-billed bird,
 Nibbling at the edge of the dunghill,
 Puts its nose in the mire,
 Chattering wounded, without mirth,
 Miserably screaming their heads off.

[7] 'S an àm tighinn an fheasgair,
 Cha bhi an acaras gann;
 Ni iad còmhnuidh 's gach callaid,
 Buileach anmhunn is callaidh
 Sgrìobadh ùir as na ballaibh;
 Mìos chur doinionn nan gleann,
 'S iad a' beucail gu toirmneach,
 'S cha bhi 'n eirbheirt ach mall.

When the evening comes
 Hunger will not be scarce;
 They will make a dwelling in each hedge,
 Utterly enfeebled and restless,
 Scraping dirt from the walls.
 In a month that sent storms to the glens,
 They are clamoring loudly,
 But their power of motion is slow.

[8] Am bradan caol bhàrr an fhìor uisg',
 Fliuch, slaod earballach, fuar,
 'S e gu tàrr-ghlogach, ronnach,
 Clamhach, geàrr-bhallach, lannach,
 Soills na meirg' air 'n a earradh,
 Fiamh na gainn' air 's gach tuar,
 'S e gu crom-cheannach, burrach,
 Dol le punne 'n a chuaich.

The skinny salmon in the running water,
 Wet, cold, dragging its tail,
 Soft-bellied, ropy,
 Scabby, spotty, scaly,
 The gleam of rust on his tail;
 Signs of want and every hardship,
 Crooked-headed, heavy-mouthed,
 Going with the current in his pool.

[9] Ach nach dao-chail 's a' gheamradh,
 Fann ghèim gamhna chion feòir,

Gnùgach, caol-dhromach, feursnach,
 Tioram, tàrr-ghreannach, àsruidh,
 Biorach, sgreamhanach, fuachdaidh,
 Siltean fuaraidh r' a sròn,
 'S i gu sgrog-laghrach gàgach,
 Fulang sàrach' an rèdt.

How pitiful in winter
 The feeble lowing of a yearling calf
 without hay;
 Sulky, lean-backed, worm-infested,
 Parched, bristly-breasted, forlorn,
 Noisy, disgusting, chilled,
 Cold drippings from its nose,
 Shriveled hooved ones with torn skin,
 Worn out by suffering in the frost.

[10] An t-samhuin bhagarach, fhiadhaich,
 Dhubharach, chiar-dhubh, gun bhlàths,
 Ghuineach, ana-bhliochdach, fhuachdaidh,
 Shruthach, steallanach, fhuaimneach,
 Thuilteach, an-shocrach, uisgeach,
 Gun dad measaich ach càl,

November threatening, wild,
 Dark, pitch-dark, without warmth,
 Fierce, milk-less, cold,
 Streaming, gushing, noisy,
 Flooding, uneasy, wet.
 With nothing edible but cabbage,

Bithidh gach deat is gach mìseach,
Glacadh aogais a' bhàis.

[11] Bitheadh gach creutair d' a threisead,
'G iarraidh fasgaidh 's a' choill,
Bitheadh na h-ùrlaichean cabrach,
Gnùsdach, airtnealach, laga,
Gabhail geilt de na mhaduinn,
Le guth a' chneatain 'n an ceann,
Is na h-aighean fo euslaimh,
Air son gun thréig iad a' bheinn.

[12] Sud na puirt bu ghoirt gearradh,
Is bu shalaiche seinn;
Ghabhadh m' inntinn riamh eagal,
Roimh bhur sgreadail 's a' mhaduinn,
'N àm a' chruidh bhi air ghadaibh,

'S an cuid fodar 'g a roinn,
'S iad 'n am baideinibh binniceach,
Gu h-àsruidh, tioma-chasach, tinn.

Every yearling sheep and goat
Is taking on the image of death.

Every creature with any strength
Seeks shelter in the wood,
The long-haired antlered stags,
Snorting, weary, weak,
Take fright in the morning,
With the sound of a cold in their heads;
And the fawns are wasting
Since they abandoned the mountain.

Then the saddest tunes are heard,
And the dreariest singing;
My mind was always afraid
Of your screeching in the morning,
At cattle-feeding time I would be on the
withes,
Distributing their shares of fodder,
And they in their horned flocks,
Pining, soft-footed, sick.

50. SALLY GRANT¹⁰⁹

[1] Mu 'm faca mo shùil thu,
 'S e 'n cliù ort a fhuair mi,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg,
 Gun robh thu mar bhan-de,
 'S gu 'n gèilleadh an sluagh dhuit,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.
 Shaoil leam nach bu bhòsd,
 Bu chòir a bhith luaidh sud.
 Ach nuair a shìn an ceòl,
 'S gu 'n d' thug iad a suas mi,
 Chreid mi h-uile drannd dheth,
 'S an danns' 'n uair a ghluais i,
 An rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.

[2] 'S e 'n t-aobhar nach dùraichdinn,
 Sàlaidh do 'n Chòirneil,
 An rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.
 Air eagal gu 'm bitheadh càch
 Ann an nàimhdeas r' a bheò dha,
 An rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.
 Creutair cho grinn i,
 Is creutair cho bòidheach,
 Rìgh, bu mhòr am beud,
 Gu 'n cailleadh i d' a deòin,
 Suiridhich an t-saoghail,
 Le aon fhear a phòsadh,
 An rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.

[3] Tha Deòrs' air a' Mhàidsear
 Ro dhàn' ann an cainnt,
 An rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.
 Sìor chur an cèill,
 Gu robh esan fuidh *stainnt*,
 An rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.
 Ach 'n uair thèid an t-òsd
 Mu 'n bhòrd anns na rancaibh,
 Olaidh e gu càirdeach,
 Deoch slàinte na baintighearn,
 Bitheadh h-uile fear do chàch,
 Mach o Sàlaidh, toirt taing dha,
 An rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.

Before I set eyes on you,
 I heard of your renown,
 You lovely, comely young lady,
 That you were like a goddess
 And that people worshipped you,
 You lovely, comely young lady.
 I didn't think that mere boasting
 But proper to relate,
 For when the music began
 And they told me of it,
 I could well believe it
 As she moved in the dance,
 The lovely, comely young lady.

The reason why I would not wish
 Sally to go with the Colonel,
 The lovely, comely young lady,
 Is fear lest others should be hostile to him
 For as long as he lives,
 The lovely, comely young lady.
 She's a creature so elegant
 And a creature so beautiful,
 Heavens, what a shame it would be
 If she were to lose
 All the wooers in the world
 By marrying one man,
 The lovely, comely young lady.

Concerning the Major, George
 Has been speaking too openly,
 The lovely, comely young lady,
 Repeatedly disclosing
 That he is already married,
 The lovely, comely young lady.
 But when the ale goes round
 At the mess tables,
 He drinks heartily
 A toast to the lady.
 Each one of the others,
 Except for Sally, is grateful to him,
 The lovely, comely young lady.

¹⁰⁹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 280-82); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 225-27) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 20). The translation is from Grimble (1999: 219-22), except as shown in italics. The poem was composed between 1759 and 1763, when Rob Donn served in the Sutherland Fencibles, in honor of the young lady who was the toast of the regiment. Grimble (1999: 215-22).

[4] Shuidh mi ann an dùsal,
 Mar gu 'n dùisgteadh à *tranns* mi,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg,
 Is chunnaic mi 'n triùir ud,
 Le 'n sùilean 's le 'n samhachd,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.
 Do rèir mar a dh' fhaodainns'
 An aodain a rannsachadh,
 Gu 'n dùraichdeadh Sàlaidh,
 Am Màidsear 'n a bhantraich.
 Tha aoibhneas air Deòrs',
 Mu 'n bhròn bh' air a' Ghrannnach.
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.

[5] Cha 'n 'eil a h-aon ,
 'S a' *Bhatàille*an d' an eòl thu,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg,
 Nach 'eil 'n am brudraichibh,
 Fuasgailt' is pòsda,
 Mu 'n rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.
 Ach gu ruigeas Teàrlach—
 Am Màidsear a b' òige,
 Ged bu chruaidh 'ainm
 Ann an armait Rìgh Deòrsa,
 Chaoch'leadh e aogais,
 Le gaol fa do chòir-sa,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg,

[6] Am fear a bhios an gaol,
 Cha 'n fhaodar leis 'fhuadach,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg;
 'S ann is cruaidhe 'chàs,
 Ach am pàidhear a dhuais dha,
 A rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg.
 Bheir mi mo sùil,
 No fuilingidh mi cluas dhiom,
 Ma tha aon de 'n triùir,
 Cia tric iad 'g a do luaidh'
 Cho tinn le do ghaol,
 Ris an aon fhear a 's fuath leat,
 An rìbhinn àluinn, aoibhinn, òg,

I sat in the corner,
 As though awoken from a trance,
 You lovely, comely young lady,
 And I saw those three,
 By their eyes and their appearance,¹¹⁰
 You lovely, comely young lady.
 According to my perception,
 Judging by her expression,
 Sally was wishing
 The Major was a widower:
 George was delighted
 That she was disconsolate.
 You lovely, comely young lady.¹¹¹

There is not a man
 In the battalion who knows you,
 You lovely, comely young lady,
 Who doesn't dream of you,
 Whether single or married,
 Of the lovely, comely young lady.
 Not even excluding Charles,
 The youngest of the Majors;
 Though he has a name for harshness
 In King George's army,
 His disposition is transformed
 Out of affection for you,
 You lovely, comely young lady,

The man who is in love
Cannot be driven away,
You lovely, comely young lady;
It is the cruelest dilemma —
But he will get his reward,
You lovely, comely young lady.
I will give my eye,
Or I will give up an ear,
If one of the three —
However often they praise you,
So sick with your love —
Is [not] the very man you detest.
The lovely, comely young lady.

¹¹⁰ Grimbale (1999: 221) has: "And these three spoke/ With their eyes and with images", which translates "Is labhair an triùir ud/ Le'n sùilean, 's le 'n samhachd" in the Mackay edition (1829: 226).

¹¹¹ Given the nature of Rob Donn's description here, it seems possible that the conversations he depicts between Sally and the officers were in English, which he did not fully understand. Or perhaps he was simply out of earshot.

51. TO THE RESPOND MISERS¹¹²

[1] 'N an luidhe so gu h-ìosal
Far na thìodhlaic sinn an triùir,
Bha fallain, làidir, inntinneach,
'N uair dh' intrig a' bhliadhn' ùr;
Cha deachaidh seachad fathast,
Ach deich latha dhith o thùs;—
Ciod fhios nach tig an teachdair-s' oirnn,
Ni 's braise na th' air ar dùil?

Lying in their lowly state
Are three we buried here,
Though they were strong and healthy,
And lively at New Year;
Ten days only have gone by
Since then — who can be sure
That our dread Summoner is not,
Unknown to us, as near?

[2] Am bliadhna thìom' bha dithis diubh,
Air tighinn o 'n aon bhroinn,
Bha iad 'n an dà chomrad,
O choinnich iad 'n an cloinn;
Cha d' bhris an t-aog an comann ud,
Ged bu chomasach dha 'n roinn,
Ach gheàrr e snàth'nn na beath-s' ac',
Gun dàil ach latha 's oidhch'.

Within one year a pair of them
Had come from the one womb,
And they had been close comrades
Since their childhood in one room;
Their fellowship is still intact,
Unsevered by the tomb —
Within two days Eternity
Has plucked them from Time's loom.

[3] O aon duine 's bean a thàinig iad,
Na bràithrean so a chuaidh,
Bha an aon bheatha thìomail ac',

These brothers now departed
Came from one man and wife,
Their clothes were made from the one
fleece,

'S bha 'n aodach d' an aon chloimh;
Mu 'n aon uair a bhàsaich iad,
'S bha 'n nàdur d' an aon bhuaidh;
Chaidh 'n aon siubhal dhaoine leo,
'S chaidh 'n sìneadh 's an aon uaigh.

Each lived the self-same life;
Their deaths came close together,
Their natures were alike,
The one procession bore their dust
And laid it out of sight.

[4] Daoine nach d' rinn briseadh iad,
Is e fiosrachail do chàch;
'S cha mhò a rinn iad aon dad,
Ris an can an saoghal gràs;
Ach ghineadh iad, is rugadh iad,
Is thogadh iad, is dh' fhàs—
Chaidh stràchd d' an t-saoghal thairis orr',¹¹³
'S mu dheireadh fhuair iad bàs.

These men broke no commandments,
As far as we can trace,
Nor did their deeds show anything
Of what the world calls grace;
They were conceived and brought to birth,
Were nursed, and grew apace,
A swatch of life passed by them,
And death put them in their place.

¹¹² The text is from Morrison (1899: 49-51) and the translation from Derick S. Thomson, *Gaelic Poetry in the Eighteenth Century* (Aberdeen: 1993), pp. 128-131; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 328-30) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 51).

¹¹³ According to Ronald Black, *An Lasair* (Edinburgh: 2001), p. 478: "Dr. John MacInnes tells me that this line is a bowdlerisation, what Rob Donn actually sang having been: *Sann dh'ith iad, dh'òl iad, 's chac iad* ("They ate, they drank, and they defecated")." He does not explain how Dr. MacInnes knew this interesting fact, although such a version could have been current in oral tradition. And it is certainly plausible, as Rob Donn was generally quite frank about bodily functions, while his nineteenth-century editors (two ministers and a librarian) were demonstrably more fastidious. Grimbly suggests (1999: 112), based on its similarity to other datable elegies, that the poem was composed in the mid-1750s.

[5] Nach 'eil an guth so labhrach,
Ris gach aon neach tha beò?
Gu h-àraidh ris na seann daoineibh,
Nach d' ionnsuich an staid phòsd';
Nach gabh na tha 'n a dhleasdanas,
A dheasachadh an lòn,
Ach caomhnadh ni gu falair dhoibh,
'S a' folach an cuid òir.

[6] Cha chaith iad fèin na rinn iad,
Agus oighreachan cha dèan,
Ach ulaidhnean air shliabh ac',
Bhios a' biathadh chon is eun;
Tha iad fo 'n aon dìteadh,
Fo nach robh, 's nach bi mi fhèin,
Gur duirche, taisgte 'n t-òr ac',
Na 'n uair bha e anns a' mhèinn.

[7] Freasdail glic an Ard Rìgh—
Dh' fhàg e pàirt do bhuidhinn gann,
Gu feuchainn iochd is oileanachd
D' an dream d' an d' thug e meall;
C' air son nach d' thugadh pòrsan,
Dhe 'n cuid stòrais aig gach àm,
Do bhochdannaibh a dheònaicheadh,
An còrr a chur 'n a cheann?

[8] An dèigh na rinn mi rùsgadh dhuibh,
Tha dùil agam gun lochd,
'S a liuthad focal fìrinneach
A dhìrich mi 'n ur n-uchd,
Tha eagail orm nach èisd sibh,
Gu bhi feumail do na bochd,
Ni 's mò na rinn na fleasgaich ud,
A sheachduin gus a nochd.

Surely this sounds a warning
To each one of us alive,
Especially old bachelors,
Unlearned in married love,
Men who will not spend on food
The cash to which they cleave,
Saving for a funeral feast
The gold that they must leave.

They'll never spend what they have made,
And make no heirs besides;
Their treasures on the hillsides
Are food for dogs and birds;
They stand condemned — though I can plead
“Not guilty” in assize —
Of hoarding darklier their gold
Than ever did the mines.

The High King in his providence
Wisely left some men short,
To test the sense of charity
Of those who have a lot;
These should surely give a part
Of all the wealth they've got
To His poor folk; He's ready
To increase their meagre stock.

In spite of this straight talking —
And I feel it's only right —
And all the words of truth I've put
Directly in your sight,
I fear you will not listen,
Or give the poor a bite,
Any more than these did
A week ago tonight.

52. THE WEDDING IN OLDSHORE¹¹⁴

'N saoil sibh nach robh iomas orr',
'S am ministeir 'g am fàgail,
Bha 'n drama uath', bha spìosradh uath',
Bha 'm pìobair uath', bha 'm bàrd uath'.
Am bothan beag do shabhull,
'S a' chuid a b' fhoghainteich' bha 'n Aisir,

A' sparradh Uilleim Ghobha,
Ann an gobhall Shìne-an-Tàilleir.¹¹⁵
Bitheadh banais am Port-chamuill ac',
'S bitheadh dramachan gu leòir ann,
Bitheadh banais eile dh' fhòghnas,
'S an tigh mhòr aig Domh'll mac
Dhòmhnuill.

'S a' bhanais bh' ann an Aisir,
Gu 'n robh gàir' oirr', ged bha bròn oirr',
'S bitheadh banais an duin' fhoghainteich,
An sabhull Dhomh'll 'Ic Sheòrais.

Don't you think they were anxious
When the minister left them?
They were lacking the dram, the spices,
The piper and the bard,
In the tiny hut of a barn.
And the most prosperous folk were in
Oldshore,
Thrusting William Smith
Into the crotch of Jean of the Tailor.
Their wedding was at Port-chamuill;
There were plenty of drams there.
There was another ample wedding
In the big house of Donald son of
Donald.
The wedding in Oldshore
Included both laughter and sadness,
And the wedding of the prosperous man
Was in the barn of Donald son of George.

¹¹⁴ The text is from Morrison (1899: 429) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 245).

¹¹⁵ Where Morrison has "Ann an gobhall" [into the crotch], Mackay has "Stigh an coinneamh" [inside to meet], one of several examples of censorship by Rob Donn's first editor.

53. THE RED WELL OF RUSPIN¹¹⁶

Sèist:

Sud e 'n tobar ruagh,
So e 'n tobar ruagh,
Sud e 'n tobar ruagh,
'S truagh an t-uisge th' ann.

[1] 'N uair a fhuair mi 'n t-sùileag,
Cha robh h-àileadh cùbhraidh,
'S ann a tha mi 'n dùil,
Gur h-e am mùn 'na bh' ann.

[2] Anns an tobar rapach,
Chladhaich iad 's na leacaibh,
'S ann tha e ro choslach,
Gur tric an c-c 'n a cheann.

[3] Tobar Uilleim Chorbaid,
Tha e cheart cho searbh dhomh,
Ris an tobar dhearg ud,
A rinn Margaid mheallt'.

[4] An tobar a tha fodhaibh,
Cha 'n ioghnadh e a bhreothadh,
Bha i fèin 's an Reothach,
Deanamh 'n gnothuich ann.

[5] 'M fear sin deur a leiginn,
A tobar na creige,
Oir an sin tha Peigidh
'N còmhnuidh leigeadh bh-m.

Chorus:

The red well there,
The red well here,
The red well there,
Wretched the water that's in it.

When I received the drinking vessel,
Its smell was not fragrant,
And I suspect
That it had urine in it.

In the filthy well
They dug in the declivity —
It is too spongy
And often had shit at its head.

The well of William Corbett,
Is just as bitter to me
As that red well
That deceitful Margaret made.

The well that is below you,
No wonder it's corrupt,
She herself and Munro
Were doing their business in it.

I would avoid that wee drop
From the well of the rock,
Because it is there that Peggy
Always relieves herself.

¹¹⁶ The text is from Morrison (1899: 368-69) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 154-55).

This charming bit of occasional verse was censored or omitted by all of Rob Donn's editors. "C-c" in the second verse must be "cac". "Bh-m" in the last line could be a form of "beum," which can mean a "stream" or a "torrent". Dwelly (2001: 90). In any case, the gist of the matter seems clear enough.

54. TO ISABEL ¹¹⁷

[1] 'N uair chruinnich iad, gu 'n
d' imich iad,
Gu ministear na sgìreachd,
Mhuinntir dhiubh bha 'm Port-a-chamuill, ¹¹⁸
Bha iad tamul faoilteach,
Gur h-iongantach an iomairt,
Bha air gillean is air daoine ann.
'S a' mhuinntir thàinig thar an loch,
Le biadh, is deoch, is pìobair.
Fhuair sinn naidheachd mar bha roimhe,
Gun robh Iain saor d' i,
'S gun d' rinn i barrant do 'n fhear
bharr-fhionn,
Bh' air taobh eile a chaolais;
Bhreab a h-athair aig an eathar,
'S cha robh athadh sineadh,
Le gad no bat, do bhean no mhac,
Do dh'each, no mhart, no chaora.

[2] Nach fulangach an duine sin,
'N uair mhionnaich e 'n an aodann
Na h-uile fear bha toirt misneach,
Gus a bhriseadh thìomail;
'S nach d' fhuair e ni cho taitneach,
Ris an fhleasgach so chaidh dhìth air,
Gu riarachadh thoirt d' a bhlas,
O 'n chaidh e as an Fhaoilinn.
Ge b' fheithealach air eathar e,
'N uair chaidh an naidheachd sgaoilte,
Chaochail dhreach mar gu 'n creacht' e,

Is leag e as a' bhirlinn.
Cha robh cragan mu na chladach,
Nach robh freagairt glaoidh dha,
'S e tàirsinn as, le spionnadh chas,
A' pronnadh chlach is fhaochag.

When they assembled, those who
journeyed
To the minister of the parish,
And the residents of Port Chamuill —
They were happy to gather for a while.
What an amazing business it was
To the lads and the men there,
And the folk who came across the loch,
With food and drink and a piper.
We received the same news as before,
That Iain was free of her,
And that she made a pledge to the
fair-haired man,
On the other side of the kyle.
Her father kicked at the boat,
And did not extend his respect
By switch or stick to wife or son,
To cow or horse or sheep.

Wasn't that man suffering
When he swore in the faces
Of everyone that offered sympathy
For his timely escape;
He got nothing as pleasing
As this young man who deprived him
To satisfy his taste,
Since he left the Faoilinn.
Although he was attentive to his boat,
When the news was circulated,
His countenance changed as if he was
robbed,
And he demolished the boat.
There were no rocks on the beach,
That did not answer his shout,
As he ran, with his powerful foot
Pounding stones and whelks.

¹¹⁷ The text is from Morrison (1899: 192-93) who also prints another version (1899: xxxix-xl) from "the pen of the Rev. Donald Sage of Kildonan", which he describes as "the only example we have of Rob Donn's in the pure Reay country dialect." It also appears in Mackay (1829: 93-94) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 83); the translation is my own.

As Morrison explains (1899: 192), Isabel had been persuaded twice by Robert Buidhe, also known as "Rob Tiugh", to forsake John Mackenzie, to whom she was engaged to be married. On the second occasion Isabel ran off unknown to her father.

¹¹⁸ Port Chamuill is located on the west side of Loch Eriboll, which must be the "loch" mentioned in the first verse. However, the "kyle" could be either the Kyle of Durness or the Kyle of Tongue.

[3] Na 'n cluinneadh sibh mar theireadh
Iain Mac-Coinnich, 'n uair a sgaoil iad,
'N uair chunnaic e gu 'n chaill e 'phost,
An deigh a chost 's a shaothar.
Dh' aithris e na bhailich e,
Do dh' anart, is do dh' aodach,
'S a liuthad turus thug e mach,
Air is, 's air ais, an caolas.
Thubhairt Iseabail, 's i clisgeadh,
"Ciod a' nis a ni mi,
Gun toir e m' alladh sios do Ghalladh,

'N dèigh mo gheallaidh fhaotainn."
Thuirt Rob Buidhe 'n sin, is e tighinn,

"Ghaoil mo chridhe, caochail,
Is greas do chas, gu tàirsinn as,
Air t' ais o 'n fhear nach caomh leat."

Did you hear what Iain MacKenzie said,
When they dispersed,
When he saw that he lost his marriage,
After his expense and his labor.
He recounted what he spent
For linen and for clothing,
And the many trips he took,
Back and forth across the kyle.
Isabel said, fearfully,
"What shall I do now,
He will carry my reputation down to
Caithness,
After receiving my promise."
Then yellow-haired Rob came to her and
said,
"Love of my heart, change,
And hurry your foot to fly away
From the man you do not care for."

55. DAVIE'S TRIP TO ORKNEY¹¹⁹

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| [1] Nach cruaidh, cràiteach, an t-aiseag,
A fhuair Daibhidh do dh' Arcadh,
Dh' fhalbh an càise, 's a' cheilp, is e fèin. | What a harsh, painful ferry
Davie got to Orkney!
Off went the cheese, the kelp and himself. |
| [2] O 'n chaidh a bhàs dheanamh cinnteach,
Shuas muy bhràighe Loch Uinnseard,
Gu 'm bu ghàireach guth minn as a dhèigh. | When his death was confirmed
Up round the braes of Loch Inchar,
Merry was kid's cry in his memory. |
| [3] Thubhairt nigh'n Dho'uill 'Ic Fhiunnlaidh,
Ris an t-Siorraimh neo-shunndach,
Dearbh cha mhise an t-aon neach tha 'n èis. | Said Dòmhnall mac Fhionnlaigh's daughter
To the unhappy Sheriff,
"Indeed I'm not the only bereaved. |
| [4] Ma chaill thusa t' fhear impidh,
Chaill mise m' fhear aoin-tigh;
Co nis is fear-punndaidh do 'n sprèidh? | "If you've lost your petitioner,
I've lost my companion —
Who's the cattle-impounder now?" |
| [5] Bha do nàbaidhean toigheach,
Anns gach bàgh 'g iarraidh naidheachd,
'S leis a' chràdh bh' orr', chan fhaigheadh
iad deur. | Your loving neighbors were searching
For news in each bay
With such grief that no tear could they
manage, |
| [6] Ach o 'n chual iad thu thilleadh,
O na cuantaibh, gun mhilleadh,
Shìn an sluagh ud air sileadh gu lèir. | But when they heard you'd returned
From the oceans unharmed,
Those people all started to cry. |
| [7] Mach o acaraidh thràilleil,
Bhios a' streup mu do cheàirde,
Cha bhi creutair ga chràdh as do dhèigh. | Except slavish flatterers
Who vie for your job,
No creature is anguished at losing you, |
| [8] Ach ma 's bàs duit an Kirkwall,
'S ann bhios deuchainn a' ghliocais,
Aig a' <i>chlàrc</i> bhios cur leac ort le speis. | But if death took you in Kirkwall
It's some clerk's test of wisdom
To put a flagstone upon you respectably. |
| [9] Sgrìobhar sios air a braighe,
"So am ball am bheil Daibhidh,
A luchd na h-eucoir, thig bàs oirbh gu lèir." | They'll write down on its surface,
"Here's the spot where lies Davie;
O illdoers, death will come to you all." |
| [10] Sgrìobhar suaicheantas Dhaibhidh,
"Ceann gaibhre, is càbag,
Rotach gleadrach, is fàladair geur." | They'll carve Davie's escutcheon —
A goat's head and a kebbock,
A sharp scythe and a cow-scaring rattle; |
| [11] "Ceann grìomach a bhagair,
Sùil mhìogach nam praban,
Beul bìogach nan cagar 's nam breug." | The surly head of the beggar,
The sly eye full of rheums,
The twitching mouth of the whispers and lies. |

¹¹⁹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 199-202) and the translation from Ronald Black, *An Lasair* (Edinburgh: 2001), pp. 280-85. The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 97-100) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 50). Each verse is repeated (apparently in full, for a total of six lines).

[12] 'S ann tha 'n eachdaireachd ghàbhuidh, Nis mu ais-eirigh Dhaibhidh, 'S e tighinn dachaigh 'n a stàirneanach treun.	The tale of adventure and peril Now tells the resurrection of Davie As he comes home a swashbuckling hero.
[13] Leis gach deoch a bha blasda, Is iomadh biadh nach do chleachd e, 'S ann is fèarr e 'n a phearsa mar cheud.	With every drink that was tasty And many foods that were new to him, His physique is a hundred times better.
[14] Dh' fhàs e stailceineach, puinnseach, 'S ann is treis' air gach puinc e, Cuiribh 'cheist ris a' mhnaoi aige fèin.	He's grown forceful and spunky, He's in every way stronger — Just ask his very own wife!
[15] Tha mnathan uaisl' 's a mhachair, O na chual iad mar thachair, Chuid bu stuama an cleachdaibh 's am beus,	There are low-country ladies Since they heard what happened (Those more sober in manners and morals)
[16] A bhiodh deònach gu 'n tachradh, Gnothuch còir anns na cairtean, Bheireadh òirnn' dol a dh' Arcadh gu lèir.	Who'd be glad for the cards To fall such a way That we'd all have to go to Orkney.
[17] Gu bheil stròic air bean Bhoralaigh, 'S air bean chòir Shanndai' Chormaig, 'S cha 'n 'eil Seumas is Margaid cho rèidh.	Bean Bharalaigh's excited And so is Sandy Charmaig's dear wife, And James and Maggie aren't getting on so well.
[18] Ged tha Màiri glè bhanail, Tha i 'g ràdh ris na fearaibh, Gur mòr a b' fheàird iad an anail gu lèir.	Although Mary's very demure She's saying to the menfolk They'd all be much the better of a holiday.
[19] Tha bean òg aig a' mhinisteir, ¹²⁰ 'S na 'm biodh <i>vote</i> aic' 's an t-Sinoid, 'S ann an Arcadh a chruinnicheadh 'Chlèir.	The minister has a young wife And if she could vote in the Synod It's in Orkney the Presbytery would meet.
[20] Cha 'n 'eil fhios agam idir, Ged nach cuala sinn diog dheth, Nach 'eil fearg air bean Rhibigill fèin.	I don't know at all, Though we've not heard a syllable of it, That even Ribigill's wife's not excited.

¹²⁰ This refers to the wife of Rev. John Thomson, minister in Durness beginning in 1764, which dates the poem to the last 14 years of Rob Donn's life. See Morrison (1899: 202, n.1).

56. TO HUGH MACKAY¹²¹

[1] Nach truagh an sgeul a fhuair mi fèin,
Mu 'n àm so 'n dè, o 'n dh' fhalbh mi uaibh,
Gu 'n bhuail an t-eug an t-uasal treun,
Le cuartach gheur, 's gu 'n mharbh sud e.
B' ann do MhacAoidh, thaobh duine 's mnaoi,

An gasan aoidheil, dealbhach ud,
Mo chreach! 'g a inns', gun deach do 'n aoig,
Mac-oighre tìr Strath-Haladail.

[2] Nach cruaidh an guth so th' aig an t-sluagh,
O 'n deach' thu luath's a dh' earb iad riut;
Tha ghaoir cho chumant aig daoine uails',

Aig mna'ibh, aig tuath, 's aig searbhantaibh;
Cha 'n 'eil o 'n Tòrr, gu ruig an Stòir,
Aon duine beò o 'n dh' fhalbh thu uainn
A 's urradh còmhradh mu na bhòrd,
Ach tuirseach, brònach, marbhrannach.

[3] Cha 'n ann mu chall an codach fèin,
Tha 'n sluagh gu lèir cho càsmhorach,
Ach aon thoirt uath', gun aon fhear-fuath,

'S an robh gach buaidh cho fàsmhorach:

A phears' gu lèir, a dhreach, 's a chèill,
Anns nach bu lèir dhuinn fàilleagadh;
Mach o 'n eug bhi cur an cèill,
Nach 'eil gach crè ach bàsmhorach.

[4] Tha do chàirdean fola 's feòla,
'S do luchd-eòlais cianalach,
Air son do ghearradh as an t-saoghal,
Mu 'n robh aon diubh riaraicht' dhìot;
'S e cùis am broin, nach d' fhàg thu beò

Fear cho òg, 's cho ciallach riut;
Ma sgrìobhar cliù do bheath' air t' uaigh,

Gur lìonmhoir' buaidh na bliadhnachan.¹²²

How distressing the news I received
About this time yesterday, after I left you,
That death struck the strong gentleman
With a sudden fever that killed him.

He was a MacKay on his father's and
his mother's side,

That cheerful, handsome young lad;
Terrible to tell is the death
Of the heir to Strath Halladale.

How cruel is this news for the people,
That you whom they trusted died young;
A cry of woe is widespread among the

gentry,
The women, the tenantry, and the servants.
From the Tòrr to the Stòrr,
Not a single person, since you left us,
Who can speak around the table,
Is not mournful, sad, and funereal.

It is not just the loss of friendship
That leaves the people all so desolate,
But one taken from them who was hated
by none,

In whom every excellence was so
abundant.

His whole person, appearance, and mind
In which none of us could see a fault,
Except that death wanted to remind us
That every creature is mortal.

Your relatives of flesh and blood,
And your acquaintances are sad,
Because you were cut off from the world
Before any of them had their fill of you.
It is cause for their sorrow that you did not
leave alive

A man as young and wise as you,
Before the fame of your life was written on
your grave —

Excellence most abundant in years.

¹²¹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 40-42), with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 311-13), and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 22).

¹²² The subject of this elegy is the eldest son of MacKay of Bighouse, who died young — as did his brother (both before 1752) — leaving no male heirs to the Bighouse estate. See Grimble (1999: 176).

[5] Ged bhiodh do ghnùis air duine bàth,
 Cha bhiodh a bhàs neo-thùirseach dhuinn;
 'S dheanadh do thoimhsean is do chàil,
 Am fear bu ghràist' cho ciùrrtach dhuinn;
 An tuigse gheur, a thogail sgèil,
 'S a' ghibht' a b' fheàrr g' an cuimseachadh,
 'S tu 'n seud bu làin', tigh'nn thuig gach la,

'S an t-slige b' àillte cumaidhtidheachd.

[6] 'S lionmhor cridhe thuit a mhàn
 Mu 'n cuairt, air là do thìodhlacaidh,
 Bha 'g earbsadh cinnteach ri do linn,

Bhi suidhicht' an inntinn shìor-bheartaich;
 Bha iomadh ceud do t' fhine fèin,
 A' deanamh feum mar ìomhaidh dhiot;
 Ach dhearbh am beum so dhuinn gu lèir,
 Nach 'eil fo 'n ghrèin ach dìomhanas.

[7] Co an duine thug orts a bàrr,
 Am breith, am pàirt, 's an ionnsuchadh?
 No cò an t-aon a sheasas t' àit,
 Dhe 'n th' air an cràdh 'g ad ionndradhainn:

Gach beag is mòr, gach sean is òg,
 Le gul is deòir 'g an ceannsachadh,
 Ged 's tric le bròn bhi tuisleach oirn,
 Cha tig an còrr le aon duin' dheth.

[8] Tha sinn uile an iomadh truas,
 Na bha mu 'n cuairt do theaghlaich-sa,
 Bhi gun aon a measg an t-sluaigh,
 A dheanadh suas do chall-sa dhuinn:
 Do thomult mòr, do chomunn còir,
 Do chomas deònach, gealltanach,
 Chuir buille bhroin 's na h-uile pòit,
 'S a chuir gach ceòl mu Bhealltuinn uainn.

If your face were on a foolish man,
 His death would be sorrowful to us;
 Your faculties and disposition would make
 The most graceful man blemished to us.
 The keen understanding that told a tale,
 And the most gifted in shaping them;
 You were the perfect jewel, learning every
 day,

And the shell of fairest proportion.

Many a heart fell down roundabouts
 On the day of your burial,
 They trusted confidently that your
 responsibilities
 Would be assumed by an ever-richer mind.
 There were hundreds of your own clan
 Who considered you as a model;
 But this blow proves to all of us,
 There is nothing under the sun but vanity.

What man excelled you
 In judgment, in kindred, and in learning?
 Or who will stand in your place
 Of those who are suffering by your
 absence?

Everyone small and great, old and young,
 Has succumbed to weeping and tears.
 Although often sorrow makes us stumble,
 Rarely will such an excess of it come
 by a single man.

We are all in great wretchedness,
 Those who were around your family,
 To be without one among the people
 That would make up your loss for us.
 Your great influence, your civil company,
 Your willing and promising talent
 Put a taste of sorrow in every pot,
 And banished from us every Beltane song.

57. THE GREY BUCK¹²³

Sèist (Chorus):

Fi-hi fann-da-ri, fe-hi-n o-rò,
 Hi-li fann-da-ri, fe-hi-n o-rò
 Fa-hil-ò fann-da-ri, fe-hi-n o-rò
 Hi-li shiubhail e,
 Fann-da-ri, hi ho-rò,
 Fa-hil-ò, fa-hil-ò.

[1] O 'n tha mi na m' aonair,
 Gu 'n teann mi ri spòrs,
 'S gu 'n cuir mi mar dh-fhaodas,
 'M boc air a sheol.
 'S gu 'n leig mi fios dhachaidh
 A dh-ionnsuidh nan Catach
 Gur h-e 'm boc glas
 A bhitheas ac' air an tòs.

*Since I am alone,
 I will proceed to have fun,
 And perhaps I will send
 The buck on his way.
 And I will send word
 Home to the Sutherlanders
 That the grey buck
 Will be with them first.*

[2] 'S iomadh òganach smearal
 Bha fearal gu leòr,
 A chunnaiceas leam-sa
 Ann an cogadh rìgh Deòrs'.
 Ach cha 'n fhaca mi boc,
 Ga thogail air feachd,
 Ach aon bhoc glas
 Bh' aig mac an Iarl' oig'.

*Many a brisk young lad,
 Courageous enough,
 Was seen by me
 In King George's war.
 But I did not see a buck
 Being raised for the army,
 Except one grey buck
 With the young Earl's son.*

[3] 'Nuair thigeadh am foghar,
 Co dheanamh a bhuain?
 Co dheanamh an ceanghal,
 No stucadh na sguab?
 Co chuireadh na siomanan
 Ceart air na tudanan?
 Ach am boc luideach,
 Na 'm faigheadh e duais.

*When autumn came,
 Who worked at the harvest?
 Who did the binding
 Or stooking of the sheaves?
 Who put the ropes
 Aright on the stacks?
 But the rascally buck,
 If he got his pay.*

[4] Gu 'n tug iad a chobhair ud
 Bhuaine gun fhios,
 'S dh' fhagadh na gobhair,
 Gun bhaine gun bhliochd.
 Tha Sine nigh'n Uilleim
 A caoine 's a tuireadh
 'S a suilean a sileadh
 Air son a bhuic ghlaiss.

*They accepted his help there,
 Reaping unknowingly,
 And the goat was left
 Without whiteness or milk.
 Jean daughter of William
 Is lamenting and weeping,
 And her eyes are overflowing
 For the grey buck.*

¹²³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 408-09). Grimble (1999: 273) translated verse 3 and I translated the remainder.

According to Morrison (1899: 408), the Grey Buck, aka Donald Mackay, enlisted in the army and sailed for the East Indies in 1778 after being accused of fornication with six different women over a four-year period. Morrison also reports that, according to oral tradition, Rob Donn composed the tune but not the words of this song. This is possible, especially if the tune was composed earlier, as 1778 was the year of Rob Donn's death, and his health had been declining for at least a year (Grimble 1999: 274).

58. ROB THE HUNTER¹²⁴

[1] Paighidh mis' a shaothair dha,
Air son gu 'n ghabh e dh' aodan air,
A dhol a dheanamh aoire
Do mhnaoi fhaoilidh Naoghais 'c Leòid.

I will pay him for his work,
For the impudence he showed
By composing a satire
On the generous wife of Angus MacLeod.

[2] Bu cheann uighe 's chliaranach,
Gu tigh teine 's biadhtachd i;
Cha b' ionnan i 's Rob liath ud,
Bhiodh ag iarraidh air gach ceò.

Her house was a destination for a bard
Seeking a warm fireside and a meal;
She was not the same as that gray Rob,
Who asked everyone for milk.

[3] Clisgidh mnathan fialaidh roimh'
'N uair thig e stigh an sliabh thugainn,
Bidh 'm madadh ruadh 's an strianach aig'
'S a dà chù dheug 'n a thònn.

Decent women tremble before him
When he comes inside the threshold;
He brings the fox and the badger with him
And twelve red dogs in his wake.

[4] Cha bu bheag am fuathas e,
A' falbh air feadh na tuatha sin,
Aon fhocal riamh cha d' fhuaras uaith,

Their dislike of him was not small,
When he made the rounds of the tenantry,
But he never received one cold word from
her —

Ach c' àit an d' fhuair e 'leòir.

Only whether he got his fill.

¹²⁴ The text is from Morrison (1899: 433), with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 251-52). Each verse is repeated (apparently in full, for a total of 8 lines).

59. TO THE EARL OF SUTHERLAND¹²⁵

[1] Rugadh mis' anns a' gheamhradh,
Measg nam beanntaichean gruamach;
'S mo cheud sealladh do 'n t-saoghal,
Sneachd is gaoth mu mo chluasaibh;
O 'n chaidh m' àrach ri aghaidh
Tìr na deighe, gu tuathail,
Rinn mi luathaireach tuiteam,
'S rinn mo chuislidhean fuaradh'.

I was born in the winter
Among the lowering mountains,
And my first sight of the world
Snow and wind about my ears;
Since I grew up looking upon
A land of ice, a northerly land,
I declined early
And my veins chilled.

[2] Chrìoch mi sgur do na dàintibh,
Chionn mo thàlann bhi gèilleadh;
Ach cha 'n fhuil' ngeadh mo nàdur
Dhomh, bhi 'n am thàmh air an aobhar-s',—
Ceannard Teaghlaich Dhun-Robain,
'N a luidhe 'n Abaid Dhun-èidin,
Gun aon fhocal aig filidh
Dhèant' 'n a shiorrumhachd fèin da.

I made an end of composing poetry
Because my talent was forsaking me;
But my nature would not allow me
To remain silent on this theme —
The head of the family of Dunrobin
Lying in the abbey at Edinburgh
Without one word from a poet
Composed for him in his own country.

[3] Anns a' chaisteal so chianamh,
'S an rùm dìota na teaghlaich,
Chunnacas iomhaigh nan cùigear,
'S iad 'n am mòr-dhaoine treubhach;—
Am fear mu dheireadh bha beò dhiubh,
'S bu mhaith a b' eòl domh mu 'n d' eug e,
Fhuair mi 'dhealbh air mo leth-taobh,
'N a sheasamh 'm breacan an fhèilidh.

In this castle a little while ago,
In the family's dining room,
I saw portraits of the five of them,
Gallant, noble people, all of them.
The last surviving one of them —
Well I knew him before he died —
I found his portrait beside me,
Standing in his kilt and plaid.

[4] Ged bu bhòidheach r' am faicinn
Dealbh nam pearsa 's an rùm ud,
Dhearcadh inntinnean gnìomhach
Air dealbh bu sgiamhaich' r' a chunntadh;
Sgiath nan ainglean a' clapadh,
'S iad 'g an glacadh d' an ionnsuidh,—
Sùil gach anaim gu deurach,
Ris na speuraibh 'g an ionndrain.

*Although it was beautiful to see them,
Their portraits in that room,
Their active minds visible
In the portraits lovely to describe;
The wings of angels were beating
And embracing them,
The eye of each soul tearfully
Mourning them to the heavens.*

[5] Bha dealbh eile gu h-uasal
Air chur suas aig mo dheas-laimh;
Is ann leamsa nach neònach,
An sluagh bhi brònach an Cataobh;

There was another portrait honourably
Hanging to the right of me.
I am not surprised
The people are sorrowful in Sutherland

¹²⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 36-39). The translation of verses 1-3, 5, 11-13 is from Grimble (1999: 216, 258-60); the remainder is my own. The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 293-96) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 54-55). William, the 18th Earl of Sutherland, and his wife died in 1766. Morrison (1899: 36).

The context in which this poem was composed perhaps deserves some explication, given the historic rivalry between the Sutherland earls and the MacKay chiefs, as well as the subsequent history of the Clearances. Although the last three verses are shocking — in hindsight — for their unintended irony, Rob Donn did not claim to be a prophet. The 18th Earl had been his commanding officer in the Sutherland Fencibles, and the bard plainly viewed him with respect and affection. See Grimble (1999: 214-16).

O na chaill iad an lànán,
Bha mìn, mòrdhalach, maiseach,

Iarla Uilleam an Còirneal,
'S a chèil' òg, Màiri Macsual.

[6] 'N uair chaidh a' chàraid so cheangal,
Bu tearc an samhail an Alba;
'S fhad 's a dh'fhan iad 's an fhearann-s',
Cha b' fheàrr dhiubh barail na dhearbhadh iad;
'S dlùth a ghleidh iad am bòidean,
Fhad bu bheò, gus 'm bu mharbh iad,
Le gaol seasmhach a' phòsaidh;
'S ann ro luath bhuainn a dh' fhalbh iad.

[7] Ged tha 'n naidheachd ud brònach,
Cha 'n 'eil e neònach mar dh' èirich,
Oir 's e 'm Breitheamh a chruthaich iad,
Thug gu cumhachdach èigh' orra.
Ged a ghealltadh dhoibh saoghal,
'S gach staid aoibhneach fo 'n ghrèin so,
Aon uair cha b' urr' iad an gleidheil,
O' n dh' èigh na Flaitheas dhoibh fèin orr'.

[8] Gu 'n robh 'n ceud Mhorair Uilleam
'N a dhuine cionalta meaghrach,
Morair Uilleam a dhà dhiubh,
Ghleidh e 'chàirdean is 'oighreachd;
Ach 's e Uilleam an tritheamh,
A dhol à tìom a dh' aon bhoillsgeadh,
Rinn gach briseadh nis ùrachadh
Do na dùthchaibh a chaill e.

[9] Sud an teaghlach bha òrdail,
Gheibhteadh mor gun bhi uaibhreach;
Sud teaghlach bha ceòlmhor,
Gheibht' ag òl gun bhi buaireant';
Sud an teaghlach d' am b' àbhaist
A bhi 'n a thàbhairnn aig uaislibh;
A' sior leasach' an fhearainn,
Gun bhonn gearain aig tuath orr'.

[10] Sud an teaghlach d' am buineadh
Cliù a' b' ainneamh r' a innseadh,
Chumadh n' uailse gu stàtail,
'S a bhiodh blàith ris na h-ìslibh;
'S nach do thog leis an eucoir,
Bonn le h-èigin air aon diubh,—
Bha gach còir aca cinneachadh,
Mach o dhiombuanachd dhaoine.

Since they lost the couple
Who were harmonious, magnificent,
handsome,
Earl William the Colonel
And his young spouse Mary Maxwell.

*When this couple was married,
Rare was their equal in Scotland;
While they remained in their own land,
They could establish no better reputation;
They kept their vows faithfully,
While they lived and until their deaths,
With enduring married love;
It is too quickly they departed from us.*

*While the news was sorrowful,
Its occurrence was not unusual,
Because the Judge who created them
Issued to them a powerful summons.
Although a lifetime was promised them,
And every joy under the sun,
They could not be preserved one hour
After Providence called them.*

*The first Earl William
Was a kind, hospitable man,
The second Earl William
Protected his relatives and his inheritance;
But it is the third Earl William,
Passing untimely in a single flash,
Who reopened every wound
In the country that lost him.*

*That family was well-ordered,
Receiving much without arrogance;
That family was musical,
They could drink without quarreling;
That family made it their custom
To entertain the gentry;
Always developing their land,
Without giving their tenants reason to
complain.*

*To that family belonged
A reputation rarely recounted,
They would proudly maintain their nobility
And would be friendly to their inferiors.
They did not raise up the unjust
Causing distress to any,
Each of their virtues was increasing
During their fleeting lives.*

[11] Bha mi coimeas nan àrmunn,
Ri deadh àmhainn bha feumail,
An dèigh a teine a bhàthadh,
'S gun bhi làthair ach eibhleag;
Ach tha mi fathast an earbsadh,
Am beagan aimsir an dèigh so,
Gu 'm bi an t-sradag ud, Beataidh,
'N a teine lasarach aoibhinn.

[12] 'N uair a bha thu 'n ad leanabh,
'S tu a dh' uireasbhuidh aimsir,
Thòisich fàbhor is fortan
Ri cur casg air luchd d' ainmeinn';
Bha do thaoitearan tapaidh,
'S cobhair Freasdail 'g an leanmhuinn;
Chaill do naimhdean am barail,—
Ghleidh thu t' fhearann is t' ainmean.

[13] Bidh mi dùnadh an dàin so,
Oir tha e àrd air son m' inntinn;
Le aon athchuing do 'n òigh so,
Dh' fhuireach beò mar aon chuimhne:

Tha mi 'g earbsadh ri Freasdal,
'S a rìgh gu 'm faic, 's gu 'n cluinn mi,
Thu bhi pòsda ri gaisgeach,
A leanas cleachd'an do shinnsear.

I was likening the chieftains
To a good oven that was useful
After its fire was put out,
And when only an ember remained.
But I am confident yet
That in a little time from now
That spark Betty
Will blaze into a joyous fire.

When you were an infant
And when you were lacking years,
Fortune and favour began
To restrain your enemies.
Your guardians were skilful,
And the aid of Providence followed them.
Your opponents lost their expectations;
You kept your lands and titles.

I will conclude this song,
For it is a matter too lofty for my intellect,
With one prayer for this little girl,
That she should remain living as a sole
memorial.

I am confident in Providence,
And O God, may I see and hear
Of your marriage to a worthy man
Who will continue the customs of your
forbears.

60. THE “GREY HEIFER” TOCHER¹²⁶

[1] 'S ann a bhuail an iorghuill,
Air an t-suiridheach tha 'n so shìos,
Chuir e 'ùigh' air cèile,
'S gu 'n do rèitich iad 'n an dìos.
Shaoil mi fèin 'n uair thòisich iad,
Gu 'n còrdadh iad gun sgìos;
Ach chum àsruidh beag do ghamhuinn iad,
Gun cheangal còrr is mìos.

[2] Sin, 'n uair thuirt a' mhaighdean,
Nach foighnich sibh rium fìor,
Is innsidh mi a rìreadh
Gu 'm bu chaochlaideach a rian.
Gu 'n robh e cheart cho deònach,
Ri duin' òg a chualas riamh;
'S a nis gu 'n ghabh e buair dhìom,
O nach d' fhuair e 'n gamhuinn ciar.

[3] Cha[idh] e sin air aghairt,
'S ann do Shaghair chaidh e 'n tùs,
Chuir iad fios 'n a dhèigh,
Thigh'nn air aghaidh ann a chùis.
'S e roghnaich es' an tàillearachd—
'S i b' fheàrr leis na bhith pòsd';
O nach d' fhuair e 'n gamhuinn àsruith,
Ged fhaigheadh e 'm bàs de 'n spùt.

[4] Dh' aithnich mi 's an amharc ort,
Gu robh do thomhas gann,
Chunnaic mi air t' iomchuinn,
Gu robh 'n iom-chomhairl' 'n ad cheann.
'S nach robh do spìorad dìomhair,
'G a do ghrìosadh 's a' cheart àm;
'N uair a b' fheàrr leat gamhuinn caoile,
Na bean, na gaoil, na clann.

[5] H-uile fear a chi thu,
'G a do dhìteadh air do chùl,
Ged leasaich sinn an t-airgiod dhuit,
Mu cheithir mharg 's ni 's mò,
'S e their gach filidh focail riut,
Gu *spot* chur air do chliù,
Gu 'n d' rinn an gamhuinn bacainn,
Do *chon-tract* a chuir air cùl.

An uproar has arisen
Over the wooer who lives yonder.
He desired a spouse
And the two of them were betrothed.
I thought myself when they began
That they would agree without difficulty,
But a small wretch of a stirk prevented
them
From tying the knot for more than a month.

It was then the girl said:
“Won't you ask me truly
And I will say that indeed
His disposition was fickle.
He was definitely as willing
As any young man you ever heard,
And now he has become enraged with me
Because he didn't get the dun stirk.”

So he went on his way
And it was to Syre he went first.
They sent word after him
To honour his bond.
He chose to be a tailor
Rather than marry.
O that he had got the wretched stirk,
Even if it were to die of the flux.

*I realized when I saw you
That your judgment was lacking.
I saw in your behavior
That your mind was divided.
Your spirit was not concealed
By your simultaneous entreaty,
When you preferred a skinny heifer
To a wife and love and children.*

*Every man who sees you
Will condemn you behind your back,
Even if we increase the dowry for you
To four marks and stock as well.
Every poet will address you
And place a spot on your reputation,
Because the tethered stirk made you
Reject a marriage contract.*

¹²⁶ The text is from Morrison (1899: 252-53); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 174-76) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 44-45). The translation of verses 1-3 is from Grimble (1999: 155-56); the remainder is my own.

The song criticizes a young man who declined to marry unless another heifer was added to the dowry of his betrothed.

[6] 'S mis a fhuair mo charadh,
Leis na fearaibh as gach thaobh,
A' mheud 's a bha 'g am iarruidh dhiubh,
'S nach b' fhiach leam duin' ach thu.
Shaoil mi fèin 's an fhoghar,
'N uair a thagh mi thu à triùir,
Nach fanadh tu cho fada uam,

Ge b' fhiach an gamhuinn crùn.

*It is I that was cheated
By the men on every side;
Of all who were courting me
I considered no one worthy but you.
I myself thought in the autumn,
When I chose you among the three,
That you would not stay away from me
so long,
Even if the heifer was worth a crown.*

61. JOHN MACALLAN¹²⁷

[1] 'S ann an Cealldail ud shuas, Tha bodhaig na stuaim', Cha 'n fhaicear gruaim 'n a mhalaich.	In Keoldale yonder There is a modest fellow On whose brow not a frown is to be seen.
[2] Tha e na òlach còir Air iomadach dòigh, Nach eòl duit Iain Mac-Ailein?	He is a worthy hospitable man Of many parts — Don't you know John son of Allan?
[3] 'S ann an Cealldail ud shuas, Tha 'n triùcair gun uails', 'N sean dall ruadh gun onoir.	In Keoldale yonder There is a rascal without gentility, The old blind red fellow without honour.
[4] 'S a rìgh, nach bu ghòrach, Duit fhoighneachd am b' eòl domh, Ròg-shùil Iain 'Ic-Ailein.	Heavens, how foolish Of you to ask whether I know Of John son of Allan's sly eye.
[5] Na 'm faiceadh sibh e 'n Dòrnach, No ann an Ionmhar-Horsa', 'S e sheasadh gu bòidheach, fearail.	If you were to see him at Dornoch Or in Thurso, He would be standing, handsome and virile.
[6] Na ceannaichean mu 'n bhòrd, 'S na gloineachan 'n dòrn, 'S iad ag òl le Iain Mac-Ailein.	The merchants around the table With the glasses in their fists Would all be drinking with John son of Allan.
[7] Na 'm biodh sogan òil air, Cha chreidteadh nach biodh 'n tòc air, 'S e sileadh dheòir le aileig.	If he were merry with drinking, You could only believe he had an eye disease, As he wept with hiccups.
[8] Gach ceannaich mu na bhòrd, Cur corrag ri a shròn, 'S iad a' spòrs mu Iain Mac-Ailein.	Each merchant at the table Puts a forefinger to his nose As they make fun of John son of Allan.
[9] Tha e ainmeil, cliùiteach, Anns gach 'cearn do 'n dùthaich, 'S mòr a mhùirns' anns gach talla.	He is famous, renowned In every corner of the country, And great is the respect for him in every mansion.
[10] Bithidh iomadh Baintigh'rn, Labhart anns gach cainnt, A' foighneachd Iain 'Ic-Ailein.	Many of their Ladyships Speak in various languages, Enquiring after John son of Allan.

¹²⁷ The text is from Morrison (1899: 240-42); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 151-53); the translation is from Grimble (1999: 187-90). Each verse is repeated, for a total of 6 lines.

The subject of this song was a merchant, accused by Rob Donn of acting as a double-agent at Culloden and saving himself by pretending to be blind. This means that it was probably composed soon after 1746, while Rob Donn was still disgusted by the man's behavior. Grimble notes (1999: 187) that the poem emphasizes his Jekyll and Hyde character by alternating between praise and disparagement.

[11] Cha 'n 'eil Baintigh'rn an cùirt,
Chi boillsgeadh d' a shùil,
Leis nach b' fheàrr an cù d' a gearradh.

There is not a noblewoman of the court
Catching a glimpse of his eye
Who wouldn't rather a dog had bitten her.

[12] 'S olc buileachadh nan rann,
'S an tàlann a tha annt',
Ris a' cheap-shuileach cham 'g a mholadh.

It is ill to be delivering verses
(With the skill they contain)
In praise of the crooked, bung-eyed fellow.

[13] 'S olc thoilleadh e do dhùrachd,
'S gu dearbh cha ruig do chliù air,

Oir choisinn e do dhùthaich onoir.

Ill he has deserved your good wishes
And for sure your praise will not reach
him,
For he has won honour for his country.

[14] *Rhibhiudhaig* e na trùpachan,
'S na rèiseamaidean ùra,
Eadar Teàrlach 's an Diùc, an Cuileodair.

He reviewed the troops
And the new regiments,
Both Charles's and the Duke's at Culloden.

[15] Bha 'n sluagh an sin gu lèir,
Gabhail truais ris mar fheumnach,
'N dùil nach bu lèir do 'dhà ghlog-shùil.

All the host there
Took pity on him as a needy person,
Thinking that his two lumps of eyes could
not see.

[16] Fiosaich' breugach nan lùb,
Dèanamh sgèil air gach taobh,
Eadar Teàrlach 's an Diùc, an Cuileodair.

Lying informer,
Betraying both sides,
That of Charles and the Duke at Culloden.

62. RICHARD'S WEDDING¹²⁸

[1] 'S ann anns an Fharaid tha bhanaid a' chluinntear,
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi;
'S e Richard 's fear-bhaile, a' bhean is a' mhuinntir,
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Bha 'm ministear fèin aig rèiteach an fhigheadair,
'S na faiceadh tu Richard, gu 'n clisgeadh do chridhe roimh',
'S e 'n donas chuir idir gu Biod-dubh-namfitheach iad;
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi.

It is in Faraid that the wedding was reported,
I am sleeping, do not wake me;
Richard, the tenant, the bride and the people,
I am sleeping, do not wake me;
The minister himself was at the weaver's betrothal,
And if you saw Richard, your heart would tremble —
It is the devil that sent them to the Black Hill of the Ravens.
I am sleeping, do not wake me.

[2] 'S lapach a rinn sibh, 'n uair chaill sibh na pìoban,
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Gidheadh bu mhaith mhisneach dhoibh 'n t-iteachan fhaotainn,
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Tha fear na bainnse fèin 'n a thaibhse do bhreabadair,
'S e a thachairt 's an oidhch' air a' chloinn gu 'm biodh eagal orr',
An t-armadh r' a aodann, 's an glaoth r' a chuid crabhhuichean,
Tha mi 'n am chodal, 's na dùisgear mi.

You made it spiritless, when you lost the pipes,
I am sleeping, do not wake me;
Nevertheless, it was very encouraging for them to get the bobbin,
I am sleeping, do not wake me;
The bridegroom himself was a ghost of a weaver,
What happened that night to the children frightened them,
The grease on his face, and the glue on his equipment,
I am sleeping, do not wake me.

¹²⁸ The text is from Morrison (1899: 417) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 260-61). Parish records date the wedding (and thus the poem) to about 1770. See Morrison (1899: 417).

63. THE WIDOWER AND THE OLD MAID¹²⁹

[1] 'S ann mu Eilispi dhealbhach,
Fhuair mi seachas an dè,
Gu 'n robh mac Hùistein 'Ic Thoramaid,
'N rùn falbh as a dèigh.
Bhean as gasda tha 'n Alba,

Gu bhi 'n a banachaig aig sprèidh,
'S duine 's gleust' a ghlac armachd,

Dhol a mharbhadh an fhèidh.

[2] Tha e dearbht' anns gach talamh,
Gun choisinn Eilispi 'n còrr
Air gach banachaig a chunntar,
Eadar Tunga 's an Stoir.
Tha e dearbhta mu companach,
O na dh' ionnsaich e òg,
Gu 'm b' e taghadh gach duin' e,
Ghlac gleus, no gunna 'n a dhorn.

[3] Gum bheil greim do dhà cheàird ac',
Gur mòr is feàrr e na 'n t-òr,
'S maith an toimhsean sin da-san,
Nach do thagh e pàisteachan òg.
'S maith an geall do fhear teaghlaich,
A fhuair a chloinn 'n uair bu chòir,

Tè chumas ris, 'n uair bhios fonn air,

'S nach tarruing tròm air r' a bheò.

[4] 'S e mo bheachd air bhur bargan,
Gu 'm bi e sealbhach gu leòir,
Cha tig gainne gu bràth oirbh,
Do dh' im, do chàise no do dh' fheadail.
'S e sud turas is ciallaich',
Rinn duine riamh a bha pòsd',

'N ath bhean thèid e a' dh' iarruidh,
Gun bhi neo-chiallach, no òg.

[5] Smuainich mise gu 'm b' fheàrr dha,
Dol g' dearbhadh rè seal,
Dh' fheuch nach deanadh i dì-meas
Air fear bha 'n saoghal cho fad.

Concerning handsome Elizabeth,
I received information yesterday
That the son of Hugh son of Norman
Was hoping to court her.

A woman as attractive as there is in
Scotland

To be a dairymaid with cattle,
And a man as expert as any when he takes
up his weapons
To go killing the deer.

It is confirmed in every district
That Elizabeth has no rival
In any dairymaid you can assess
Between Tongue and Stoer.
It is confirmed of her companion
Since he was educated in youth
That he was the choicest of men
Who ever took gun-lock or gun in his fist.

*They will have mastery of two trades,
Something much better than gold,
And it shows his good judgment
That he didn't choose a young wife.
It is a good bet for a family man
Who had his children at the appropriate
time;*

*A woman who will keep up with him,
when he wishes,
And will not be too demanding, while he
lives.*

My opinion of your agreement
Is that it will be quite prosperous.
No shortage will ever reach you
Of butter, of cheese or of meat.
This is the most prudent course
Ever embarked upon by one who has been
married,
That the next wife he seeks
Is neither lacking in prudence nor young.

*I thought it would be better for him
To wait long enough to make sure
That she would not fail to respect
A man who had been in the world so long.*

¹²⁹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 221-23); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 128-30). The translation of verses 1, 2 and 4 is from Grimble (1999: 157-58); the remainder is my own.

Cha d' fhuair i duine cho cuimseach,
Thilgeadh urchair air geal,—
Ach an t-urram do Shannsaid,
Mu 'n do chaisg a' bhantrach a ghoil.

[6] Fhuair thu taghadh do dh' armaibh,
Dhol a' shealgach an fhèidh,
Fhuair thu gunna bha bòidheach,
Is bu sheòlt' air a gleus.
Thug e teum chun a chruidhe,
Do 'n chlaisich bhuidhe aige fhèin;
Is thug e seana chlaiseach Bhiogais,
Do 'n fhear bu sgiobailte leum.

[7] Gu 'n d' fhuair Uilleam dha fèin iad,
Airm allail gu tilgeadh nam fras,
Fùdar fìor làidir sèidmheach,
Sàr-bhuilleach, gràn-mheallach, glas;
Laoch apar, is lùth's acfuinneach,

Gu triall air aghairt 's air ais;
'S glè mhaiseach an làmh gaisgich seasamh
'N ceann fàs-ruith sean-chlaiseach bhras.

*She did not get a man as sure of aim,
Who fired his bullet at a target —
But the honor to Sandy,
Before the widower quenched his ardor.*

*You received your choice of arms
To go hunting the deer,
You obtained a beautiful gun
That was carefully primed.
It delivered a wound to the heart
Of the yellow antlered one himself,
And it took Bighouse's old weapon
To the one most agile in leaping.*

*William himself obtained them,
Excellent arms to fire small shot,
Powder very forcefully propelled,
Hard-hitting, fine-grained, gray;
An expert champion, vigorous and well-
equipped,
For traveling back and forth;
And very handsome held in the hand of a
hero,
The old fluted end shooting forth keenly.*

64. CHRISTIAN MACLEOD¹³⁰

[1] Rob Donn:

'S ann 's an Fharaid tha mhaighdean,
Nach 'eil toillt'neach air fuath dh' i;
Aghaidh mhaiseach gun ghnùig oirr',
Beul ciùin nach dean bruidhlean;
Sud an teanga le breugan
Nach cuir càirdeas an t-sluaigh dh'
Uasal, iriosal, rianail,
Beannachd tighearn' is tuath aic'.

In Faraid there is a maiden
Who does not deserve hatred;
A lovely face without a scowl,
A gentle mouth that does not offend.
Her tongue will not lie
To curry people's favor;
Noble, modest, good-tempered,
She is blessed by lord and common folk.

[2] Alexander Cormack:

Rinn thu moladh gun choinnseas,
D' a h-aodann choinntinneach mhalluicht'
'S gu 'm b' e 'fasan bhi riasradh,
'S a spionadh dhias anns an Fharaid.
Mallachd athar is màthar,
'S gach aon nàbaidh tha mar ri;
'N teangaidh ascaoineach, riasgaidh,
'M beul mi-dhiadhaidh na caile.

You praised without a conscience
Her contentious, cursed face.
It was her practice to be wandering
And uprooting grain in Faraid.
Curse of father and mother
And every single neighbor near her;
The tongue harsh, intemperate,
In the girl's blasphemous mouth.

[3] RD:

Cha bu bhreugan a chanainn,
'N uair bhithinn moladh na gruagaich,
Oir 's e firinn is onoir
O gach seanair bu dual d' i.
'S ged bhiodh Gallach le prosbaig,
Gus am preasadh e 'ghruaidhean,
'S mis' nach creideadh air 'fhocal,
Gu 'm fac' e rosadh nan sguab i.

No lies did I speak
When I complimented the girl,
Because she inherited truth
And honor from each grandfather.
Even if a Caithness man used a spy-glass
Until he wrinkled his cheeks,
I would not believe his word
That he saw her stripping the sheaves.

[4] AC:

Tha mise labhairt na firinn,
Is 'g a h-innseadh gu còmhnhard,
'S ged cheil thusa le masgull,
Their Mac-Casgail ni 's leòir deth;
Gu 'n robh Curstaidh, 's sròn fhiat' oirr,
Lomadh dhias ann a pòcaid,
Gu teumnach, beumnach lasgant',
Is beag tlachd air a còmhradh.

I am speaking the truth
And telling it straight,
Although you obscured it with flattery.
MacAskill will say enough about it:
That Kirsty, with her surliness,
Was removing grain in her bag,
Capriciously, destructively, brazenly,
And little charm in her conversation.

¹³⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 127-30) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 80-83) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 78-79).

The poem uses a dialog form to discuss a situation in which a young woman named Kirsty was accused of stealing grain during the harvest on Lord Reay's farm at Balnakeil, Durness. Her accuser, MacAskill, Lord Reay's griever, and Rob Donn's interlocutor, Alexander Cormack of Keoldale, were both from Caithness. Rob Donn defended the girl and Cormack condemned her. The poem reveals contemporary attitudes to class, the role of women, local loyalties, and the centrality of the Bible as a frame of reference in addressing ethical issues.

[5] RD:

'S neònach thus' bhi cho daobhaidh,
'S tu sìor leughadh na còrach,
Gun robh Ruta cho saothreach,
Air an raon a bh' aig Boaz;
Thug e òrdugh do phàirt diu,
Gu bhi fàgail nan dòrlach;
Sud am barant bh' aig Curstaidh,
Gu bhi 'm measg ur cuid eòrna.

It is unusual for you to be so perverse,
And you always preaching about justice.
Ruth performed the same labor
On the field of Boaz;¹³¹
He gave an order to some of them
To leave the sheaves;
That is the authorization Kirsty had
To be in your part of the barley.

[6] AC:

Cha 'n eil barant 's a' Bhìobull,
Leis an saoradh tu Curstaidh;
Oir 's e 's fasan do 'n fhìrinn,
Bhith sìor dìteadh gach trusdair;

Gum bheil gob oirr' mur reusair,
Seirm na h-eucoir' mar rotair;
M' ulaidh, m' aighear, is m' eudail,
Is mairg cèile gheibh mosag!
female!

There is no authority in the Bible
By which you could exculpate Kirsty,
As it is her practice towards the scripture
To constantly reproach every worthless
fellow.
She has a mouth like a razor,
The noise of the criminal like a rotor —
My treasure, my joy, and my darling —
Pity the husband who gets the niggardly

[7] RD:

'S mòr m' fharmaid ri cèile
Gheibh dha fèin i mar chuspair;
Pearsa maiseach, 's i foghlumt',
An deadh èideadh 's an trusgan.
Ged nach fulaing i luaidh rith',

Tha gaol uaigneach aig cus d' i,
Is na 'm bithinns' 'n am bhantraich,
Bhithinn fann mu 'm faigheadh tus i.

Great is my envy of a husband
Who will obtain her for himself —
An attractive person, educated,
Good clothing and furnishings.
Although she will not permit a
sweetheart near her,
Many feel unrequited love for her,
And if I were a widower,
I would be a weakling before you would
get her.

[8] AC:

Ged a bhithinn-s' 'n am bhantraich,
'S mi nach sanntaicheadh peanas,
Is nach pòsadh gu m' aimhleas,
Olc aingeant' gun onoir.
Ma ni 'm bàs rud cho tainnt' ort,
'S gu 'n tèid thu na cleamhnas gun sonas,
Ma gheibh i aobhar gu aimhreit,
Gu 'n cum i cainnt ris an Donas.

If I were a widower —
Unless I was seeking penance —
I would not marry to my ruin
Malicious evil without honor.
If death makes you such a twisted thing
That you will enter a joyless relationship;
If she receives cause for a quarrel,
She will speak even to the Devil.

¹³¹ Ruth was given permission to glean leftover barley from the fields of Boaz so that she and her mother-in-law Naomi could eat. Ruth 2.

[9] RD:

'S e mo chomhairl' do dhaoineibh,
Gun bhi 'g inns' air a' mhaighdean,
Ann an toiseach a pisich,
Cliù a 's measa na thoill i.
Ged a thog iad droch sgeul oirr',

Cha bu lèir dhoibh 's an oidhch' i,
Mach o rhop-shùil Mhic-Casguil,
'Bha riamh faicinn nan taibhseach'.

It is my advice to people
Not to burden the young woman,
At the beginning of her success,
With a reputation worse than she deserved.
Although they would invent a bad tale
about her,
They did not see her at night,
Except for the slovenly MacAskill,
Who was always seeing ghosts.

[10] AC:

Rinn Mac-Casguil an fhìrinn,
Ann an dìteadh na maighdinn;
'S cha 'n fhaigh thusa a rìs oirr',
An cliù sgaoilt' sinn chaill i.
Bu cho maith dhuit a daoradh,
Ris an t-saothair a rinn thu,
'S nach robh leisgeul g' a saoradh,
Ach bhi 'g innseadh gur taibhs' i.

MacAskill told the truth
In condemning the girl,
And you will not restore to her
The good name that she lost.
Regardless of the efforts you made
To rehabilitate her,
There was no excuse to acquit her
Unless you say that she was a ghost.

[11] RD:

Cha 'n 'eil Curstaidh 'n ur comain,
Chionn bhi tolladh a cliù oirr',
Leis na grìobhachan Gallach,
Cur a h-alladh feadh dhùthchan;

Le sgeòil bhreugach Mhic-Casguil,
A' bhiasd chrasg-shùileach, ghlòn-dubh,
Le bhi seinn a chuid tuaileis,
A' deanamh suas ri daoine' ùra.

Kirsty is not obliged to you
To be ruining her reputation,
With the grieves from Caithness
Broadcasting her ill-fame throughout the
countryside.
With MacAskill's false story —
The cross-eyed, dark, squinting beast —
By proclaiming his slander,
Making up to new people.

65. FAOLAN¹³²

Sèist (Chorus):

Hè, hoirionnan ho, 's ho, hoirionnan ho,
'S e hoirionnan ho, 's ho, hoirionnan ho.

[1] 'S ann tha bhean againn muileach,
Mu 'n fhear ghurrach gun treòir;
Ach feuch an innis e nis dhi,
C' uin' thèid mis do 'n tigh-òil.

[2] Gur h-i mo bharail air Faolan,
Gur h-e stic na tha beò,
Fear nach ceileadh an fhìrinn,
'S fear a dh' innseadh an còrr.

[3] Na 'm bithinn fhèin mar tha Faolan,
Dheanainn strì ri bhur leòn;
Gu 'n cuirinn, na 'm faodainn,
A' chorrag dhìreach 'n ur tònn.

I have a very dear wife —
But as to the feeble crouching fellow,
See if he will tell her now
When I go to the drinking-house.

It is my opinion of Faolan
That it is a mistake he is alive —
A man who would not conceal the truth,
But instead would reveal too much.

If I myself were like Faolan,
I would struggle against your defect;
And I would put, if I could,
Your rigid finger up your ass.

¹³² The text is from Morrison (1899: 388) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 182).

As explained by Morrison and Mackay, the story of this little gem is as follows: One day Rob Donn and Faolan were planting potatoes. Some friends came up the road and invited them for a drink, which both accepted. Then Faolan left, and instead of going back to work, reported to the bard's wife that he was still in the tavern. The last verse refers to a previous injury to Faolan's finger, which left him unable to bend it.

66. TO JOHN MACKAY (MAC EACHAINN)¹³³

[1] 'S aonarach a tha mi 'm bliadhna,
'S tha mi cianail air a shon-a,

Tional achaidhnean air bhràigheach',
'S fèidh air fàsach bhàrr na bh' orra;

'S gàbhaidh 'n roinn-s', tha 'm buill an
anama,
Pàirt diubh leanmhuinn air gach cor-a,

Lean mo thuigse 'n sin ri m' fheum,

Is thàir an fhèill dhi fèin toil-a.

[2] 'S luaineach, mion-chorrach, mo dhùsgadh,
'G iarruidh naidheachd ùr gach fir,
Suain cha 'n fhaigh mi air an rian so,
Deoch no biadh, cha 'n iarr, 's cha sir;
'S gann gu 'n cluinn mi phàirt tha làmh rium,
'N uair is àirde 'n gàir 's an gean-a,

Cuimhneachadh bhi òg air fèilltibh,

Sealltuinn as mo dhèigh, 's mi sean-a.

[3] Ach, Hùistein, cluich a rèir do chèille,

Dèan-sa t' fheur ri grèin 'n a teas-a,
'S cuimhnich nach 'eil neart an daoineibh,
Nach toir beagan tìom air ais uath'.
Cuimhnich orm-sa là Fèill-Mìcheil,
'M bothan dìthreibh fo bhun phreas-a,

'S m' aigheadh fèin cho trom ri luaidhe,
Air son bhith tuath, nuair bha thu deas-a.

How solitary I am this year,
And how melancholy I am on that
account—a,

Gleaning fields on the uplands
And deer in the rough pasture instead of
cattle.¹³⁴

Desperate is the fate that befalls the
living limbs,
Some of them following where thought
leads them—a;
My understanding has *followed my need*
there,¹³⁵
And the fair has drawn me in desire—a.

I awake restless, full of little starts,
Wanting fresh news of each man;
I cannot sleep on account of this,
Drink nor food I neither want nor ask for.
I scarcely hear those who are beside me
When their laughter and good humor are
at their height—a,
Remembering how I was young at the
fairs,
Looking over my shoulder, and I an old
man—a.

Play your hand, Hugh, as your good
sense directs you.
Make hay while the sun shines brightly—a,
And remember that men possess no powers
That a little time will not strip from them.
Remember me on the day of Michael's fair
In a wilderness bothy under the shadow
of bushes—a.
My spirits are as heavy as lead
Because I am in the north while you are
in the south—a.

¹³³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 101-02) and the translation is from Grimble (1999: 103-06) except as noted; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 316-17) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 40).

Rob Donn composed this poem to honor Iain mac Eachainn's retirement from his career as a drover. Grimble (1999: 103) describes it as "the earliest of Rob Donn's reflections on old age", which also "preserves a peculiarity of Iain Mac Eachainn's speech." Hugh was Mackay of Bighouse, the kinsman and former partner who took over the droving business when Iain mac Eachainn retired. See Grimble (1999: 103-04).

¹³⁴ I have translated "na bh' orra" [what was there] as "cattle" to make the implication clear.

¹³⁵ Grimble has "kept close to my necessity here" to translate this line in Mackay (1829: 316), which has the word "sionn" instead of "'n sin".

[4] Ach tha thu 'n cùirtibh mar bu chòir
 dhuit,
 Ged eil mis' fo cheò, 's fo smal;
 'S tha thu dèanamh 'n àirde t' eòlais,
 Ris gach duine mòr is mion.
 Tha thu nochd a' triall a shealltuinn
 Air Bàrr-callduinn,¹³⁶ 's air a bhean-a,
 'S ged a dh' fhàs mo chasan mall,
 Cha tric' mo smuaintean 'so na sin-a.

[5] Ach saoilidh mi gu 'm bheil mi ann,
 Is glacadh mi gu teann mo chuilce;
 Is saoilidh mi anns a' cheart àm,
 Nach 'eil 'n am cheann ach samhlahd uilce;

Saoilidh mi gu faic mi t' eudan,
 Do làmh threun, 's an t-srèin, 's a' chuipe;
 'S tha do dhealbh aig sùilibh m' inntinn,

Mar tha bheinn-s' aig sùil mo chuirpe.

[6] Dèanamh aithne ris gach dròbhair,

Chaith mi iomadh bòta, 's spuir-a,
 Rinn mi 'n àirde cliù do nì,
 Greis de thiom mu 'n d' rinn mi sgur-a;
 'S caraid thu—cha chaill ni fhuair thu,

'S tu tha buain na bha mi cur-a;
 'S ait leam thu bhi 'n tùs na prìs,

Ged tha mi 'm bliadhn' 'n am aonar tur-a.

O you are in the great houses as you love
 to be,
 While I am in fog and gloom,
 And you are increasing your knowledge
 Among all men, big and small.
 Now you are off to see
 Barcaldine and his wife—a,
 And though my steps have become slow,
 My thoughts are not more often here
 than there—a.

O I think I am there.
 I shall take firm hold of my cane
 And I shall think at the appropriate time
 That it is only a semblance of evil in my
 mind.
 And I shall think I see your features,
 Your strong hand with rein and whip in it,
 And your picture before the eyes of my
 mind,
 Just as that hill is before my actual sight.

In making the acquaintance of all the
 drovers,
 I wore out many a boot and spur—a.
 I gained great fame with cattle
 For many a day before I ceased—a.
 You are a friend; anything you gained is no
 loss
 And you reap what I sowed—a;
 And I am pleased that your reputation is
 fresh,
 Although I am this year entirely alone—a.

¹³⁶ Grimble (1999: 104) suggests that this reference dates the poem to about 1750, as Hugh's daughter Janet had married Barcaldine's brother, Colin Campbell of Glenure (the Red Fox in R. L. Stevenson's *Kidnapped*) in 1749 and his murder occurred in 1752.

67. TO THE REV. MURDO MACDONALD¹³⁷

Seist:

'S cianail, is cianail, O! 's cianail a tha mi,
'N ceann na bliadhna, O! 's cianail a tha mi,
A Mhaighstir Mhurchadh, 's tu air m' fhàgail,
'S mairg sinne, nach d'fhuair linn no dhà
dhiot.

[1] Chridhe an reusain, a bhéil na tàbhachd,
Cheann na céille, 's an fhoghlaim chràbhaidh,
Làimh gun ghanntair 'n am dhuit paidheadh,
An uachdar a' bhùird, a ghnùis na fàilte.

[2] Chaochail iad rianan, o chioslaich am bàs
thu,
Cha 'n 'eil meas am bliadhna, air ciall, no air
pairtean;
Thionndaidh na biasdan gu riasradh gràineil,
Leo-san leig Dia srian o 'n là sin.

[3] Tha mise 'n am aonar, mar aon ann
am fàsach,
'S ni gun fheum dhomh, aobhar ghàire,
Cuims' ann an cainnt, ann an rainn no
'n danaibh,
Chionn 's nach 'eil thu ann g' an clàistinn.

[4] 'S caomh leam an teaghlach, 's a' chlann
sin a dh' fhàg thu,
'S caomh leam na fuinn, bhiodhteadh seinn
ann ad fhàrdoich;
'S caomh leam bhi 'g ùrachadh an cliù sin
a bha ort;
'S caomh leam an ùir th' air do thaobh-s'
de na bhàghan!

[5] Rinn cuid bròn fa chomh'r do bhàis-sa,
Ach ghabh iad sgìos ann am mìos no dhà
dheth;
Cha 'n 'eil mis' mar iadsan, riaraicht'
cho trà dheth,
An ceann na bliadhna, O! 's cianail a tha mi.

Chorus:

I am mournful, Rev. Murdo,
At the end of the year that you left me,
And we are full of woe
That we could not keep you for two
generations.

Sound and sensible heart,
Prudent mind of pious learning,
Hand unstinting in bestowing
The best of the table and a welcoming
countenance.

They have changed their manners since
death subdued you;
There is no respect this year for prudence
or parts;
The beasts turned to loathsome disorder
Since God released their bridle on that day.

I am here alone, like one in the
wilderness,
And useless to me are reasons for laughter,
Or well-aimed speech, in verse or poetry,
Because you are not here to listen.

I love the family and those children that
you left;
I love the songs you would sing in your
dwelling;
I love to renew the fame that was yours;
I love the earth by your side in the
churchyard.

Some were sorrowful on account of your
death,
But they wearied of it in a month or two;
I am not like them, satisfied so soon,
At the end of a year I still mourn.

¹³⁷ The text is from Morrison (1899: 26-27) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 327-28) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 18).

Morrison reports (1899: 26) that Rob Donn composed this lament in response to a request by Rev. Patrick MacDonald on a visit to Durness about a year after his father's death in 1763.

68. THE “GEIGEAN”¹³⁸

[1] 'S duilich leam creidsinn,
Mu thoimhsean a' Ghèigein,
No gin a bha mar-ris,
Bhi baileachadh 'n cèille,
Air a leithid do bheum,
'S a chuala sin oth'.¹³⁹

It is hard for me to believe,
Considering the Geigean's abilities,
That anyone who was with him
Could make any sense
Out of his kind of mockery
When it reached their ears.

[2] Ma gheibh a leithid,
Do fhasan cead èirigh,
Faodaidh iad tuilleadh
A dheanamh do bhreugan,
Ma bhios sinn 'n ar tàmh,
'S gu 'n leig sinn sud leoth'.

If his sort is allowed
To become fashionable,
The lies he makes
Could multiply,
If we remain quiet
And permit them.

[3] A leithid do dhi-moladh,
Dheanamh do leanaban,
Bha gun chron cumaidh,
'S na h-urra bha dealbhach,
'S a thainig do fhine
Cho maith 's a bha 'n Alba,
Bheirinn mo mhionnan
'S gu 'm b' urradh mi 'dhearbadh,
Chanainn gu 'm b' fhearra dhuinn,
'M balach a spoth.

His sort of criticism
Is made for children;
It lacked sophistication,
And the responsible parties were evident.
It came to a kindred
As fine as any in Scotland.
I would give my oath
And I would be put to the test —
I say we would be better off
To castrate the fellow.

[4] Ged tha na Sutharlaich
Ullamh gu beumadh,
Na biodh iad tuilleadh,
Ri urra cho beusach,
'S a thàinig dhiubh fèin,
No neach thainig romp'.

Although the Sutherlands
Are prone to sarcasm,
How could they be otherwise,
No matter how virtuous,
Considering from whence they came
Or who came before them.

[5] An duanaidheachd sgaoilt' ud,
Nach d' fhaod iad a dhlùthachadh,
Ach iad bhi gu rèapach,
Feuchainn an dùrachd,
Bha aca le gamhlas,
Agus le goimh.

That verse that was circulating,
They could not go near it
Without being sloppy.
Trying their best,
They produced only
Grudges and malice.

¹³⁸ The text is from Morrison (1899: 285-87) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 231-33).

The circumstances giving rise to this poem are not explained in my sources. Morrison (1899: 285) says only that the “Geigean” was the nickname of a would-be poet by the name of Sutherland. Mackay (1829: 231) adds that the Geigean had composed a song dispraising a particular young woman, but precisely what he said and why I am unable to reconstruct. However, the Geigean appears in a few other songs, including one in which he is mentioned as a possible seducer of one of Lady Reay's maids. See Grimble (1999: 129-34). That may imply that anything he said about a young woman, even in jest, might threaten her reputation.

¹³⁹ According to the glossary in Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 123), the word “oth’ ” is a form of “uatha” meaning “from them”.

[6] Tè gun chron cumaidh,
O 'm mullach g' a h-earball,
Dh' èireadh le h-earradh,
Cho grad ris an earba,
'S e ge tapaidh an Gèigean.
Bu chèile dha Barb'ra,
Bhiodh e cho sona,
'S ged theannadh Rob Dearg rith',
'S bheirinn mo làmh
Gu 'n cumadh i romp'.

[7] Cha 'n 'eil agam umhaill,
Mu 'n chumha ni Sine,
'S cha mhò orm Mairi,
Na sàthadh ni prìne,
'S cha 'n 'eil an cleamhnan,
'N an cùis-eagail domh.

[8] 'S cha 'n fhuiling mi màbadh,
Do phàirtibh na Sgìre,
Air son na gràisg
Da 'm bu chàra bhi 'n dìthreabh,
Eadar sgìr' Chlin,
Agus bràighe sgìr' Loth.

[9] Ged tha na breitheamhnan
Maith air ar fàgail,
'S comas aig trusdairean
Cus do na breugan;
Ach an tèid mise
Ni 's miosa, na tha mi,
Bheir mi mo mhionnan
Nach fuiling mi tàmailt,
Do 'n aon neach a 's tàire,
Rugadh an so.

Any decent woman
From head to toe,
Would arise with her belongings
As quickly as the roe deer,
However clever the Geigean.
Barbara was a match for him —
He would be so happy —
And if Red Robert came near her,
I would give my hand
She would not yield to them.

I pay no heed
To the lament Jean makes
And Mary is no more to me
Than a pinprick.
It is not the betrothal
That worries me.

I will not tolerate mockery
Towards members of the Parish
For the sake of a rabble
Who deserve to be in the wilderness
Between the parish of Clyne
And the braes of the parish of Loth.

Even if the righteous judges
Have forsaken us
And worthless fellows
Can lie with impunity,
Unless I become
Worse than I am,
I give my promise
That I will not tolerate insult
To the lowliest person
Who was born here.

69. THE YOUNG MAN AND THE WIDOW¹⁴⁰

Sèist:

Thèid mi cuide riut do 'n bhail' ud thall,
'S ni sinn rud-eigin mus tig sinn a nall;
Thèid mi cuide riut do 'n bhail' ud thall,
'S ni sinn rud-eigin mus tig sinn a nall.

[1] 'S duine sona, saoghalt' thu,
Mu 'n e 's gu dean i taobh riut,
Cha bhi dad do shaothair ort,
Ach sìneadh ris 'n a àm.

[2] Cha 'n 'eil clach à gàradh agad,
'S cha bhi tigh r' a bhàrradh agad;
Faodaidh tu cheud ràidh an sin,
Do làmhan chur mu d' cheann.

[3] Cha 'n 'eil leac no dòrnaig uait,
No croman thèid 's an òtrach uait,
No poit a dh' easbhuidh clòsaigeadh,
No bòrd a thèid 'n a ceànn.

[4] Oir tha thu làidir, foghainteach,
'S gu 'n dean do chàirdean cobhair riut,
Gu 'm b' fheàrr leam anns an t-sabhull thu,
Na gobhair agus meann.

[5] 'S feàrr duit tè a dh' oibricheas,
Gnìomh na tuath' mar thigeadh dhi,
No òinseach ghòineach, spidealach,
'S dos rioban air a ceann.

Chorus:

I will go with you
To that village over there,
And we will do something
Before we come to it (2x).

You are a lucky, worldly man,
Regarding what she will do by your side,
It will be no effort for you
Except extending it at the time.

You don't have a stone from a garden,
You won't have a house to thatch;
You could spend the first quarter there
With your hands behind your head.

You will not contribute a flagstone or a
pebble,
Or a hoe to use in the dunghill,
Or a pot without a lid,
Or a table that will go on its end.

Because you are strong and fit,
And your friends will provide help,
I'd rather have you in the barn
Than a goat and a kid.

Better for you a woman who will work
At the ordinary tasks that become her,
Than a careless, spiteful fool
With a plume of ribbons on her head.

¹⁴⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 282-83) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 171-72) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 53).

Mackay (1829: 171) describes it as a song giving advice to a young man on his way to court a widow with land and cattle, who asked the bard to accompany him and assist in his efforts. Rob Donn carefully enumerates the particular advantages that would accrue to each party from the marriage.

70. TO KENNETH SUTHERLAND¹⁴¹

[1] 'S e do bhàs, Choinnich Sutharlain, Dh' fhàg na h-àitean so dubhach gu leòr, 'S a chuir caoidh agus mulad Air gach mnaoi agus duine d' am b' eòl; Fhir gun mhearachd, gun fhoill-bheart— Fhir nach dubhairt, 's nach d' rinn ach a' chòir:	It is your death, Kenneth Sutherland, That left these places so gloomy, And brought lamentation and sorrow On every woman and man who knew you. Man without flaw or deceitful deed, Man who did not speak or act except rightly:
Bu shluagh borb sinn gun bhreitheanas, 'N uair a dh' fhalbh thu, mur sgathadh sin oirnn.	We would be a barbarous crowd without judgment If your death did not injure us.
[2] Ged a chuir sinn fo dhìon thu, Ann an talla na di-chuimhn' le bròn; Mar tha do bhodhaig a' crìonadh, Tha ni 's modha do d' ghnìomhraibh tigh'nn beò; Fhir bha beartach gun àrdan, Fhir bha caithteach 's a thèaruinn gu leòr;	Although we placed you safely And sorrowfully in the hall of forgetting, As your body is decaying, More of your works are coming alive. Man who was rich without hauteur, Man who spent and saved when appropriate;
Fhir thug feart air a' chràbhadh, 'S fhir bu bhlaiste na àireamh gu spòrs.	Man who drew strength from piety, And man who relished many pastimes.
[3] Bu chùis-fharmaid do bheusan, Oir a b' annas an leithid 's an fhonn; Bhiodh do chùisean air thoiseach, Thaobh an t-saoghail a bhos agus thall; Cha 'n fhacas 's cha chualas, Fear do dhreuchd air nach buannaicht' leat geall; Rinn thu mòran a thional, 'S do neach beò cha d' rinn sgillinn do chall.	Your virtues were cause for envy, Because their like was rare in the land; Your affairs would be foremost On this side of the world and beyond. Unseen and unheard is a man of your profession Who did not gain by your promise; You did a great deal of collecting, And no one alive lost a shilling to you.
[4] Gu do bhàs o do thoiseach, Ann do ghnàths cha robh car far 'm bu lèir; 'S tu bha tuigsinn nan uailsean, 'S tu bha teàrnadh na tuath' anns gach feum: 'N uair bhiodh <i>difir</i> 'n an cùisean, 'S tus' a ghleidheadh gach taobh le do chèill; Cha robh geilt gu bhi caillt' ort, 'S cha robh airc ort gu <i>bribe</i> dhuit fèin.	From your beginning until your death, No fraud was evident in your habits; You understood the gentry And you rescued the common people in every need. When there were differences regarding matters, You would protect each side with your good sense; You had no terror of ruin, And sought no bribes for yourself.

¹⁴¹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 28-31) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 301-03) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 12).

Kenneth Sutherland was apparently that rarity in the Gaelic tradition, a good factor. He was also an excellent violinist, who instructed several of Rev. Murdo MacDonald's children (male and female) on that instrument. See Morrison (1899: 28).

[5] 'M fear dh' innseadh do bheusan,
'S mòr a dh' fheumadh e ghèire 's a chainnt;

'S iomadh neach bhios 'g ad ionndrain,
An àm togail is cunntaidh na *rainnt*:

Bhiodh do thìodhlacan dìomhair,
'S tu nach sèideadh do ghnìomh le do chainnt,

'S tu nach maoidheadh air feumnach,
'S tu nach iarradh dhuit fèin bonn no taing.

[6] 'S iomadh neach a bheir tairgse
Air do leantuinn an airgid 's an sprèidh,
Ach an ceartas, 's an tròcair,
Nach toir feart air do ròidean gu lèir:
'S mise fèin a bha eòlach,
Gu 'n robh annadsa còrr air cùig ceud,
Ann am fialaidheachd mhòra,
'S gun thu 'g iarruidh na glòire dhuit fèin.

[7] Fhir a theasgaisgeadh ùmaidh,
Gun a lag-bheart a rùsgadh le tannt;

Ach chuireadh beagan do thùir ann,
Leis gach comhairl a chùinneadh do cheann;
Eadar dithis 's an t-saoghal,
Ann am breith cha b' fhiù leat bhi meallt',

Cò nach earbadh a chùis riut,

Oir bu dearbhata gu 'n chùlaich thu sannt.

[8] Mac an athair bha glic thu,
'S bu tu athair a mhic a rinn cliù;
'S na 'm biodh roghainn o 'n bhàs dhuinn,
Cha robh fhios co a dh' fhàg'maid do 'n triùir.

'S e rinn iomlan ar bròn dhuinn,
Mu 'n do thiormaich na deòir o ar sùil,
Gun na lotan sin slàn,
A' bhuille 's goirte bhi 'n trath-s' againn ùr.

The man who recited your virtues
Would need much acuteness in his
description;
And many people will miss you
At the time of collecting and counting the
rent.

Your gifts were profound,
And you did not puff up your deeds by
boasting;
You did not threaten the needy,
And you did not seek gold or thanks for
yourself.

Many will receive an opportunity
To follow you in money and in stock,
But in justice and in compassion
They will not be your equal.
I myself was aware
That you had more than five hundred,
In great generosity
And without seeking personal glory.

Man who would teach a fool,
Without exposing his poor performance
by a taunt;
But would contribute some of your genius
By each counsel your mind shaped;
Between any two in the world
Your superiority in birth could not be
mistaken;
Who would not entrust their business to
you,
Because it was proven that you disdained
greed.

You were the son of a wise father,
And father of a son who earned repute,
And if death gave us a choice,
No one knows which of the three we would
keep.

What made our sorrow complete
Before the tears dried in our eyes,
Was that those unhealed wounds
Were renewed for us with this most
grievous blow.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Kenneth Sutherland's death must have occurred soon after those of his father and his son; the latter married Isabel MacKay, Iain mac Eachainn's daughter, in 1747, but both died in 1748 of a fever. See Grimble (1999: 97-98, 103). This dates the poem to about 1750.

[9] Ged tha dàimh ann do thalla,
Tha e 'n a fhàsach do shealladh mo shùl,
Rinn thu beàrn dhomh 's gach comunn,

Ann an cràbhadh no 'm folluiseachd cùirt';
Ged tha cuimhneachain call' ann,
'N uair nach fhaidh mi ort comain ni 's mò;
Bidh mi feuchainn mo chomais,
Gu bhi 'g iomradh air d' alladh s' do chliù.

Although relatives are in your hall,
The sight is a desert to my eyes;
You left an empty spot for me in every
company,
In piety or in public occasions.
If it memorializes your loss,
While I will no longer expect recompense,
I will be trying my best
To celebrate your fame and your
reputation.

71. TO THE REV. MURDO MACDONALD¹⁴³

[1] 'S e do bhàs, Mhaighstir Murchaidh,
Rinn na h-àitean so dhorchadh,
'S ged chaidh dàil ann do mharbhrann,
Labhraidh balbhachd ri cèill.
Na 'm biodh a' Chrìosduidheachd iomlan,
Cha rachadh dì-chuimhn' air t' iomradh,
No do ghnìomharan iomlaid,
Ach leantadh t' iomchan-s' gu lèir;

Gur h-e chràdh mi 'n am mheanmnadh,
'S do luchd-gràidh agus leanmhuinn,
Meud do shaothrach mu 'n d' fhalbh thu,

'S lugh'd a luirg às do dhèigh;—

Bheir cuid *leasan*an buadhach,
O bhruaich fhasanta t' uaghach,
Nach d' thug daiseachan suarach,
As na chual iad uait fèin.

[2] Fìor mhasgall chionn pàidhidh,
No stad gealtach le gàbhadh,
Bhrìgh mo bheachd-s' ann an dànaibh,
'S mi nach dèanadh, 's nach d' rinn:
Ach na 'm biodh comain no stà dhuit,
Ann a t' alladh chur os àird dhuit,
Co na mis' do 'm bu chàra,
'S cò a b' fheàrr na thu thoill?
Bhuidhean mholtach-s' a dh' fhàg sinn,
Ged nach urr' iad a chlàistinn,
'S còir bhi 'g aithris am pàirtean,
Gun fhàbhor, 's gun fhoill.
Oir 's buain' a' chuimhne bheir bàrda,

Air deadh bhuadhannaibh nàduir,
Na 'n stoc cruinn sin a dh' fhàg iad,
Is còmhstri chàirdean 'g a roinn.

It is your death, Master Murdo,
That has darkened these places,
And although your elegy has been delayed,
There is eloquent reason for the silence.
If Christianity were perfected,
Your renown would not pass into oblivion
Nor the efficacy of your deeds,
But your example would be wholly
preserved.

What has grieved me in spirit
And those who loved and followed you,
Is the magnitude of your labor before you
left us,
And the scantiness of its traces that remain
after you.

Some profitable lessons will flow
From the fringes of your grave,
That the poor rhymers did not understand
By listening to your teaching.

Outright flattery for payment
Or caution through fear of danger
Never was or will be
The basis for the opinions in my poetry.
But if it could be a tribute or service to you
To raise your fame on high for you,
Who should do it more than I,
And who could deserve it more than you?
The praiseworthy company now departed,
Although they cannot hear it,
Deserve to have their merits recounted
Without favor and without deceit,
Because bards will provide a more
lasting commemoration
Of excellent natural talents
Than the accumulated wealth they left
For their relatives to fight over.

¹⁴³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 20-25); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 321-26); Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 1-3), and Ian Grimble, *The World of Rob Donn*, 1st edn (Edinburgh: 1979), pp. 213-17. Most of the translations are from Grimble (1999: 10-11, 41-45, 248-53); I translated the second half of verse 2, verse 7, the second half of verse 8, and verse 9. Morrison (1899: 20) describes the subject of this elegy as follows:

Minister of Durness from 1726 to 1763. He early recognised the poetic talent of Rob Donn, being a poet himself and a translator into Gaelic of many pieces. He translated a large portion of Pope's works, and recited them to meetings of his parishioners. Rob Donn, who was a frequent listener, caught up the ideas and made use of them as opportunity offered.

Mr. MacDonald was a native of Ross, educated at St Andrews, married Agnes, daughter of the Rev. Patrick Cooper, Pittenweem. His family consisted of four sons and seven daughters, most of whom were musically inclined. The eldest daughter, Florence, and the second son, Joseph, composed airs to several of Rob Donn's pieces.

[3] Bha do ghibhtean-sa làidir,
 Air am measgadh le gràsaibh,
 Anns a' phearsa bha àluinn,
 Iom-làn do na chèill;
 An tuigs' bu luchdmhoir' gu gleidheadh,
 An toil a b' èasgaidh' gu maitheadh,
 'S na h-uile h-aigheadh cho flathail,
 Fad do bheatha gu lèir.
 Bhiodh do chomhairl' an còmhnuidh,
 Le do chobhair 's do chòmhnadh,
 Do luchd-gabhail na còrach,
 Rèir 's mar sheòladh tu fèin.
 Dheanadh tu 'n t-aindeonach deònach
 Is an t-aineolach eòlach—
 'S b' e fìor shonas do bheòshlaid,
 Bhi tabhairt còrr dhoibh do lèirs'.

[4] Bha thu caomh ri fear feumnach,
 Bha thu saor ri fear reusont',

Bha thu aodanach, geurach,
 Mar chloich, ri eucoireach, cruaidh:
 Bu tu 'n tabhairteach maoinach,
 Bu tu 'n labhairteach saothrach,
 Bu tu 'n comhairleach tiomeil,
 'S crìoch a' ghaoil ann ad fhuath:

Tha e 'n a ladarnas gàbhaidh,
 Bhi le h-eagal ag àicheadh,
 Nach 'eil stoc aig an Ard-Rìgh,
 Ni an àird na chaidh uainn.

Ach 's fàbhor Freasdail, 's is ioghnadh,

No 'n ni a 's faisge do mhiorbhuil,
 Am beàrn so th' againn a lìonadh,
 Gu blas miannach an t-sluaigh.

[5] Leam is beag air tha fhoighneachd,
 Mu na thubhairt, 's na rinn thu,
 'S mu na chliù sin a thoill thu,
 O 'n là chaill sinn thu fèin;
 Ach mòran tartar is straighlich,
 Air son fèich agus oighreachd,
 D'fhag na beartaich mar bhann,
 Air an clann as an dèigh;
 'S e ni a' s minic a chi mi,

Dh' aindeoin diombuanachd tioma,
 Gum beil gionaich nan daoine,
 Tarruing claonadh 'n an cèill;

Your gifts were wonderful,
 Mingled with grace
 In a person that was lovely,
 Filled with intelligence —
 The understanding capacious in its breadth,
 The will that was quick to forgive
 And the whole mind so noble
 Throughout all your life.
 Your advice kept company always
 With your help and assistance,
 For those who accepted righteousness
 As you yourself guided.
 You made the reluctant willing
 And the ignorant wise,
 And the absolute joy of your life
 Was in imparting more light to them.

You were gentle to those in need,
 You were generous with reasonable
 people,

You were shrewd of aspect, hard
 As stone toward the miscreant.
 You were bountiful in giving,
 You were a diligent preacher,
 You gave timely advice
 With a loving purpose underlying your
 hostility.

It is a terrible audacity
 To deny in fear
 That the High King has means
 From which to replenish what we have
 lost.

But it is the favour of Providence and
 wonderful it is,
 Indeed it is near a miracle
 That this gap in our midst should be filled
 In accordance with the earnest desire of the
 people.

Few, I find, are the enquiries
 About what you said and what you did
 And concerning the renown you earned
 Since the day we lost you;
 But great clamor and bustle
 About debts and inheritance
 Left by wealthy people like fetters
 Upon the children who succeed them.
 And it is a thing I have frequently
 observed,

Despite the impermanence of time,
 That the ambitions of men
 Turn them away from enlightenment.

Ach cha 'n 'eil iomairt no dòighean,
Anns na freasdail so dhomhsa ,
Nach toir earail 'n am chòmhdhail,
Le seann nòt o do bheul.

[6] Toigheach, faicilleach, fiamhach,
Smuainteach, focalach, gnìomhach,
Ann do ghnothuchaibh dìomhair,
Gun bhi dìomhain aon uair.
Chaith thu t' aimsir gu saothreach,
Air son sonas nan daoine,
'S cha b' e truaillidheachd shaoghalt
No aon ni chur thu suas.
'N uair tha nitheana taitneach,
Dol a mugh' a chion cleachdaimh,
B' e chùis fharmaid fear t' fhasain
'S cha b' e beartas is uails',
A' dol o 'n bheatha bu sheirbhe,

Troimh na cathaibh bu ghairbhe,
Dh' ionnsuidh Flaitheas na tairbhe
Gu buan shealbhachadh duais.

[7] Gum beil cealgaireachd chràbhaidh,
Air a dearbhadh gu gàbhaidh,
Tha 'n a gairistinn r' a clàistinn,
Is ro chràiteach r' a luaidh.
'N uair a thuit thu le bàs uainn,
Mar gu 'm briseadh iad bràighdean,
Dhùisg na h-uilc sin a b' àbhaist,
A bhi an nàdur an t-sluaigh.
Gum beil cath aig an Ard Rìgh,
Gu bhi gabhail nam pàirtean,
Anns na chruthaich e gràsan,
Thug air aghairt gach buaidh;
Rinn sud sinne 'n ar fàsaich,
Anns an talamh-s' an trath so,
So a' bharail th' aig pàirt diubh,
Tric 'g a leughadh air t' uaigh.

[8] An duine thigeadh a suas riut,
Ann an guth 's ann an clusaibh,
Cha 'n fhacas riamh is cha chualas,
Is 's e mo smuaintean nach cluinn.
Ged bu bheartach do chràbhadh,
Bha do mheas air gach tàlann,
'S tu a thuigeadh na dàinte,
'S am fear a dheanadh na rainn.
A' chuid a b' àirde 's a' bhuaidh sin,
A tha 'd air stad dheth o 'n uair sin,
Ach na daiseachan suarach,
A tha mu 'n cuairt duinn a' seinn.

But there are no chances or changes
In these ways of fate I witness
That do not caution me with the memory
Of a former lesson from your lips.

Attentive, careful, alert,
Thoughtful, eloquent, active
In your private affairs,
Without ever being slothful,
You spent your time diligently
For the good of mankind
And you did not advocate
Shabby worldliness or possessions.
When pleasing virtues
Perish for want of practice,
Men of your mold are objects of envy,
And not wealth or honors;
As you departed from life with its
bitterness,
Having fought the hardest battles,
For the Heaven of perfection,
To enjoy the eternal reward.

*As pious hypocrisy
Has demonstrated vividly
(It is horrible to hear
And most painful to mention),
When you slipped away from us in death,
It was as if they broke their bonds —
The customary evils then awoke again
In the nature of the people.
The High King must struggle
To take their parts;
In the graces he created,
He advanced every victory.
We turned that into a wilderness
In our time on this earth;
Here the judgment on some of you
Is oft read out on your grave.*

The one to compare with you
For voice and ear
Has never been seen or heard of
And in my opinion he will not be heard of.
Although rich in piety,
You showed appreciation for every talent,
And well did you understand the songs
And the one who composed the verses.
*The best part of that triumph
Is that they have ceased since then,
Except the incompetent poets
Who go around singing to us.*

'N uair a cheilear a' ghrian orr'
 Sin 'n uair ghoireas na biasdan,—
 Cailleich-oidhch' agus srianaich,
 An coilltibh fiadhaich, 's an glinn.

[9] 'S eòl domh daoine 's an aimsir-s',
 Dh' fhàs 'n an cuideachd glè ainmeil,
 Tigh'nn air nitheanaibh talmhaidh,
 Ann an gearrabhaireachd gheur.
 Ach 'n uair thogar o 'n làr iad ,
 Gus an nithibh a 's àirde,
 'S ann a chluinneas tu pàirt diubh,
 Mar na pàisdean gu chèill.
 Fhuair mi car ann do rianaibh-s',
 Le do ghibhtean cho fialaidh,
 Nach do dhearc mi, ma 's fìor dhomh,
 An aon neach riamh ach thu fèin,—
 Càil gach cuideachd a lìonadh,
 Leis na theireadh tu dìomhan,
 'S crìoch do sheanchais gun fhiaradh,

Tigh'nn gu diadhaidheachd threun.

[10] Bha do chuid air a sgaoileadh
 Gu bhi cuideachadh dhaoine,
 'S am feadh a bha thu 's an t-saoghal,
 'S tu nach faodadh bhith pàidht';
 Chuid bu taitneich' 'n an iomchainn,

Cha 'n 'eil focal mu 'n timchioll,
 Cha bhi ceartas mu 'n iomradh,
 Ach le 'n imrich 'n am bàs;—
 'S truagh am peanas a thoill sinn,
 Thaobh nan ciontan a rinn sinn,—
 Bhi sìor ghearradh ar gaibhlean,
 'S ar cuid theaghlaichean fàs;
 Gun cheann laidir gu 'fhoighneachd,
 Co ni 'n àirde na chaill sinn;
 Cuid, d' an cràdh, là is oidhche,
 Nach tig t' oighre 'n ad àit.¹⁴⁴

*When the sun is hidden from them,
 They will howl then like beasts —
 Owls and badgers
 In wild woods and glens.*

*I know some of my contemporaries
 Who developed a reputation in society,
 Approaching worldly things
 With acerbic satire,
 But when they are raised from the earth
 To higher matters,
 Some of them sound
 Like children without sense.
 I received inspiration from your guidance,
 With your generous gifts,
 That I never observed, in truth,
 In a single person except yourself.
 A disposition to fill every company
 With the wisdom you offered,
 And the result of your straightforward
 exposition
 Was to bring the persevering to godliness.*

Your substance was spent
 In assisting people,
 And as long as you were in the world
 You would not consent to payment.
 The most pleasing feature of these
 transactions
 Was that not a word was said of them.
 Justice will not be done to their fame
 But with the alteration of death.
 Woeful is the punishment we deserve
 For the sins we have committed.
 Our pillars of support are constantly cut off
 And our kindred rendered desolate,
 With no strong leader to consult
 Who will repair our losses.
 Some are in anguish day and night
 Lest your heir should not succeed you.

¹⁴⁴ This refers to the hope of many parishioners that Mr. MacDonald's eldest son, Patrick, minister of Kilmore, would succeed to his father's ministry in Durness. Morrison (1899: 25 n. 1). That hope was not realized, but it reflects an interesting belief that even ministerial appointments could be inherited.

72. TO JOHN MUNRO AND DONALD MACKAY¹⁴⁵

[1] 'S e mo bheachd ort, a bhàis,
Gur bras thu ri pàirt,
Gur teachdair thu laidir, treun thu;
An cogadh no 'm blàr,
Cha toirear do shàr,
Aon duine cha 'n fhàir do thrèigsinn;
Thug thu an trath-sa
Dhuinn buille no dhà,
Chuir eaglaisean bàn, is foghlum;
'S is fhuarsd dhomh ràdh,
Gur goirid do dhàil,
'S gur tric a' toirt beàrn 'n ar Clèir thu.

[2] Bhuin thu ruinn garbh,
Mu 'n dithis so dh' fhalbh,
'N uair ruith thu air lorg a chèil iad;
C' uime nach d' fhàg thu
Bhuidhean a b' àirde,
A bhiodh do chàch ro fheumail;
A bhruidean a b' fheàrr
A' tighinn o 'm beul,
'S an cridheachan làn do reuson;
Chaidh gibhteachan gràis
A mheasgadh 'n an gnàths,
'S bha 'n cneasdachd a' fàs d' a rèir sin.

[3] Dithis bha 'n geall
Air gearradh à bonn,
Gach ain-ìochd, gach feall, 's gach eucoir;
Dà sholus a dh' fhalbh
A earrannaibh garbh',
Dh' fhàg an talamh-sa dorch d' a rèir sin;
Ge d' tha e ro chruaidh,
Gu 'n deach' iad 's an uaigh,
Tha cuid a gheibh buaidh is feum dheth;
Mar ris gach aon ni,
Dh' aithris iad dhuinn,
Chaidh 'n gearradh à tìom an leughaidh.

[4] Dithis a bh' ann,
Bu chomhairl' 's bu cheann,
Do phobull fhuair àm g' an èisdeachd;
Dithis, bha 'm bàs
'N a bhriseadh do chàch,

In my opinion, death,
You are hasty towards some,
A strong and powerful messenger;
Not in war or in battle
Are these worthy men taken,
And not one will you relinquish.
You gave us just now
A blow or two,
Leaving churches and schools empty;
It is easy for me to say
That short your delay,
So often creating a vacancy in our clergy.

You dealt a harsh deal
When these two departed,
When you ran seeking them together;
Why didn't you leave us
A nobler company
That would be more useful to the rest?
The best speech
Coming from their mouths,
Their hearts full of reason;
Gifts of grace
Were manifest in their conduct,
And humanity increased accordingly.

Two that were pledged
To cut off at the foundation
Every cruelty, falsehood and injustice;
Two lamps that departed
From harsh provinces,
Left the very earth dark behind them.
Although it is very hard
That they went into the grave,
There are some who will profit from it;
Along with it every single thing
That they recounted to us;
Their time of instruction was cut short.

The two that were with us,
Were counselors and leaders
To people who took time to listen;
These two, in breaking
Death to the rest,

¹⁴⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 1-5) with my translation: it also appears in Mackay (1829: 306-10) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 13-14).

John Munro, the minister in Eddrachillis, and Donald Mackay, the schoolmaster in Farr, both died in 1755 (Morrison 1899: 1, 4).

Gidheadh gu 'm b' e 'm fàbhor fèin e;
Cha ladurn gu dearbh,
Dhuinn chreidsinn 'n uair dh' fhalbh,
Gu 'n d' fhreagair an earbs' gu lèir iad;
A dh' aindeoin an aoig,
B' e 'n cairide gaoil,
'N uair sgair e o thìr nam breug iad.

[5] Tha sgeula r' a h-inns'
Mu dhèighinn na dith's,
A 's feumail' a bhios na ceudaibh;
Feudaidh mi radh,
Cia teumnach am bàs,
Nach tug e ach pairt d' a bheum uainn.
Ged thug e le tinn,
An corpa do 'n chill,
Bidh iomradh ro bhinn 'n an dèigh orr';
Is iomadh beul cinn,
Ag aithris 's gach linn,
Na labhair, na sheinn, 's na leugh iad.

[6] Sinne tha làthair,
Tuig'maid an t-stràchd-s';
Is cleachdamaid trath ar reuson;
Nach faic sibh o 'n bha,
An lathaichean s' geàrr,
Gu 'n do ruith iad ni b' fheàrr an rèis ud;
'S mac-samhuil dhuinn iad,
Ged nach 'eil sinn cho àrd,
Anns na nitheanaibh cràbhaidh, leughant';
Na earb'maid gu bràth,
Gu 'n ruig sin an t-àit-s'
Mur lean sinn ri pàirt d' an ceumaibh.

[7] Tha 'n teachdair s' air tòir
Gach neach a tha beò,
'G an glacadh an còir no 'n eucoir;
Na gheibh e 'n a dhòrn,
Cha reic e air òir,
Ri gul, no ri deòir cha 'n èisd e;
Chi mi gur fiù
Leis tighinn do 'n chùil,
Gu fear th' ann an clùd mar èididh;
'S ged dheanamaid dùn,
Cha cheannaich e dhuinn,
Aon mhionaid do dh-uin o 'n eug sin.

[8] An dithis so chuaidh,
Cha rachadh cho luath,
Na 'n gabhadh tu uainn an èiric;
Cha leig'maid 'n an dith's
Iad as an aon mhios,

Were yet themselves on its edge.
It is not presumptuous at all
For us to believe, when they departed,
That faith answered them completely;
In spite of death
It was a beloved friend,
When it parted them from the land of lies.

The story to be told
About this pair
Will be of the greatest use to hundreds;
I must say,
That while death is capricious,
It struck us only a partial blow.
Although it took with sickness
Their bodies to the churchyard,
A virtuous reputation will survive them;
And many a wise mouth
Will recite to each generation,
What they spoke and sang and read.

We who are present,
Let us understand this stroke,
And let us use our reason early;
Don't you see from their death,
Their days here cut short,
That they ran their race the better?
And they are a model to us,
Although we are not so worthy,
In the deeds of piety and learning;
Let us never trust
That we will reach their place,
Unless we follow in part of their footsteps.

This messenger pursues
Every person alive,
And seizes both just and unjust;
What he takes in his grasp,
He will not sell for gold,
He won't listen to weeping or tears.
I see he considers it
Worthwhile to come after
A man with a rag for clothing;
And even if we build a fortress,
He will not hire it to us,
For a single minute in death.

These two we lost
Would not go so quickly
If you would accept a ransom from us;
We would not let this pair go
In the same month

Na 'm b' urr' dhuinn an diol le seudaibh;
Ach 's teachdair ro dhàn'
Thu, tighinn o 's àird,
Buailidh tu stàtaibh 's dèircean;
Cha bhacar le 'phrìs,
Air t' ais thu a rìs,
'S tu dh' easbhuidh an aoin mu 'n tèid thu.

[9] Glacaidh tu cloinn
A mach o na bhroinn,
Mu 's faic iad ach soills' air èigin;
Glacaidh tu 'n òigh,
Dol an coinnimh an òig,
Mu 'm feudar am pòsadh èigheachd.
Ma 's beag, no ma 's mòr,
Ma 's sean, no ma 's òg,
Ma 's cleachdamh dhuinn còir no eucoir;
Ma tha sinn 'n ar beò,
Is anail 'n ar sròn,
Cuirear uile sinn fò na fèich ud.

[10] Tha 'm bàs os ar cinn,
'G ar glacadh le tinn,
'S le fradhrac ar cinn cha lèir e:
Ach tha glaoth aig' cho cruaidh,
'S gu 'm faodadh an sluagh,
A chluinntinn le cluasaibh reusoin:
Nach dearc sibh a chùl,
Is fear aig' fo iùl,
'S e sealuinn le 'shùil gu geur air;
An diugh ciod am fàth,
Nach bidh' maid air *gheàrd*,
'S gu 'n bhuin e ar nàbuidh 'n dè uainn.

[11] A chumhachd a tha
Cur thugainn a bhàis,
Gun teagamh nach pàighear 'fhèich dha;
Tha misneachd is bonn
Aig neach a tha 'n geall,
Air tagradh na gheall do bheul dha;
Oir 's athair do chlann
A dh' fheitheas air teann,
'S fear-tighe do 'n bhantraich fèin e;
Is Cruithfhear a th' ann,
A bheir gu neo-ghann,
Na thoilleas sinn anns a' chreutair.

If we could pay compensation in jewels.
But you are too impudent a messenger,
Coming from on high,
You will smite the haughty and the beggar.
You will not be hindered by the price,
You are back again,
Needing one more before you go.

You will take children
Out of the womb,
Who have scarce seen the light of the sun;
You will take the maiden
Going to meet the youth,
Before their marriage is proclaimed.
Whether small or great,
Whether old or young,
Whether our habits are virtuous or vicious,
If we are alive,
And breath in our nostrils,
We are all on the brink of that debt.

Death is above us,
Seizing us with sickness,
Undisturbed by the sight of our end.
But his cry is so harsh
That the people must listen
To him with ears of reason.
Won't you peer closely behind?
Any man he has in his sights,
He sees with his sharp eye.
What cause have we today
Not to be on guard,
When he took away our neighbor
yesterday?

O power that sends
Death to us,
No doubt his debt will be paid.
There is well-founded confidence
In everyone who has longed
For the promise of your mouth to him.
Because He is father
To your waiting children,
And husband to the widow,
The Creator
Will give unstintingly
Whatever each person deserves.

73. THE WORTHLESS FELLOW¹⁴⁶

Sèist:

'M faic thu bagan an dubh chladaich,
Sud na bh' againn air son tairbh;
'M faic thu bagan an dubh chladaich,
Sud na bh' againn air son tairbh.

[1] 'S eigin dhomhsa dol a dh'innseadh,
Ged nach caomh leam a bhi toirm,
Gun deachaidh es' a chur 's na laos-buic,
O nach fhaodtadh 'chur 's na tairbh.

[2] O' n tha Ealasaid 'g a àrach,
Chuir i 'n gàrlaoch ud fo bheirm,
'S e dh' fhàg measail e 's na h-àiteachs',
A lughad 's a bh' ann gu dàir do thairbh.

[3] Ged tha meanmuinn ann gu riasradh,
Le teas biadhaidh bhi 'n a ghairbh,
B' fheàrr leam reang a chur 'n a earball,
Na 'n te dhearg a chur 'n a sheilbh.

[4] Fòghnaidh ainmeachadh le bruidhean,
Gu clann nighean chur am feirg;
'S feàrr duit fanadh 'n Coire-Chàrnaich,

Gus an gabh do chrògan meirg.

[5] Shiubhail e gus na h-uile inighean,
Eadar Mioghradh 's taobh a' Phairbh,
'S ann aig inighean Iain Gobha,
Fhuair e chobhair a bha soirbh.

Chorus:

Do you see a little glutton on a dark shore?
That is what we had for a bull.
Do you see a little glutton on a dark shore?
That is what we had for a bull.

It is necessary for me to report —
Although I dislike making a fuss —
That he was thrown to the castrated goats,
Since he could not be thrown to the bulls.

Since Elizabeth is raising him,
She made that little weakling barmy;
He decided to leave in the fields
The smallest of the bulls for breeding.

Although he is glad to wander about
With hot food in his greedy stomach,
I would rather take a rod to his backside
Than put the red one in his possession.

A mere mention will suffice
To put the girls in a rage;
You would be better off waiting in Coire-
Chàrnaich,
Until your little horn gets rusty.

He went to see all the girls
Between Mioghradh and Cape Wrath,
The daughter of Iain Gobha
Finally came to his aid.

¹⁴⁶ The text is from Morrison (1899: 350-51) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 123).

This puzzling poem seems to concern a young man who was incompetent at both stockbreeding and courtship. The key incident seems to be in verse 2, while the rest is largely commentary. In verse 3, “an tè dhearg” could be either the poet’s red-haired daughter or a red cow. Although the main point seems to be that the subject of the poem endangered the livelihood of other members of his community by breeding inferior cattle, it is also possible that the entire poem is merely an extended sexual innuendo.

74. TO DONALD, 4TH LORD REAY¹⁴⁷

[1] 'S i so nollaig a 's cianail'
A chunncas riamh le mo shùil;
'S soilleir easbhuidh ar Triath oirnn,

An àm do 'n bhliadhna tigh'nn ùr;

Ceann na cuideachd 's na tàbhuirnn,
Luchd nan dàn, is a' chiùil,
'N a luidhe 'n eaglas Cheann-tàile,
'S an rùm tha mhàn fo 'n ùir.¹⁴⁸

[2] 'S iomadh buille bha cràiteach,
A rinn am bàs a thoirt dhuinn,
Air chosd gheugan do theaghlaich,
Gun athadh bonn do na cinn;
Ach cha deach' uiread de thròcair
A chur fo 'n fhòd ri mo linn,
'S a chaidh chàradh 's an *tòma*,
Le Morair Dòmhnall MacAoidh.

[3] Bu lìonmhor buaidh bh' ann do nàdur,
Nach urrainn bàrd chur an cèill;
Cha d' àt do mhoraireachd t' àrdan,
'S cha d' leag càirdeas do spèis;

B' fhiù do chòirean an sgaoileadh

Air feadh an t-saoghail gu lèir;
Gun robh do mhaitheanas ullamh
Do 'n neach a mhealladh thu 'n dè.

[4] 'S tric a dh' innis do ghnìomhara,
Nach robh crìonachd 'n ad rùn;

'S tu thug feart air an dìomh'nas
Bha air crìoch luchd nan dùn.
Chuireadh buileachadh d' fhàbhoir
Uiread fàilt ann do ghnùis,

'S a bhitheadh air na fir gionach,
An àm cur sgillinn ri crùn.

This is the most melancholy Christmas
I ever set eyes upon.
The want of our Chief is brought home to
us

At the time when the New Year is
approaching.

The apex of society and entertainment,
Of the men of poetry and music,
Lying in the church of Kintail
In the lowest room underground.

Many a grievous blow
Death has inflicted upon us
At the expense of branches of your family,
Without sparing the uppermost.
But never went so much mercy
Beneath the sod in my day
As was placed in the tomb
With Lord Donald, Chief of Mackay.

Your nature was more utterly winning
Than a bard can express.
Your peerage did not swell your pride
And friendship did not diminish your
regard.

A knowledge of your worth should be
proclaimed
Throughout the entire world.
Your forgiveness was ready
For the man who deceived you the day
before.

Frequently your deeds proclaimed
That there was no pettiness in your
disposition.

You gave heed to the idleness
That characterized the castle folk.
Conferring a favour on your part
Would bring as much joy to your
countenance

As avaricious men experience
When they are adding a penny to five
shillings.

¹⁴⁷ The text is from Morrison (1899: 6-10) and the translation from Grimble (1999: 236-42) except as noted; I translated verses 8, 10, 11 and 12 and made one or two minor changes elsewhere. The elegy also appears in Mackay (1829: 297-301), and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 6-7), although they print the verses in a different order. Grimble discusses the historical background at some length. The fourth Lord Reay died in 1761, which dates the poem to that year (Morrison 1899: 6).

¹⁴⁸ This refers to the Reay family vault in the church at Tongue, the seat of Kintail MacKay. Morrison (1899: 6).

[5] 'S tusa tharruing gu tiomeil
O chleachdamh dhaoine 's am beus,
Gu 'n robh 'n caitheamh 's an t-anabarr,
'N a ni a dh' fhalbhadh gun fheum;
'S uiread beartais 's a dh' fhàg thu,
G' a roinn aig càch às do dhèigh;
Ach bha thu cunntadh do dhaonnachd,
Mar *stoc* a shaor thu dhuit fèin.

You were the one who learned in time
From the practices and ways of men
That extravagance and hoarding
Were ephemeral and without use.
And as much wealth as you left
Was divided among others after you.
But you considered your liberality
As an asset that accrued to yourself.

[6] 'N uair thigeadh àm na Fèill-Màrtuinn,
Is cunntadh *rainnt* thugad fèin,
Bhiodh do shùil ris gach pàipeir,
A chuireadh 'n *clàrc* às a dhèigh;
'S maith a dh' aithnicheadh tu 'n t-airidh,
'S an neach a thàrladh 's an fheum;
'S e do pheann a bhiodh èasgaidh
Gu dubhadh mach an cuid fèich.

When the time of Martin's Fair came,
*To count the rent due to you,*¹⁴⁹
Your eyes would be on each paper
That the clerk had prepared.
Well you knew the worthy man
And the one who happened to be in want,
And your pen would be ready
To cancel their arrears.

[7] Na 'm bitheadh gionaich 'n ad nàdur,
C' uim' nach deanadh tu tòrr,
Leis na thogtadh do mhàl dhuit,
'S le do *phension* d' a chòrr:
'N uair a gheibheadh tu 'm meall ud,
'S ann leat a b' annsa gu mòr,
Iomhaigh Dhè air bochd aoidheil,

If you had been avaricious by nature,
What a pile you might have made
From the rent owing to you
And with your pension in addition.
When you received that heap,
More dear to you by far
Was the likeness of God in the face of a
poor happy man
Than the likeness of the King on a gold
coin.

Na ìomhaigh 'n Rìgh air an òr.

[8] Gheibhear cron dha do sgaoilteachd,
'S nach do chaomhain thu 'n còrr,
Leis an fhear tha na ghlutair,
Gu deanamh upainn do 'n òr;
A dh' iarras fois thoirt d' a anam,
'N uair chi e mar ris ni 's leòir,
'S e 'n neach sin fèin ris an canar
Le Dia, an t-amadan mòr.

*You are criticized for your generosity
And for failing to save your surplus
By the man who is greedy
To accumulate a hoard of gold,
Who will seek peace for his soul
Only when he has acquired enough wealth.
That is the same man who is called
By God, the great fool.*

[9] Seallaibh eachdraidh a' Bhìobuill,
Chum na crìche o thùs,
'S gheibh sibh olc nach robh 'n aoaibh

Look at the story in the Bible
To the end, from the beginning,
And you will find evils that were not
practiced
By the really serious sinners,
And the failings that are mean streaks
In worthy Christians.
But the carnal sin
Need never be in that category.

Nam fìor eucorach mòr',
Agus starraidhnean mìodhoir
Anns na Crìosdaidhibh còir;
Ach an crìon pheacadh biasdail,
Cha d' fheud e riamh bhi 's an t-seòrs'.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Grimble (1999: 238) has: "And the assessment of your budget". This seems unnecessarily indirect; the point is that Lord Reay was personally cancelling arrearages of rent owed by his tenants.

¹⁵⁰ Grimble argues convincingly (1999: 242) that the fourth Lord had syphilis. Thus, despite his generosity, he left no competent heirs and bequeathed an estate whose debts only grew with each

[10] Ge maith eòlas na firinn,
 Ni mòran bruidhean gun stuaim;
 'S soilleir comharr' 'n deadh Chriosduidh,
 Do 'n nòs bhi gnìomhach gun fhuaim;
 Seallaidh Athair na caomhachd
 Air fear na daonnachd gun ghruaim,
 'N uair a their e ri crìon-fhear,
 "Bidh-s' gu sìorruidh dol uam."

*While knowledge of Scripture is worthy,
 Many will speak without modesty;
 And the clear mark of a good Christian
 Is the habit of good deeds in silence.
 The Father of compassion will look upon
 The benevolent man without a frown,
 While he says to the niggardly man,
 "He will be elsewhere for eternity."*

[11] Labhraidh buidheann gun chreidimh,
 Le mòran glaigeis 'n an ceann;
 Ach 'n uair thig iad gu cleachdamh,
 Cha 'n fhaighear am focal ach fann;
 An teis-meadhon am pailteis,
 Mar 's an airc bitheadh iad gann;—
 'S 'n uair is toirmneich' am farum,
 Gur corp gun anam tha ann.

*A group without religion will speak
 With a lot of prattle in their heads;
 But when they come to practice,
 You will get hardly a word.
 In the very midst of plenty
 They will be as stingy as in hardship;
 And when their murmuring is loudest,
 They are a body without a soul.*

[12] Abram, athair nan creidhmheach—
 Or 's e gun teagamh a bh' ann;
 Dhiùlt e beartas Rìgh Shòdoim,
 Ged bu mhaith a chòir air 's an àm;—

*Abraham, father of the faithful —
 Because he was without doubt —
 Refused the wealth of the King of Sodom,
 Although he had a good claim to it at the
 time;*

Bhiadh e ainglean gun fhios da,

*Angels protected him without his
 knowledge,
 With abundant warmth and compassion;
 How can verses by a miser
 Say that he is unique among His children?*

Le blas is iochd nach robh gann;
 Cia mar 's dàna le fionaig
 A ràdh gur h-aon e d' a chlann.

[13] Cha b' ionann dòigh an robh
 gaol dhuit,
 'S do mhòran daoine tha beò,
 A bhios luchd-masguill a' sèideadh,
 'N uair ni iad eucoir no còir,
 Air eagal uilc tha 'n an nàdur,
 O 'n tha iad nàimhdeil gu tòir,
 No bhi 'g earbhsadh o 'n lamhan,
 Am maith nach dèan iad d' an deòin.

Your love was not of the same kind

 As that of many people now living,
 Whom public sycophancy flatters
 Whether they act justly or unjustly,
 For fear of their vindictive natures
 Since they are malicious in retribution,
 Or in hope of receiving from their hands
 Good they would not do of their own wills.

[14] Gaol do Dhia, 's dha do nàbuidh,
 Sùim nan àithntean gu lèir;
 'S their a' mhuinntir gun chràbhadh,
 Gu 'm bheil an nàdur-s' d' an rèir;
 Ach iads' tha beartach gun charrthunn,
 Riuth-s' a thàrlas 'n am feum
 Tha na Sgriobtuir 'g an sgàradh,
 O luchd na dàimh' ri Dia fèin.

Love of God and your neighbor
 Is the substance of all the commandments.
 People without piety will say
 That they are like that by nature;
 But those who are rich without charity
 To those who come to them in need,
 The Scriptures cut them off
 From the people who are in communion
 with God himself.

succeeding generation until the MacKay lands were finally sold to the house of Sutherland. Grimble (1999: 274).

[15] Bha daoine àrda do d' shinnsear,

An cliù, 's an inntinn, 's an cèill,
Bha 'g an giùlan mar rìghribh,
A thaobh an innleachdan fèin:
Cha d' thàinig duine dhiubh 'n àird riut,
Ann am blàth's ri luchd feum',
'S fhusa 'dhùrachd na 'earbsadh,

Gu 'n tig ni 's feàrr 'n ad dhèigh.

[16] 'S tric le filidhean dhaoine
Thigh'nn air an fhìrinn ro theann;
Ach 's tearc againn an t-àireamh
A sheasas t' àit dhuinn 's an àm:
Ach o nach 'eil mi m' fhìor fhàidh,
'S e 'n neach a b' fheàrr leam thigh'nn

Fear nam buadhan, ni t' fhàgail,
'S a dheanadh breugach mo rann.

[17] Cha dean mo mholadh-s' ni 's
àird' thu,
'S cha 'n 'eil thu 'n dràsda 'n a fheum;
Sgaoil do bhuadhan am pailteas,
'S cha 'n 'eil thu 'n airc chur an cèill;

Ach 'n uair their mi 'n dàn bròin so
Do dhaoineibh mòr' às do dhèigh,
Mur bi 'leithid r' a inns' orr',
Cha bheag an nàire e dhoibh fèin.

There were outstanding men among your
forbears,

In reputation and intellect and wisdom,
Who conducted themselves as kings
In the paths of their ability.
Not one of them was your equal
In kindness to those in need,
And it is easier to wish than to feel
confident

That better will come after you.

It is often that the poets of mankind
*Come closest to the truth;*¹⁵¹
But few amongst us
Can take your place at this time.
However, since I am not a true prophet,
The person I would most like to succeed
you

Is a man of talents who will excel you,
Who would give the lie to my poem.

This praise of mine will not exalt you,

And now you have no need of it.
Your virtues are abundantly scattered
And you are not impoverished by having
them proclaimed.

But when I recite this sad poem
To the great men who come after you,
Unless the like be related of them,
Not slight the shame upon them.

¹⁵¹ Grimble (1999: 242) has "Reach the truth most concretely".

75. TO JOHN SUTHERLAND¹⁵²

[1] 'S mi-chliuiteach a' cheist ort, An cliù th' ac' a nis ort, Gun aon neach a' teicheadh air t' àilghios.	The controversy involving you is disgraceful, The reputation that you now have among them, That anyone had to flee your aggression.
[2] Bha eagal air Coinneach, 'S air imodaidh cloinne, 'S cha bu lugh' bh' aig a' chaillich, bean Phàil, romhad.	Kenneth was afraid of you, And many of the children, And no less the old lady, Mrs. MacPhail.
[3] Bhri Uilleam Cothardach Fèithean a ghobhail, A' ruith thun an t-sobhail d' a theàrnadh.	Foamy William broke Sinews in his groin, Running to the barn to escape you.
[4] Mu chùis Iain Thapaidh, Chuir crùn air a mhasladh, 'N uair mhùch e am brachadair càbach.	In the matter of Clever John, Was placed a crown of disgrace, When he smothered the toothless maltster.
[5] Mu mharbh thu an duine, Bha gléidheadh an leanna, No thruaighe mu dh' fhuilingeas bàrd e.	You about killed the man, Who was preserving the ale — Only a pitiful poet would suffer it.
[6] Gu 'n do reic thu 'n damh ceanfhionn, Air peice mòr uinnean, G' a chur ann am mionach na làire.	You sold the white-faced bull, For a large peck of onions, That you put into the belly of the mare.
[7] 'S e sin a thuirt Dòmhnall, "Bithidh so ann ad chòmhdhail, 'N uair théid thu Di-dòmhnuidh do 'n Bhàghan."	As Donald said: "This will be before the assembly, When you go on Sunday to the Church-yard."

¹⁵² The text is from Morrison (1899: 337-38) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 69-70). Each verse is repeated in full, for a total of six lines.

76. BRIOGAISEAG¹⁵³

[1] 'S mithich do Sheòras dol a Chealldail,
Ma tha teaghlach idir aig',
Laimh ri Naoghas mac Iain-'ic-Hùistein,
'S duine lùthair sgiobalt' e.
Ged tha e 'n a dhroch bhall,
Cha 'n 'eil e 'n geall air biogaireachd,
Ach cuiridh mise riut geall,
Nach seall e ri Briogaiseag.

[2] Is olc a leig thu an làir dhonn,
'N talamh toll a shluigeadh i,

Ged a ghabh thu peann is ainnc,
A sgrìobhadh cainnt nach tuigeadh iad.
Ged bhithinn gun fhearann, gun fhonn,
Gun duin' a' sealltuinn idir rium,
'S mi nach earbadh gnothach trom

Ris an Nòtair ghalld' aig Briogaiseag.

[3] 'S e mo bharail air an t-sluagh,
Gu bheil fuathas miodail annt',
Oir chaidh iad uile de an rian,

'N uair nach fhiach leo idir sibh.
Tha sibh nis gun bhallan, gun bhò,
Gu mheasair mhòr, gun bhiogaran,
Ciod a dh' èireas do 'n fhear dhearg,
An uair a dh' fhalbhas Briogaiseag.

It is time for George to go to Keoldale,
If he still has a family,
With Angus son of John son of Hugh —
He is a quick, clever man.
Although he is in a bad spot,
He is not fond of bickering,
But I will lay a wager with you
He will not look at Briogaiseag.

It's a shame that you let the brown mare
Into the hole in the earth that swallowed
her,
Although you took pen and ink,
Writing words they could not understand.
If I were homeless, without land,
Without anyone at all to support me,
I certainly would not entrust serious
business
To Briogaiseag's Lowland notary.

It is my opinion of those people
That a great deal of flattery is in them,
Because they all proceeded with an
arrangement
When it did you no good at all.
You are now without walls, without a cow,
Almost without a small wooden dish,
Whatever happens to the red-haired man
When Briogaiseag leaves.

¹⁵³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 346-47) with my translation ; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 115-16).

As both editors explain, George, a cowherd, and his wife Briogaiseag were dismissed from their employment (and apparently their home) by Lord Reay's factor after losing a brown mare in a quagmire (verse 2). The wife had hired a notary to write a letter of appeal to Lord Reay, but the letter was illegible, so George had to make a personal appearance to plead his case before the factor in Keoldale after all. The outcome is unknown, but Rob Donn was careful to blame both George and the notary for the situation.

77. TO EWEN¹⁵⁴

Seist:

'S cian fada, gur fada,
'S cian fada gu leòir,
O 'n la bha thu fo sheac-theinn,
Gun aon ag acain do bhròin;
Ma tha 'n tìom air dol seachad,
'S nach d' rinn thu chleachdamh air chòir,
Ged nach dàil dhuit ach seachduin,
Dèan droch fhasan a leòn.

[1] 'S tric thu, Bhàis, cur an cèill dhuinn,
Bhi sìor èigheachd ar cobhrach;
'S tha mi 'm barail mu 's stad thu,

Gu 'n toir thu 'm beag is am mòr leat;
'S ann o mheadhon an earraich,
Fhuair sinn rabhadh a dh' fhòghnadh,
Le do leum as na cùirtibh,
Do 'n a' chùileig 'm bheil Eòghann.

[2] Ach na 'n creideadh sinn, Aoig, thu,
Cha bhiodh 'n saoghal-s' 'g ar dalladh,
'S nach 'eil h-aon de shliochd Adhaimh,
Air an tàmailt leat cromadh;
'S i mo bharail gur fìor sud,
Gur àrd 's gur ìosal do shealladh;
Thug thu Pelham à mòrachd,—
'S fhuair thu Eòghann 's a' Pholla.

Chorus:

It is a long time, a long time,
A tediously long time
Since the day you fell mortally ill
Without a soul to bemoan your misery.
If the time has gone by
And you have not used it well,
Though you have but a week's respite,
Mend evil ways.

Often enough, Death, you remind us
Never to cease suing for salvation,
And it is apparent to me that before
you're done
You carry off both the mean and the great.
Since the middle of springtime
We have had ample warning
That you pass at a bound from the courts
To the corner where Ewen lies.

But if we were to believe you, Death,
The world would not beguile us
When there is not one of Adam's seed
Whom you would disdain to swoop upon.
It seems to me certain
That you search high and low.
You took Pelham from greatness
And you got Ewen at Polla.

¹⁵⁴ The text is from Morrison (1899: 46-48) and the translation from Grimble (1999: 108-11). The poem also appears in Mackay (1829: 331-33) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 31).

Prime Minister Pelham had died in March, 1754, a few weeks earlier. As Morrison explains (1899: 46):

Ewen was a poor old man, sorely distressed with asthma, and dwelling all alone in one of the most secluded, cold, and uninviting spots in that part of the country—Polla—at the head of Loch Eribol. Rob Donn, as was not unfrequently his custom, was shooting in the neighbourhood all day, and came to Ewen's humble abode to pass the night, that he might not be far from the hill for the next day's sport. Ewen was lying on an uncomfortable bed in the corner of the bothy, and to all appearance fast approaching his end. Immediately before leaving Balnacille the bard had heard of the death of Mr. Pelham. This was intimated by Mr. Macdonald, the minister, as he himself tells us, "in the fellowship meeting on the Monday three weeks after the event." The bard not unnaturally pondered over the position, rank, and influence of Pelham and Ewen, and this masterpiece of song was the result. Having composed it, the poet, to wile away the time, repeated the song aloud to himself several times. Ewen, ill as he was, could not restrain himself, and rising from his bed, grasped his staff and endeavoured to chastise Rob for the slighting references to his condition in life.

[3] Tha thu tigh'nn air an t-seòrs' ud,
Mu 'm bheil bròn dhaoine mòra,
'S tha thu tighinn air muinntir,
Mu nach cluinntear bhi caoineadh;
Cha 'n 'eil aon 's an staid mheadhoin,
Tha saor fathast o dhòghruinn,
Do nach buin a bhi caithriseach,
Eadar Pelham is Eòghann.

[4] Tha iad tuiteam mu 'n cuairt duinn,
Mar gu 'm buailt' iad le peilear,
Dean'maid ullamh, 's am fuaim so,
Ann ar cluasaibh mar fharum;
Fhir a 's lugha measg mhòrain,
An cual thu Eòghann fo ghalar?
Fhir a 's mò anns na h-àiteach-s',
An cual thu bàs Mhr. Pelham?

[5] Ach a chuideachd mo chridhe,
Nach toir an dithis-s' oirnn sgathadh!
Sinn mar choinneal an lanntarn,
'S an dà cheann a' sìor chaitheamh;
C' àit an robh anns an t-saoghal,
Neach a b' ils' na mac t' athar s'?
'S cha robh aon os a cheann-sa,
Ach an Rìgh bh' air a' chaithir.

You come to that sort
Whom great men mourn,
And you come to the people
For whom no lamentation is heard.
There is none between these extremes
Who is free from anguish,
Who has not cause for anxiety
Between Pelham and Ewen.

They are falling around us
As though struck by bullets.
We should be alerted by this sound
As by a trump in our ears.
You who are least among men,
Did you hear that Ewen was ill?
You who are the greatest in these places,
Did you hear of Mr. Pelham's death?

O friends of my heart,
Will not the fate of these two move us?
We are like a candle in a lantern,
Both ends inexorably being consumed.
Where in the world was there
Anyone more lowly than your father's son,
While there was none higher than the other
Except the King on his throne?

[1] 'S trom leam an àiridh, 's a' ghair so a h-innt',
 Gun a' phàirtinn a b' abhaist, bhi 'n trath-sa air mo chinn,
 Anna chich-chorrach, chaol-mhalach, shliob-cheannach, chruinn,
 Is Iseabail a' bheòil mhilis, mhànrach, bhinn.
 Heich! mar a bha, air mo chinn,
 A dh' fhàg mi cho cràiteach, 's nach stà dhomh bhi 'g inns'.

The shieling is a sad place for me, when the present company in it —
 Rather than the company who used to be there — are near to me —
 Anna of the pointed breasts, finely-arched brows, shining hair, full figure;
 And honey-mouthed Isabel, melodious, sweet.
 Alas for things as they were, close to me —
 I have grown so bereft, there is no point in talking about it.

[2] Shiubhail mis' a' bhuaile, 's a suas measg nan craobh,
 'S gach àit anns am b' àbhaist bhi tàthladh mo ghaoil;
 'N uair chunnaic mi 'm fear bàn ud, 's e mànrach r' a mhnaoi,
 B' fheàrr leam nach tiginn idir, làimh riu, no 'n gaoith.
 'S e mar a bha, air mo chinn,
 A dh' fhàg air bheag tath mi, ge nàir' e ri sheinn.

I wandered across the fold, and up into the woods,
 And everywhere I used to kiss my love,
 When I saw that fair fellow courting his wife,
 I wish I had not come near them or beside them.
 That's how it was, close to me,
 What has made me so dispirited — it's no good talking about it.

[3] Anna bhuidhe 'n Dhòmhnuill, na 'm b' eol duit mo nì,
 'S e do ghaol gun bhi pàight' leag a mhàn uam mo chli;
 Tha e dhomh à t' fhianuis, cho gnìomhach 's 'n uair chì,—
 Diogalladh, 's a' smùsach, 's gur ciùrrt tha mo chridh'.
 Air gach trà, 's mi ann an strì,
 A' feuchainn r' a àicheadh, 's e fàs rium mar chraoibh.

Fair Anna, Donald's daughter, if you knew my condition,
 It is unrequited love for you that deprived me of my strength.
 It remains as lively with me as in your presence,
 Teasing and provoking, wounding me to the heart.
 At every hour I am in turmoil
 Trying to deny it, while it grows in me like a tree.

¹⁵⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 148-50) and the translation from Grimble (1999: 21-23); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 210-11) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 8). As Morrison explains (1899: 148):

Ann was the bard's first love. . . . In the end she married John Murray, a joiner, who did not, according to local report, turn out to be a model husband. So much can be inferred from the poet's verse to his grandson, who was also Murray's grandson by the marriage of his son Hugh to Christian, Rob Donn's daughter, in 1773.

The poem dates to the 1730s, before the poet's marriage in about 1740 (Morrison 1899: xxi).

[4] Ach labhair i gu h-àilghiosach fàiteagach rium,
“Cha ’n fhair thu bhi làmh rium do chàradh mo chinn;
Tha siathnar ’g am iarruidh o bhliadhna do thìom,
’S cha b’ àraidh le càch thu thoirt bàrr os an cinn.”
Ha! ha! ha! an d’ fhàs thu gu tinn,
Mas e ’n gaol a bheir bàs ort gu ’m pàigh thu d’ a chinn!

But she spoke very disdainfully, superciliously to me:
“You don’t deserve to be beside me, stroking my head.
Six men have been seeking me in the last year
And the others would hardly expect you to surpass them.
Ha! Ha! Ha! Have you become unwell?
Is it love that will cause your death? You will pay for it!”

[5] Ach cionnus bheir mi fuath dhuit, ged dh’ fhuaireadh thu rium,
’N uair ’s feargaich’ mo sheanchas mu t’ ainm air do chùl,
Thig t’ òmaigh le h-annsachd, mar shamhladh ’n am ùigh,
’S saoilidh mi gur gaol sin, nach caochail a chaoidh.
’S thèid air a ràth, gun dh-fhàs e às ùr,
Is fàsaidh e ’n tràth sin cho àrda ri tùr.

But how can I hate you, even though you have grown so cold to me?
Whenever I speak most angrily about you behind your back
Your image floats with its fascination as an embodiment of my dreams,
So that I think then that that love will survive,
And this is proved as it wells up again
And it grows then as high as a tower.

[6] O ’n chualas gu ’n gluaiseadh tu uam leis an t-Saoir,
Tha mo shuain air a buaireadh le bruadraichean gaoil;
Do ’n chàirdeas a bha sud, cha ’n fhàir mi bhith saor,
Gun bhàrnaigeadh làimh riut, tha ’n gràdh dhomh ’n a mhaor,
Ach, ma tha mi ga do dhìth,
B’ fheàirde mi pàg uait mus fàg thu an tìr.

Since it was rumored that you would forsake me for the carpenter,
My sleep is disturbed with dreams of love.
Of the affection that was between us I cannot break free:
When I am not beside you, love is like a bailiff to me.
Now, if I am to lose you,
I would be the better of a kiss from you, before you leave the country.

79. TO JOHN MACKAY OF OLDANY¹⁵⁶

[1] Sgeula bàis tighinn 'n a chaoir oirnn, O gach ceàrn' an sèid gaoth oirnn, Fhuair mi naidheachd, 's bu daor leam i, 'n dè. ¹⁵⁷	A tale of death coming upon us like a flame, From every quarter where the wind blows; I received news yesterday that cost me dearly.
[2] Nios o Alldanaidh 'n Asainnt, 'N robh mo thriall o cheann seachduin, 'S e mo chràdh o nach deachaidh, 's nach d' tèid.	Up from Oldany in Assynt Was my journey a week ago, But my anguish remains and will not depart.
[3] Iain òig, mhic an Taoiteir, C' àit' an cualas, no 'n cluinntear, Sgeul a 's cruaidh' air do mhuinntir, na t' eug.	Young John, son of the Tutor, Where was heard or will be heard News more cruel to your people than your death?
[4] 'S ann an cuideachdaibh dìomhair, Gheibhteadh dealbh an fhìor Chriosdaidh Ort, an smuaintibh, an gnìomhraibh, 's am beus.	And in private gatherings, The image of a true Christian will be found in you, In thoughts, in deeds, and in virtue.
[5] Fear flathail, 's fear faoilidh, Fear-tionail, 's fear-sgaoilidh, Tha 'n a luidhe 's an Fhaoilinn, 's bu bheud.	A man noble and generous, A man who gathered and spent, Is lying in Faoilinn to our loss.
[6] Ged nach tàir mi do bhuadhan, Rèir 's mar b' àill leam a luaidh riut, Gur tu neach do nach cualas riamh beud.	Although I cannot describe your virtues As I would wish to praise you, I have never heard of any defect.
[7] C' àit an cualas riamh aon neach Dh' earb riut, 's a dh' fhalbh diombach, Bha do chomhairl' is t' impidh gu feum.	Where was there a single person Who trusted you and left dissatisfied? Your advice and intercession were useful.
[8] Bu mhòr do dhàimh ris na daoineibh, 'S tearc do nàmhaid 's an t-saoghal, 'Soilleir beàrn Chloinn Mhic-Aoidh as do dhèigh.	Strong was your relationship to the people, And rare your enemies in the world: You left a visible gap in the Clan MacKay.
[9] Gasan gealltanach faidhreil, Gnìomh gaisgich, 's gnùis maighdinn,	A fair and promising young man, Noble of deed and maidenly of countenance,

¹⁵⁶ The text is from Morrison (1899: 52-55) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 103-06) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 39).

Rob Donn composed this elegy in 1773 for John MacKay, third son of Robert MacKay, Tutor of Farr, an important tacksman in the district. Another son, George of Handa, later succeeded to the Bighouse estate by marriage. See Morrison (1899: 52); Grimble (1999: 97, 261). Oldany Island is in Eddrachillis Bay, just east of the Point of Stoer in Assynt.

¹⁵⁷ The third line is repeated in each verse, for a total of four lines.

'S mairg a phlanndaich 's a choill thu,
's thu d' ghèig.

Pity on those who planted you in the wood,
the young branch.

[10] Clann t' athar bha buadhach,
Mheud 's a thàmh, 's a chaidh uainn diubh,
So an treas tarruing chruaidh orr' le eug.

Of the children of your gifted father,
His greatness and his ease, this is the third
That cruel death has taken from us.

[11] Bàs Iain 's an àm so,
Buille' ùr 's an dà sheann lot,
Dh' fhalbh Hùistean, 's dh' fhalbh Sanndai,
's dh' fhalbh èis.¹⁵⁸

John's death at this time
Is a new blow in two old wounds —
Hugh departed, and Sandy departed,
and he himself departed.

[12] 'S e do chomunn bhi aoibhneach,
Dh' fhàg do dhealachadh neimhneach,
Dha do mhnaoi, 's dha do chloinn,
's dhuinn fèin.

Your company was pleasant,
Your parting left pain,
To your wife, to your children,
and to ourselves.

[13] Na 'm biodh comas aig daoineibh,
Neach a chumail bu chaomh leo,
'S tusa 'm fear a b' fhaid' aois an cuig ceud.

If men had the power
To keep someone they loved,
You are the man who would reach age 500.

[14] Ciod an stà dhuinn bhi brònach,
Ged nach tàir sinn bhi deònach,
Gheibh sinn bàs, na tha beò dhinn, gu lèir.

What is the use for us to be sorrowful,
Although we are unwilling,
Every one of us who lives will die.

[15] Ach a Sheòrais na h-Airde,
O' n tha òig' is gibht bàird agad,
'S ann is còir dhomh chùis fhàgail duit fèin.¹⁵⁹

But for George of Ardbeg,
Since you have youth and a bardic gift,
It is proper for me to leave something for
you to add.

[16] Mu 'n duine-s' fhuair bàs uainn,
B' fhiach 'iomradh a chlàistinn,
Uiread 's a dh' fhaod' maid a ràdh ris le chèil.

As to the man whom death took from us,
His mention was worth hearing,
As much as we could sensibly say of him.

[17] Ann an dreach pearsa talmhaidh,
Ann am beartas pàirt anama,
An diugh cha 'n eòl domh fhior dhealbh
fo na ghrèin.

A person robust in form
And abundant in soul,
Today I know not his true likeness
under the sun.

[18] Tha do bhàs tighinn a' m' chluasan,
'S cha 'n 'eil fàth faotainn buaidh air,
Mo cho-ghràdh gu 'm bu chruaidh leam
an sgeul.

Your death comes to my ears,
And a poem cannot influence it,
My sympathy that the news was so cruel.

¹⁵⁸ Hugh was the eldest brother, who died in 1746, and Sandy was a younger brother. See Morrison (1899: 52 & 54 n. 1).

¹⁵⁹ This verse refers to George Morrison of Ardbeg, who later composed an elegy for Rob Donn himself. Morrison (1899: 54 n. 2). It is evident from the text of Rob Donn's poem, especially verses 6 and 16, that he did not know its subject well, but still believed it proper to compose an elegy, perhaps because of the Tutor's stature in the community and his loss of three sons. It is also possible that the Tutor requested or commissioned the tribute.

80. IN PRAISE OF SALLY GRANT¹⁶⁰

Seist:

Fear a dhannsas, fear a chluicheas,
Fear a leumas, fear a ruitheas,
Fear a dh' èisdeas, no ni bruidhean,
Bi 'n creidheach' aig Sàlaidh.

[1] Shiubhail mi dùthchan fada, leathan,
'G amharc inighean agus mhnathan;
Eadar Tunga 's Abair-readhon,
Cha robh leithid Sàlaidh.

[2] An Dunèidin 's an Dun-didhe,
'S a h-uile ceum a rinn mi dh' uighe,
Cha 'n fhaca mi neach coltach rithe,
Bean mo chridhe Sàlaidh.

[3] 'S maith a clàistinn, 's maith a fradharc,
Blasd' a càil agus na their i,
'S maith do 'n fhear a thàireadh 'n gaire,
Do dhoireachan Sàlaidh.

[4] 'S maith a muigh, 's is maith a stigh i,
'S maith 'n a guth i, 's maith 'n a dath i;
'S maith 'n a suidhe 'n ceann na sreath' i,

'S maith 'n a breith 's na h-àireach.

[5] Fear a dh' iarras i 's nach fhaigh i,
'S fear nach iarr i a chionn aghaidh,

Cha robh fhios a'm cò an roghainn
Thaghainn às na dhà sin.

[6] Caiptean treun nan *Grenadeer*,
'S àirde leumas, 's feàrr a ruitheas,

Cha 'n 'eil àit an dèan i suidhe,
Nach bi esan làimh rith'.

Chorus:

He who dances, he who sports,
He who leaps and he who runs,
He who listens, he who talks
Are pining all for Sally.

I have passed through lands far and wide
Where I have seen girls and women.
Between Tongue and Aberdeen
There was not the like of Sally.

In Edinburgh and in Dundee,
And everywhere I've put my feet
I saw none like her,
Sally, the lass of my heart.

*Good to hear her, good to see her,*¹⁶¹
Delightful her temper and all her talk.¹⁶²
Lucky the man who approaches near
To the groves of Sally.

Good without and good within,
Pleasant in speech and in appearance,
Pleasant when seated at the head of the
company,
Notable in her birth and in her nurture.

The one who wants her and won't get her
And the one who won't try for want of
nerve,
I didn't know how to make
A choice between the two of them.

The stalwart captain of Grenadiers
Who leaps the highest and runs the
swiftest,
There's no place where she sits
But he'd be beside her.

¹⁶⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 283-84) and the translation from Grimble (1999: 217-18) except as noted; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 227-28) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 49).

¹⁶¹ Grimble (1999: 218) has "Good her hearing, good her sight", but in English this implies that Sally had all her faculties, which is rather beside the point.

¹⁶² Grimble has "Delicious her taste", but this can be read to imply (erroneously in my view) that she was kissing every man in the regiment.

[7] Na 'n d' rachadh 'dealbh a chur 's a'
bhrataich,
Ann an Arm an Iarla Chataich,¹⁶³
Bhiodhmaid marbh mun leigeadh as i,
Ged thigeadh neart a' Phap oirnn.

If they were to put her picture on the flag
Of the Earl of Sutherland's regiment,
We would die to keep it there,
Though the power of the Pope came
against us.

¹⁶³ Sally Grant was a young lady who was the toast of the regiment, the First Sutherland Fencibles, in which Rob Donn served from 1759 to 1763 as a member of the Durness Company. See Morrison (1899: 284, n. 1); Grimbly (1999: 214-22). The poem is useful to the biographer because it lists places Rob Donn visited during his military service.

81. WILLIAM BAIN'S SON¹⁶⁴

[1] Sinidh mi gu faoilteach, ait,
Ce saothreach e, ri chur an dàn;
'S innsidh mi gach strì ri *maitse*,
Thachair aig mac Uilleim Bhàin.

I will endeavor generously and gladly,
However toilsome, to express it in song;
And I will describe every effort
By William Bain's son to find a wife.

Sèist A: Sud e 'n a ruith o thigh gu tigh,
Sud e 'n a ruith, 's e a tha;
Sud e 'n a ruith o thigh gu tigh,
Sud e 'n a ruith, 's e a tha.

There he is, running from house to house,
There he is running, there he is;
There he is, running from house to house,
There he is running, there he is.

[2] Dh' innseadh gu 'n robh 'aodann
duineil,
Shìn e gu h-urramach, àrd,
Tairgse thoirt do nighean a' Mhorair',¹⁶⁵
Chuid, 's a chomunn, 's a ghràdh.

He was told that his impudence was
remarkable:
He reached to the noble and high;
He made an offer to the Lord's daughter
Of his goods, his company, and his love.

Sèist A

[3] Bhan-Mhorair a b' fheàrr do 'm b' aithne,
A h-argumaid a chur an gnath,
Dh' fheòraich co as a bha 'n ceigein,

The best Lady of my acquaintance
Made her point in her usual manner:
She inquired where the squat fellow was
from

Nach robh ni b' fhaide o 'n làr.

Who was no farther from the ground.

Sèist A

[4] "'S suarach mi mu t' fhuaim
's an ridhil,
'S ceàrr thu air fidhioll 's air dàn;
'S coltach am post ris an duine,
Nach ruigeadh thurad no stàn."

"I am unimpressed by your sound
in the reel,
And you go astray on fiddle and song;
The man is like a post
That wouldn't reach across you or down."

Sèist A

[5] Chaidh e 'n sin a suas do Mhusal
A shealltuinn air cupull an àidh,
A dh' iarraidh Màiri no Is'bail,¹⁶⁶
No tè de 'n mhiotailt a b' fheàrr.

Next he went up to Musal
To look at a couple of heifers,
Seeking Mary or Isabel
Or one of the best mettle.

Sèist A

¹⁶⁴ The text is from Morrison (1899: 187-91), with my translation: it also appears in Mackay (1829: 85-88) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 91-92).

The song makes fun of an unprepossessing young man, neither handsome nor wealthy, who made the rounds of the district seeking a wife among the daughters of all the local gentry. Apparently he worked as a baker or miller or farm-servant, grinding grain on a quern.

¹⁶⁵ Lord Reay's daughter.

¹⁶⁶ Daughters of Iain mac Eachainn of Musal. Morrison (1899: 188 n. 1). Since Isabel married in 1747 (Grimble 1999: 97), this dates the poem to the mid-1740s.

[6] Thuirt bean an tighe 's i fanoid,
 "Faighnich dheth am bheil e fuar;
 Faighnich dheth 'n do ghabh e 'n galar,
 Ris an can iad tinneas-fuail."

The wife of the house said mockingly:
 "Ask him whether he is cold;
 Ask him whether he got the disease
 That they call kidney-stone."

Sèist A

[7] Chaidh e sin do dh' Acha-gharbhsaid,
 Gu leannan a' fhaotainn dha
 'S feargach ghabh aig Barbra Abrach,¹⁶⁷
 Prabnach thighinn 'n a dàil.

Then he went to Acha-gharbhsaid
 To find himself a sweetheart,
 And he made Barbara Abrach angry,
 A young lad coming to meet her.

Sèist B:

"Bheadagain duibh, prab-shùil air chrith,
 Mach as mo thigh, trà, trà!
 Bheadagain duibh, prab-shùil air chrith,
 Mach as mo thigh, trà, trà!"

"Black saucy fellow, bleary-eyed, trembling,
 Out of my house at once!
 Black saucy fellow, bleary-eyed, trembling,
 Out of my house at once!"

[8] "Mhaoiseanaich dhuibh, mhaoil na
 brathainn,
 'S dao-chail leam na tha thu 'g ràdh,
 'S ioghnadh leam do strì ri mnathan,
 'S fheabhas 's a bhleitheas tu bràth."

"Black, bald, stupid fellow of the quern,
 What you are saying is disgusting to me,
 I am surprised you are seeking a wife
 Since you are superior at grinding on a
 quern."

Sèist B

[9] "Fhir a dh' fhuineadh 'm bonnach leathan,
 'S fhir a bhleitheadh air a' bhràth;
 Fear a bhleoghnadh caoir' is gobhar,
 Ciod am feum th' air cobhair da."

"Man who would bake the flat bannock,
 Man who would grind on the quern,
 Man who would milk sheep and goats,
 What is the use of helping him?"

Sèist B

[10] "'S feargach leis a' bhalgan phocach,
 Bargan socrach mar fhuair càch;
 Bean a thoirt air làimh leis dachaidh,
 'S bhi fàgail an tochaird air dàil."

"And furious with the little squat fellow,
 An easy bargain like others got;
 A wife to take home with him by the hand,
 And to leave the dowry on credit."

Sèist A

[11] Thunga thug e 'n urchair sgiobalt,
 Shealltuinn air Biogas gun dàil.¹⁶⁸
 Leught' 'n a aodann e bhi abuich,
 Leis an fhreagairt thug e dha.

He took Tongue like a speeding bullet,
 Searching out Bighouse without delay.
 His reception was read in his face
 By the answer he gave him.

¹⁶⁷ The Abrach Mackays lived at this time in Mudale, about five miles south-east of Rob Donn's home in Strathmore. "They were known as the Abrachs after the daughter of MacDonald of Keppoch in Lochaber, who had borne a son to the Mackay Chief who married Elizabeth of the Isles in 1415." Grimble (1999: 31).

¹⁶⁸ Mackay of Bighouse, Lord Reay's factor, was then resident in Tongue (Morrison: 190 n.1).

Sèist A

[12] Dh' fhaighnich e 'm faigheadh e caileag, He asked whether he could get a girl,
'M faigheadh e roghann à dhà; Could he get a choice between two:
"S coma leam tana, no tiugh i, "I don't care if she is thin or plump,
'S coma leam dubh i, no bàn." I don't care if she is dark or fair."

Sèist A

[13] "Feumaidh tu fearann gu aran, "You need land for bread,
Feumaidh tu baile no dhà; You need a steading or two;
Airgiod bhi le toirm 'n ad sporan, Money to jingle in your purse,
Feitheamh ri ceannachd o chàch. Available for purchases from others.

Sèist C:

Feumaidh tu tigh, feumaidh tu daimh, You need a house, you need bulls,
Feumaidh tu crodh thèid a dhàir; You need cows that will breed;
Feumaidh tu tigh, feumaidh tu daimh, You need a house, you need bulls,
Feumaidh tu crodh thèid a dhàir." You need cows that will breed.

[14] 'N uair dh'ionnsuich e nach ceannsaicht' When he learned that Bighouse was
Biogas, unconquered,
Leis na bh' aige-se air blàr; By all he placed on the battlefield,
Chaidh e 'n sin a sios gun athadh, He promptly went down without a blush
Shealltuinn air Strathaidh gun dàil. To look in Strathy.

Sèist A

[15] 'N uair chunnaic Strathaidh a dhronnag, When Strathy saw his small stature,
'S nach robh a thomult ni b' fheàrr, And his bulk was no better,
'N aodann chuireadh faoilt 's na ballaibh, The face that would be welcoming
B' èigin a cromadh gu làr. Could hardly bow to the floor.

Sèist A

[16] Ràinig e 'n sin Maighstir Rothach,¹⁶⁹ Then he reached Reverend Munro,
Caraid is comh-dhalt is dàimh; A friend and foster-brother and relation,
Cha 'n fhaigheadh esan uaith a nighean, He could not get his daughter from him —
Cùmhnanta, cridhe, no làimh. Contract, heart or hand.

Sèist A

[17] "S duilich leam bhi cur ri fath-chainnt, "I am sorry to add to the ridicule,
'S nach dean mi leasachadh 's feàrr; But I will not do any better,
'N saoil thu 'n ann le nighean Parsoin, Do you think that the parson's daughter
'S docha peasan na le càch?" Prefers a sorry little fellow to all the rest?

Sèist A

¹⁶⁹ Morrison (190 n.2) says this refers to Rev. George Munro of Farr, 1754-1779. But Isabel MacKay (verse 5) had died in the late 1740s, so this does not make sense chronologically.

[18] Ràinig e 'n sin Seumus Sgeireidh,¹⁷⁰
Gu dearbh cha do cheil mar bha;
Labhair e gu magail, sgeigeil,
Ged nach robh aige ni b' fheàrr.

Then he reached James of Skerray,
Indeed he did not hide how it was;
He spoke mockingly, jeering,
Although he had nothing better.

Sèist A

[19] “Tha mo nighean gu stumpach, leathan,
'S cha 'n 'eil a h-athair ach geàrr;
'S ma 's cliamhuinn domh an spìocair odhar,
Cha 'n fhaicear m' ogha 's an fheur.”

“My daughter is stumpy and wide,
And her father is short;
And if the fallow, shabby fellow becomes
my son-in-law,
My grandchild will be invisible in the
grass.”

Sèist A

[20] Thug e suas air thar a' bhealaich,
Do nach d' fhuair e leannan 's an àit,
Shaoil leis gur h-e Taoitear Far,
Bha shaoire mu 'chaileig na càch.

He took himself up over the pass,
For he could not get a sweetheart in the
place.
It occurred to him that the Tutor of Farr
Was freer with his daughter than the rest.

Sèist A

¹⁷⁰ This was presumably James MacKay, the tacksman of Skerray who served as a Captain in the Sutherland Fencibles during Rob Donn's service from 1759-63. See Grimble (1999: 215).

82. TRIP TO STORNOWAY¹⁷¹

[1] Siubhal mar-ri Deorsa duinn,
Do Steòrnabha air chuan,
Fad na h-oidhch' a' seòladh dhuinn,
Gu Rugha-'n-Stoir ud shuas;
Bu bhiadhach, deochach, 'bhirlinn ud,

'S i luchdar, dìonach, luath,
Gu stiùrach, crannach, ròpanach,
Gu rathanach, seòlta, fuaight'.

[2] Air maoladh gob an Rugha dhuinn,
An dubharachd na h-oidhch',
Suas gu Loch-an-Ionmhair sinn,
'G iomramh, gun leus soills',
Shìn gaoth an ear ri sèideadh oirnn,
'N uair dh' èirich lath' o 'n oidhch',
'S air port 's am bith cha lùbtadh i,
Eadar Pùitig is Loch-Aills.

[3] 'S a' mhaduinn 's ann a b' èigin duinn,
'N uair dh' èirich gaoth gu searbh,
Ar cùlaobh thoirt do 'n tìr,
'S ar ceart aodann thoirt do 'n fhairg',
Fo steallaidhnean, 's fo thunnsghaidhnean,

Na tonnan mòra, borb,
Cnocach, copach, sìdeach, gleannach,

Glupach, lìopach, gorm.

[4] 'N uair chaidh i air a h-adhairt,
'S a h-aghaidh air a h-iùil,
Bu chuimseach, gleusd' na Leòdaich,
Mu na sgòidean aig na siùil.
Bu toigheach, cuimhneach, làidir,
Bha Pàdruig air an stiùir,

We travelling with George
By sea to Stornoway,
We sailing the whole night
Yonder towards the Point of Stoer,
Provisioned with food and drink, that
galley,

Loaded with cargo, watertight, swift,
With helm, masts and rigging
With pulleys and stitched sails.

We sailing closely round the Point
In the darkness of the night,
We continued towards Lochinver,
Rowing without a flicker of light.
The east wind began to blow on us
As day rose out of night,
And she could not be steered to any port
Between Puitig and Lochalsh.

In the morning we were obliged,
When the wind rose harshly,
To turn our backs to the land
And our faces directly towards the sea,
Subjected to the drenchings and the
beatings

Of the furious great waves,
Mountainous, foamy, stormy, deep-
valleyed,
Sucking, thick-lipped, blue.

As she made headway
Forwards on her course,
The MacLeods were unerring and expert
About the sheets of the sails.
Watchful, mindful, powerful
Was Patrick at the helm,

¹⁷¹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 156-59). Most of the translation is from Grimble (1999: 63-66, 9); I translated the first two lines of verse 9 and verse 10 (which Grimble omits). The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 89-91) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 66-67).

The song commemorates an undated voyage that Rob Donn took to Stornoway with George Mackay of Handa and his Macleod crew. A storm overtook them at Stoer Point, so they ran the Minch without the pilot they had planned to pick up at Lochinver and apparently considered themselves lucky to be alive. Morrison (1899: 156). It would be interesting to compare this poem to Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair (AMA)'s "Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill", which Ronald Black infers was written between 1751 (the publication date of *Ais-eirigh*, which did not include it) and 1770 (the date of AMA's death). *An Lasair* (Edinburgh: 2001), p. 470. It is possible that Rob Donn used AMA's poem as a model, but it is also possible that Rob Donn composed his poem first. Grimble does not try to date the trip to Stornoway, but it sounds like a young man's adventure, and Rob Donn seems to have composed all his poems shortly after the events they describe.

'S bha Seòras ruadh na Tairbird ann,
Le seirbheis uiread 's a bha 'n triùir.

[5] Bha 'n sgiob ud air a coimeasgadh,
Le fearalas is fiamh,
Chìteadh fiamh a' ghàir' orr',
Ged a dh'fhàg iad clach is sliabh,

Le duinealas gun eibeantas,
Gun saidealtas 'n an gnìomh;
'S gun fhear air bith do 'n chùigear ud,
Bhi stigh an Leodhas riamh.

[6] Ach sheall an t-Iùl-fhear tràcaireach,
Air ur n'eigin-sa na thiom,
'N uair nach feudtadh bòsd
A chur à seòldair, no a saoir;
O dhruim na mara mòr-chlasaich,
'S i seòladh stigh 'n a caoir,
'S dhe bàrr nan tonnan sròthanach,

Gu 'n bhuail i sròn ri tìr.

[7] 'N uair ràinig sinn an t-àite sin,
Bha chuideachd fàilteach ruinn;
Fhuair sinn taghadh fàrdoich,
Nach robh àicheadh os a cinn,
Gu ballach, aolach, sglèatach,
Reidhleach, lotach, glèidhteach, grinn,
Aig àrmunn fial do dh' Iomhaireach,
Aig nighean Triath Chill-duinn.

[8] Bha Caiptein oirnn 's an àite sin,
'S ann as a dheanainn bòsd,
Cha tigeadh gloin' gu clàr ann,
Nach b' i a shlàint-sa rachadh òl;
Seana mhnathan a' briathrachas,
Nach fhac iad riamh ni 's bòidhch',
Is cagar mhaighdean fiarachdail,
"O chiall, am bheil e pòsd'?"

[9] 'N uair chuir e 'aodach aisig dheth,
'S a dheasaich se e fèin,
Shaoil mi nach bu mhagaid domh
A ràdh, gu 'm b' ghasd a cheum.
B' e cainnt nan daoine bha eòlach air,
'S e falbh 'n an còir air sreud,
"Thath e gun mhnaoi a chobhras e,
'S a rìgh bu mhòr am beud."

And George Roy of Tarbet was there
Doing the work of three.

That crew alternated
With fortitude and fear.
They were to be seen smiling,
Though they had left rock and mountain
behind,
With unfainting courage,
Without timidity in their actions,
Though not a man out of the five of them
Had ever set foot in Lewis.

But the divine helmsman looked mercifully
On our plight in time,
When it was impossible to boast
Of sailor or of carpenter.
From the back of the great sportive sea
And the water rushing forward in a torrent
And from the summit of the whirling
waves
She struck her prow against land.

When we came to that place
The people made us welcome.
We got our choice of lodgings,
Such as had none to surpass them,
With high walls, lime and slates, rails,
With upper floors, well-protected, neat,
With a generous Laird of the MacIvers.
And the daughter of the Lord of Kildun.

Our Captain in that place
Was someone to boast of.
Not a glass came to the board there
But it was his health that was drunk,
While old women exclaimed
They had never seen anyone so handsome
And maidens whispered the question,
"Goodness, is he married?"

*When he took off his sailing clothes
And dressed himself properly,
I thought it no extravagance
To say that his step was handsome.
Those who know him well said,
As he made his rounds visiting them,
"He is without a woman to care for him —
Heavens, what a great shame!"*

[10] Se mo dhùrachd chinnteach dhuit,
'S i 'n fhìrinn tha mi 'g ràdh,
Bith cuimhneach air do *philot*,
Is cha chaill thu air gu bràth;
Saoghal sona 'n deagh bheath' dhuit,
'S deadh oighreachan bhi t' àit,
Is uiread eile dh' ionndrain orr'
'S an àm am faigh iad bàs.¹⁷²

*It is my firm wish for you —
And it is the truth I tell —
Be mindful of your pilot,
And you will never be lost.
Prosperity and a good life to you,
And worthy heirs to follow you,
And so much more I wish for them
In the time of their death.*

¹⁷² It is unclear why Grumble omitted this verse — perhaps because the meaning of the last line is unclear. All three sources print it as above, so he could be wishing them an easy death. He could be seeking their eternal blessings in the hereafter, although that reading would make more sense with a preposition that translates as “after” rather than “in”. Or the original could have been “Gus an àm am faigh iad bàs” (until the time of their deaths), which would translate as “throughout their lives.”

83. RUPERT MACKAY¹⁷³

[1] Slàn is maireann do Rhùpard, Chaidh air 'aineol gun chùram, Air bhàrr mara fuidh shiùil air na clàraibh.	Health and long life to Rupert, He went into the unknown without a care, On the crest of the sea on a ship under sail.
[2] 'S mòr a' chrois air na dùthchaibh-s', Gum bheil tearc duine fiùghail, Thuiteas feasd annt' air cùis mach o 'n àireach.	A great misfortune will fall on this country When a rare and worthy man is borne away From the cattle business on the sea-stream.
[3] Cha bu triall duit mur b' fhìor sud; Thaobh do chiall is do ghniomhra, Cha bu mhiann duit bhi diomhain 's na h-àitibh-s'.	You would not be leaving if that were not true; Because of your intelligence and industry, You did not wish to waste your life in these parts.
[4] Soirbheas sona air a chuan duit, Taghadh cala gun fhuadach, O na maireannan gluasadach, gàireach.	Good luck to you on the ocean, Choice of harbor without being storm- driven By the moving, roaring seas.
[5] Na robh feartan aig fuachd ort, Na toir teas dhuit a chuartaich, Na bu treise luchd t' fhuath na luchd t' fhàbhoir.	May the forces of cold spare you, May fever not envelop you, May those who hate you not be stronger than your supporters.
[6] Rèir 's mar b' aithne dhomh fèin thu, No mar b' urradh mi innseadh, Bha e ainneamh fear t' aois is do thàbhachd.	To the extent that I knew you, Or was able to ascertain, A man of your age and your substance was rare.
[7] Cruaidh, duineil, gun dochair, Suaire, sìothchail, gun sochair, Caitheadh cuimir gun bhoichdas gun bhàithe.	Hardy, manly, without blemish, Polite, peace-loving, without softness, Wearing a form without poverty, without folly.
[8] Smachd is meas gun bhi feargach, Cuimse ghlic gun bhi cealgach; Uailse phailt air a tearbadh o 'n àrdan.	Power and respect without anger, Good judgment without dishonesty, Ample nobility without pride.

¹⁷³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 131-33) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 160-62) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 83), where it is described as an "Iorram" or boat-song. Each verse is repeated, for a total of six lines.

The occasion for the song was the emigration of Rupert Mackay, a son of the Tutor of Farr, to Jamaica, where he later died. Grimble (1999: 97). Considering the similar fate of Joseph MacDonald in India, it seems that the tropical regions of the Empire were a graveyard for the ablest younger sons of the far North. However, I have seen no evidence in Rob Donn's poetry that he questioned any aspect of the Empire, including the slave plantations in Jamaica. On that topic, see T.M. Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland's Global Diaspora 1750-2010* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2011), pp. 40-46.

[9] Na 'm b' e gibhtean mo chinn-sa,
Chuireadh fonn dhomh air m' inntinn,
'S iomadh iomradh a dh' innsin a dh' fhàg mi.

If I were gifted myself,
A tune would come to my mind,
And I would often mention the one who
left me.

[10] An earbsadh naidheachd a chluinntinn,
Thogas aighear do mhuinntir,
Iomadh soraidh, le mìle ceud fàilt duit.

Their confidence in hearing news
Will raise the spirits of the people,
Many a farewell, with a hundred thousand
greetings to you.

[11] Ann do dhùisg, no 'n do chadal,
H-uile cùis 'g ad dheadh fhreagairt
Dhuitse, Rhùpaird Mhic Reabaird 'Ic
Theàrlach.

In your waking or in your sleeping,
May all your affairs answer well
For you, Rupert son of Robert, son of
Charles.

84. THE LITTLE COUPLE¹⁷⁴

Sèist:

Hei, tha mo rùn duit,
Ho, tha mo rùn duit,
Hei, tha mo rùn duit,
A rùn ghil' na trèig mi.

[1] Tha dithis anns an dùthaich-s',
Tha triall dhol a phòsadh;
'S gur beag an t-aodach ùr,
Ni dhoibh gùn agus lèine.

[2] Dithis a tha òg iad,
Dithis a tha bòidheach,
Dithis tha gun òirleach
A chòrr air a chèile.

[3] Ma bhios macan buan ac',
'S gu 'n tèid e ris an dual'chas,
Cuiridh e gu luath
An cù ruadh as an t-saobhaidh.

[4] Ach ma thèid an crùsach,
Sgaoilt' air feadh na dùthcha,
Thèid *prospeic* ris na sùilean
Tha dùil a 'm, mus lèir iad.

Chorus:

Hey, my affection is for you,
Ho, my affection is for you,
Hey, my affection is for you,
True love, do not forsake me.

There is a couple in this country
Who intend to get married;
They have little new clothing —
A gown and a shirt will do for them.

Two that are young,
Two that are handsome,
Two that are without
An extra inch between them.

If they have a hardy wee son,
And he follows his heritage,
He will quickly displace
The red fox from his den.

But if the small fry goes
Running around the countryside,
They will need a telescope,
I expect, before they can see him.

¹⁷⁴ The text is from Morrison (1899: 370) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 155) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 34).

85. A LOVE SONG¹⁷⁵

Sèist:

Hillin ò ro, a Mhargaidh bhàn,
Hillin ò ro, gur tu mo ghràdh,
Hillin ò ro, ho roch ò ro,
'S hillin ò ro, a Mhargaidh bhàn.

[1] Tha fleasgach òg ann so gu tinn,
'S a dh'iarraidh 'shlainte chaidh e
do 'n bheinn,
Cobhair àraidh a dheanadh stà dha,
'S cha 'n 'eil e 'm fasaichean no 'n glinn.

[2] Chuir iad lèigh 'n sin os a chinn,
Cha d' fhuair e sgeul ach gun robh e tinn,
Galar caithteach, gun chron ri fhaicinn,
A dh' fhàg mi-thaitneach dha muir is beinn.

[3] 'S galar dùthchasach do dhuin' òg,
Saighead *Chupid* a bhi 'g a leòn,
Ma tha do shùil-sa ri maighdean chliùiteach,
Faigh ri taobh is bitheadh tu beò.

[4] "Cha 'n 'eil àicheadh na tha thu 'g ràdh,
Faodaidh m' aodan sud inns' do chàch;
Tha mi 'n gaol, is cha bhi mi saor 's e,
Ged a shaoileadh e dhomhsa am bàs."

[5] Gabh-sa 'n riaghailt th' aig ceud do chàch,
Se 's ciallaich' dhuit dhol 'n a dàil;
An t-sùil a 's luainich' mu thaobh na buaile,
Is cead do 'n ghruagach bhi dubh no bàn.

[6] Ged 'eil an rian sin air tigh'nn fo 's àird,
Bheir mi mo bhriathar nach caomh leam e,

Chorus:

Hillin ò ro, fair Maggie,
Hillin ò ro, you are my love,
Hillin ò ro, ho roch ò ro,
'S hillin ò ro, fair Maggie.

There is a sickly young bachelor here,
And to seek his health he went
to the mountain,
To avail himself of a particular remedy,
And he is not in the wilds or the glens.

They sent a doctor to him up there,
He found out only that he was sick,
A wasting sickness, without visible harm,
That left sea and mountain displeasing to
him.

It is the usual sickness for a young man,
To be wounded by Cupid's arrow;
If your eye is on a respectable maiden,
Go to her side and you should live.

"I do not deny what you say,
My face may reveal that to others;
I am in love, and I would not be free from
it,
Even if it feels to me like death."

Adopt the method of a hundred others,
It is wisest for you to go to meet her,
[Take] the quickest glance around the
cattlefold,
And [ask] permission for the girl, be she
dark or fair.

"Although I have considered that
approach,,
I give my word I do not like it;

¹⁷⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 234-36) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 141-53) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 85).

This poem is one of many in which Rob Donn offers sympathy and counsel to young, lovelorn friends and neighbors. The first two verses imply that the young man had gone to the shielings to visit his beloved, and that Rob Donn was the "doctor" sent up to "cure" him. The advice he provides is a ringing endorsement of love over material goods, and probably reflects his own marriage as well as his temperament.

'N uair bhios mi suiridh, 's mo chion do
dh' inighean,
'S e bhi 'g iomlaid mo ghalar bàis.

[7] Cha 'n 'eil thu 'n àit sin, mur phàirt
tha beò,
Thug do 'n t-saoghal an gaol a 's mò;
Pears' is pàirtean, dreach is nàdur,
Cha 'n 'eil e dhoibh ach mar bhàrr
an fheadir.

[8] Cha 'n 'eil mo bhuaireadh-s' am buaile
chruidh,
No ann am maise 's mi sealltuinn rith';
Cha 'n ann an dìleab a tha mo shìth-s',
Ach an tè a 's caomh leam gun ni 's am bith.

[9] Air son nì cia b' e mhill a bhlas,

Innsidh tìom dha nach 'eil e ceart;
'N uair dh' fhalbhas 'eudail, bidh 'ghaol
a dh' èis air,
Is c' àit' fuaidh 'n ghrèin bheil a rèisd
a thlachd.

[10] Cha 'n 'eil do bhròn air an fhòd so tric,
Suiridh air gruagach, gun bhuar, cha ghlic;
Tha bith ar èigheachd le cuid, tha feumail,

Nach toir fear eud ach do rèir a stuic.

[11] Cha 'n e mar tha thu a 's feàrr a bhi,
Ged fhaigh thu pàirt ris am bi do shìth;
'S e 'n gaol a 's àirde sin o 'n tig an t-eudach,
Is leis na dhà sin gu 'm fàg e 'chlìth.

[12] Fheara òga, tha 'n ear 's an iar,
Bithibh bunntumach ann bhur ciall;
Seallaibh 'n àirde ri pears is pàirtean,
Mus dean sibh làmh a chur anns a' chliabh.

When I am courting, and I love a girl,

The result is my sickness unto death."

You are not in that state unless you are
partly alive.
Love is the greatest gift to the world;
Appearance and goods, form and nature:
Compared to them it is the best of
the harvest.

"My temptation is not in the cattlefold

Or the beauty that I see in her,
My goal is not the inheritance
But the one I love without any goods."

For the sake of goods, a man will ruin his
happiness,
Time will tell him that he is wrong.
When his treasure disappears, his love
will annoy him,
And where under the sun is his
satisfaction then?

"Your attitude is unusual in this business;
Courting a girl without cattle is not wise.
Some have insisted that a livelihood is
necessary,
That a man will not become zealous
except for stock."

That is not the best way to live,
Even if you get part of what you want;
Zeal comes from the highest love,
And with those two, one can
overcome adversity.

Young men, who are east and west,
Be shrewd in your thinking;
Look higher than person or parts
Before you put a hand on the creel.

86. TO ANN MORRISON¹⁷⁶

Sèist (Chorus): Hi-im, agus hi-im o,
 Hi-im, agus hi-im o.

[1] Tha gruagach àraidh shuas air àraidh,
'S mòr thug gràdh dhi, 's mairg nach fhàir i.

There is a certain maiden up in a shieling,
Many have given love to her; alas for him who does not get close to her.

[2] An tùs na bliadhna, dùn 'g a h-iarruidh,
Triùir a' tigh'nn diubh, 's triùir a' triall diubh.

At the beginning of the year a crowd were seeking her,
Three of them coming and three of them leaving.

[3] Fear goirid leathan, fear eadar-mheadhonach,
Fear dubh, fear donn, fear crom, fear dìreach.

A broad, short man, a middle-sized man,
A black-haired man, brown man, bent man, straight man.

[4] Tha Guinneach cionalt, cinneant, càirdeach,
Gnìomhach, beartach, neartmhor, làmhant'.

The Gunn fellows are amiable, enterprising, friendly,
Active, prosperous, robust and handy.

[5] Raibeart Abrach, tapaidh, treubhach,
Gnìomhach, greigheach, màgach, sprèidheach.

Robert Abrach is clever, gallant,
Active, possessing horses, clumsy-legged, rich in cattle.

[6] Tha pàirt de 'n t-sluagh, 's an uair s' r'an innseadh,
Muillear, tuairnear, tuath, is greubhar.

Some of the people to be named in this context
Are a miller, turner, husbandman and grieve.

[7] Cha liutha litir anns na bradaibh
Na duin' òg an tòir cho fad' oirr'.

The letters of the alphabet are not more numerous
Than the number of young men who have been seeking her for so long.

¹⁷⁶ The text is from Morrison (1899: 396-97) and the translation is from Grimble (1999: 24) except as noted; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 212-13) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 49).
Like the two other love songs to Ann Morrison, it was composed in the 1730s.

[8] Bha I, N, D; bha E, two Angus,
U, R, O, gu *poly gamos*.¹⁷⁷

There were I, N, D; there was E, two of Angus,
U, R, O, *polygamously*.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Although editors and commentators uniformly describe Rob Donn as illiterate, this poem shows that he had some basic familiarity with letters and their sounds. The initial “I” probably referred to Iain, or John Murray, the man Ann Morrison married. Grimble (1999: 23). “N” could have been Neacal or Niall, “D” could have been Daibhidh or Dòmhnall, “E” could have been Eachann, “U” could have been Uilleam or Ùisdean, and “R” was the poet Rob. “O” is less obvious; it could have referred to an Owen (although the Gaelic spelling is usually Eòghainn). “Angus” is in English, presumably to rhyme with “polygamous”, a word he must have learned from Rev. MacDonald or someone else with a superior formal education. However, there is an entry in MacKechnie’s *Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts* (1973), p. 342, referring to a now-lost manuscript by the Rev. Dr. Alexander Irvine (1773-1824), which states that Rob Donn “Went to Ereboll school.” This seems quite plausible and consistent with other tidbits of evidence. That is, if he attended only briefly — just long enough to learn his letters and realize what he was missing — it could explain both this poem and some of his other comments on the schoolmaster John Sutherland and the advantages of literacy.

¹⁷⁸ Grimble (p. 24) has “to polygamous”, which makes no sense.

87. DONALD FRASER'S DOG¹⁷⁹

Sèist:

Sìos do 'n mhuileann, suas do 'n chuil',
Triallaidh an cuilean as mo dhèigh;
Sìos do 'n mhuileann, suas do 'n chuil',
Triallaidh an cuilean as mo dhèigh.

[1] Tha iad uile toirt a' ghàir domh,
Mu 'n chù bhlàr bhi as mo dhèigh;
Ach 's ro dhuilich leams' a mharbhadh,
'S a chaoidh cha 'n fhalbh e uam leis fèin.

[2] Cuiream fios gu Dò'ull Friseil,
Gu'm bheil mis' a' sileadh dheur,
'S mur faigh mi tuille' da sholaidh,
Fanadh Bòini aige fèin.

[3] Ach ma 's dealach sinne, *Bhòini*,
Mìle beannachd ann ad dhèigh;
Tha do nàdur càirdeach, tairis,
Sud am beul nach d' aithris breug.

[4] Cha 'n iongnadh mise a bhi feargach,
'N uair chaidh m' ainm a chur an cèill,
Anns an *list* aig Maighstir Murchadh,
Sgrìobh iad fear-chù bhi mo dhèigh.

Chorus:

*Down to the mill, up to the house,
The puppy will follow me;
Down to the mill, up to the house,
The puppy will follow me.*

They are all laughing at me
Because the white-starred dog follows me,
But it is very hard for me to destroy him,
And he will never leave me of his own
accord.

I will send word to Donald Fraser
That I am shedding tears,
And unless I can get more benefit from it,
Let Boiny remain with him.

But before we part, Boiny,
A thousand blessings on you,
Your nature is faithful, trustworthy —
That is the mouth that hasn't told a lie.

It is no wonder I am angry.
When my name was published
In the Reverend Murdo's list,
They wrote down "dog-keeper" as my
occupation.

¹⁷⁹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 354) and the translation mostly from Grimble (1899: 148-49); I translated the chorus. It also appears in Mackay (1829: 125-26).

88. MARION AND HER LOVER¹⁸⁰

Sèist:

'S e 'n gille dubh ciar-dhubh,
Ciar-dhubh, ciar-dhubh,
'S e 'n gille dubh ciar-dhubh
Tha triall 'n a gaoith.

[1] Tha maighdean 's an àite s'
Tha àireamh do bhliadhnaibh
Is shaoil leam nach pòsadh
Neach beò i, chion briadhadh;
Ach 's garbh-dheanta calg-fhionnach
Calbhar r' a bhiadhadh,
An gille dubh ciar-dhubh,
Tha triall 'n a gaoith.

[2] A Mhairread, cha chòir dhuit
Bhi gòrach no fiata,
Tha marbhaist¹⁸¹ ni 's leòir dhuit,
An còmhnuidh 'g ad iarraidh;
Ni 's araidhe cha 'n eòl domh,
'S ni 's bòidhche cha b' fhiach thu,
Na 'n gille dubh ciar-dhubh,
Tha triall 'n ad ghaoith.

[3] Tha ministeir còir ann,
Is mòran do chiall aig',
'N a thaoitear do 'n inghean,
Gun iomrall gun fhiaradh;
Is b' fheàrr leis, an òigh
Bhi gun phòsadh seachd bliadhna,
Na 'n gille dubh ciar-dhubh
Bhi triall 'n a gaoith.

[4] Ged bhiodh ann a phòcaid,
Do dh' òr na th' aig Iarla,
Bu mhòr a' chùis bhròin e
Do 'n òigh tha e 'g iarraidh;
Sùilean is sròn,
Agus feòsag, is fìaclan
A' ghille dhuibh chiar-dhuibh,
Tha triall 'n a gaoith.

Chorus:

It is the dark, black-haired lad,
Black-haired, black-haired,
It is the dark, black-haired lad,
Who travels in her wake.

There is a maiden in this place
A number of years of age,
And I did not think anyone alive
Would marry her for her beauty;
But a roughly-made, bristly-haired,
Voracious glutton,
The dark, black-haired lad
Is traveling in her wake.

Marion, it is not seemly for you
To be foolish or impulsive.
You have more resources than you need,
The dwelling you desire;
I know of nothing you deserve less —
As to propriety or beauty —
Than the dark, black-haired lad
Who travels in your wake.

We have a virtuous minister,
And he is very sensible
In tutoring the girls
Not to wander or go astray;
And he would prefer the maiden
To be unmarried seven years
Than the dark, black-haired lad
To travel in her wake.

Even if he had in his pocket
As much gold as an Earl,
He would be a cause of great suffering
To the maiden that he seeks;
The eyes and nose
And beard and teeth
Of the dark, black-haired lad
Who travels in her wake.

¹⁸⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 311) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 9-11) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 11).

This is a parody of a popular love song, "An Gille Dubh, Ciar-dhubh", in which Rob Donn attempts to discourage the marriage of an old maid and an old bachelor, whom he believes would be a dreadful husband. See Mackay (1829: 9).

¹⁸¹ I have interpreted this word as "mairbheist", defined in Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 122) as an obsolete word meaning effects or resources.

[5] 'S olc an leannan òineid
 An t-òlach s' 'n a fhìonaig,
 'N a luidhe 'n a chòta,
 'N a rògaire mìodhoir,
 A shàilean 'n a thòn,
 Is a shròn ris a' ghriosaich;
 'S e 'n gille dubh ciar-dhubh
 Tha triall 'n a gaoith.

[6] Tha pung ann a chàileachd,
 Thug bàrr air na ceudan;
 Tha 'aogas ro ghrànda,
 'S e air fàile 'n t-srianaich.
 An uair bha e 'n Grùididh,
 Cha taobhaicheadh fiadh ruinn,
 Leis a' ghille dubh ciar-dhubh
 Bhi triall 'n an gaoith.

[7] Ged tha e cho daoachail,
 Is aogas cho fiadhaich,
 Bithidh feum air 's an tìr so,
 Air tioman de 'n bhliadhna,
 A thoirt ghabhraibh air mheann,¹⁸²
 'S a chur chlann dheth na cìochan;
 'S e 'n gille dubh ciar-dhubh
 Tha triall 'n a gaoith.

[8] 'N uair a bha sinn cruinn
 Anns a' bheinn, 's sinn ri fiadhach,
 Bu tric a bhiodh tu 'n sàs
 Anns an t-*sauce-pan*, is biadh ann;
 Bhiodh eagal ar bàis oirnn,
 Gu 'n cnàmhadh tu bian oirnn,
 A ghille dhuibh ciar-dhuibh,
 Tha triall 'n a gaoith.

The foolish lover is terrible,
 This lousy drunkard
 Lying in his coat,
 The contemptible rogue,
 His heels at his bottom,
 And his nose to the burning embers;
 It is the dark, black-haired lad
 Who travels in her wake.

There is a quirk in his constitution
 That made him superior to hundreds,
 His appearance is very ugly
 And he smells like a badger.
 When he was in Gruididh,
 The deer would not approach us,
 With the dark, black-haired lad
 Traveling upwind from them.

Although he is so disgusting
 And his face is so wild,
 He is needed in this land
 At certain times of the year,
 To bring flocks of goats with kids,
 And to put the young ones to the teats;
 It is the dark, black-haired lad
 Who travels in her wake.

When we were gathered
 On the mountain, hunting the deer,
 You were frequently focused
 On the sauce pan and its contents;
 We were deathly afraid
 That you would chew our hides —
 You, the dark, black-haired lad
 Who travels in her wake.

¹⁸² In this line, I have substituted “air” from Mackay (1829: 11) for the word “o” that appears in Morrison (1899: 313).

89. TO JOHN SUTHERLAND¹⁸³

[1] Tha 'm brachadair a' rànail gu tric, tric, tric,
O! c' àit an deach' do chràbhadh, bha glic, glic, glic?
Gun do sgrìob thu le t-ingnean mo lip, lip, lip,
Mar bhreun chlamhan aig éirigh ri circ, circ, circ.

The maltman is crying out, often, often, often,
Oh, where did your piety go, that was wise, wise, wise?
That you scratched with your nails my lip, lip, lip,
Like a filthy buzzard seizing hens, hens, hens.

[2] 'S ann am bàghan Cheann-tàile¹⁸⁴ tha chluig, chluig, chluig,
Chaidh an t-òlach do Dhòrnach le 'chuid, 'chuid, 'chuid;
Gu 'n d' fhàg thu an t-àgadh air rud, rud, rud,
Nàirich an làir ud thu; ud, ud, ud!

In the Kyle of Tongue are bubbles, bubbles, bubbles,
The fumbler went to Dornoch with his share, share, share;
You left the ox on a thing, thing, thing,
The mare embarrassed you there, there, there.

[3] Dh' fheòraich a mhàthair 'n do reic, reic, reic,
Thàinig e làmh ri le peic, peic, peic,
Bh' fheàrr gu 'm bitheadh Margaid 'n a t' airc, t' airc, t' airc,
'S gu 'm tàireadh tu a ghràdhaich bhi aic, aic, aic.

His mother inquired did he sell, sell, sell,
He came to her with a peck, peck, peck,
It would be better if Maggie were in your straits, straits, straits,
And you would get esteem from her, her, her.

[4] 'N uair thàir thu an làir, a bha rag, rag, rag,
Dh' fheuch thu le càirdeas i, dh'ob, dh'ob, dh'ob;
Gus 'n do shàth thu 's a' bhlàr i, bha bog, bog, bog,
'N uair ghlac thu le stràchd i, le hob, hob, hob!

When you got the mare, that was stubborn, stubborn, stubborn,
You tried her with kindness, and she balked, balked, balked,
Till you pushed her on the ground that was soft, soft, soft,
When you seized her with a blow with a hob, hob, hob!

¹⁸³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 334) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 67-68) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 36).

¹⁸⁴ Since Tongue was the seat of Kintail MacKay, and John Sutherland (Iain Tapaiddh) was the schoolmaster in Tongue, this presumably refers to the Kyle of Tongue.

90. THE INCONSTANT LOVER¹⁸⁵

Sèist:

Hillin is oho, bean-bhleoghain nan caorach,
Hillin is oho, bean-bhleoghain nan caorach,
Hillin is oho, bean-bhleoghain nan caorach,
Banachag nan gabhar 's bean-bhleoghainn
nan caorach.

[1] Tha mise 'n am bhantraich,
'S neo-shanntach mo cheum,
Toradh mo bhargain,
Air falbh gun dad feum.
'S cianail mo chòmhradh,
Mu 'n òigean a threig mi,
Tha mi cho brònach,
'S ged phòsadh e 'n dè mi.

[2] Tha mi mall-shuarach,
Mu bhuachailleachd chaorach,
O 'n dh' imich an tuathach
Suas uainn do 'n dìthreabh.
Shil air mo ghruaidhean,
O 'n chuala mi rìreadh,
Nach robh am fleasgach
Cho seasmhach 's a shaoil mi.

[3] Truagh gun bhi beartach,
A' faicinn mar dh' èirich,
Duin' agus bean
A chur aithn' air a chèile.
Chrìoch dhol air ais
Anns an t-seachduin an deigh sin,
Tha mis' a' sìor stad
Gus an las an tein' -èigin.¹⁸⁶

[4] Tha mac peathar m' athar
'G am fheitheal 's 'g am fhògradh,
Feuchainn a chomais,
Cur maill' air mo chòrdadh.

Chorus:

Hillin is oho, milkmaid of the sheep,
Hillin is oho, milkmaid of the sheep,
Hillin is oho, milkmaid of the sheep,
Milkmaid of the goats and the sheep.

I am a widow
And disheartened my step,
The result of my betrothal
Gone without use.
My conversation is sad
Regarding the youth who abandoned me,
I am so sorrowful,
Although he would have married me
yesterday.

I am indifferent
About the sheepherding
Since the tenantry moved away
Up into the unplowed land.
I wept on my cheeks
Since I heard for certain
That the young man was not
As committed as I thought.

Wretched without being wealthy,
Seeing how it happened:
To recognize each other
As husband and wife,
His intention to go back
The week afterwards.
I am constantly stopping
To light the need-fire.

The son of my father's sister
Is delaying and banishing me,
Trying his best
To interfere with my betrothal.

¹⁸⁵ The text is from Morrison (1899: 362-63) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 147-48) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 86).

While the story here is confusing, it appears that a young couple had been formally betrothed but not yet married when the young man left. In the first three verses, the milkmaid laments her apparent abandonment. In the last verse, the man seems to be saying that he was sent abroad suddenly by one of his relatives (perhaps he was in the army) but still intends to return and marry her.

¹⁸⁶ The "teine-èiginn" or need-fire was a folk custom employed to ward off evil. Dwelly (2001: 943) cites Alexander Carmichael as his authority in stating that it was last made in Reay about 1830. It seems unlikely that Rev. Murdo would have approved such a "pagan" practice, but it is interesting that it was still common enough in the 18th century for Rob Donn to describe it casually.

Ged chuir e le 'carachd,
Seal mi do 'n Olaind,
Thig mi gu baile,
'S bidh Ealasaid pòsd rium.

Although he sent me deceitfully
For a while to Holland,
I will come to the village,
And Elizabeth will marry me.

91. ANGUS BE BOLD¹⁸⁷

[1] Tha mo spiorad fo chuing,
'S bidh mi fo mhulad a chaoidh,
Air son nach 'eil mar rium do chothrom,
Na cheannaicheadh Anna mar mhnaoi.
Tha mo spiorad fo chuing, etc.

My spirit is oppressed,
And I will always be sorrowful,
Because I lack the wherewithal
To establish Anna as a wife.

[2] Tha mo nì cho tana,
'S nach urrainn mi aran thoirt di;
Tha mo ghaol cho deala,
'S nach tàir mi bhi sona 'd a dìth;
Tha mo dhaoine a' fantuinn
Cho dreamach le corruich 's le strì,
Cha 'n aithne dhomh duine nach canadh,
Gu 'm b' ainid leis aona dhiubh trì.

My goods are so few
That I cannot provide her with bread;
My love is so ardent
That I cannot be happy without her.
My relations continue to be
So peevish with anger and strife,
Everyone I know would say
That he would consider all three of them
galling.

[3] 'S neònach leam t' athair bhi gealltuinn,
Gu 'n cumadh e 'chlann air son sprèidh,

It is strange to me that your father vows
To hold back his children for the sake of
stock,

Oir is fear esan bha fulang
Mu'n d' fhuair e na bhuinnig e fèin,
Shuidhich e 'anam an geall oirr'
Ged chailleadh e 'theaghlach gu lèir,
'S cha chreid mi nach aidich an saoghal,
Gur mise 's mo aòbhar na ès'.

Because he himself is one who suffered
Before he obtained what he has.
He set his soul on his longing for it,
Although he would lose his entire family,
And I believe the world will acknowledge
That I am right rather than he.

[4] O! cha toigh leam gu bràth
A' mhuinntir a 's subhaich' 's a 's sàthaich',
Dh' aindeoin an cothrom 's am buinnig
Mur dean iad comh-fhulang ri càch.
O! cha toigh leam gu bràth, etc.

Oh, I will never understand
The happiest and most comfortable people,
Despite their advantages and their gains,
Who do not sympathize with others.

[5] Bha mi an teaghlach ministear,
A chraonaich na h-uile ni bàth,
Dh' iarradh droch smuaintean a bhacadh
Gun pheacadh a chleachdadh no ràdh.
Ged b' e sud pàirt d' a ghnòthuch,
Bhi tabhairt na comhairle b' fheàrr,—
Chaidh 'n stic so ni 's fhaide ann am aigheadh,
Na 's urradh mi aideachadh dha.

I was in the family of a minister,
Who eschewed all foolish things,
Seeking to prevent evil thoughts
Without practicing or speaking sin.
Although that was part of his duty —
To offer the best advice —
This inclination lasted longer in my mind
Than I could admit to him.

[6] 'S iad do cheisteachan teann,
Dh' fhàg mo lethsgheulan fann,

They are for the strict catechism;
They left my excuses weak,

¹⁸⁷ The text is from Morrison (1899: 116-18) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 218-220) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 67).

This is another poem about frustrated lovers with material and family impediments to their marriage. Here it appears that the young man's father wanted him to marry a young woman with more cows, so he refused to contribute to the cost of setting up their establishment, although he could afford to do so. The poem takes the form of a dialog between Angus and Rob Donn.

Air son nach 'eil romham na bhacadh,
A' chomhairl' a ghlacadh mo cheann.
'S iad do cheisteach teann, etc.

[7] Ged nach biodh bò r' a bleoghan,
Caoire no gobhair ach gann,
Ged nach biodh sguab 's an t-sabhull,

Bidh dùil ri cobhair nam beann.
Cha 'n eòl domh seòl a 's taitneich'
Air beartas 'n uair thachradh e gann,
No daoine bhi innealt gu cleachdadh,
Fasan na h-acfuinn a th' ann.

[8] O! nach tèid sinn air ghleus,
'S c' uime nach cuir sinn an cèill,
Nach ann an socair no 'm beartas,
Tha 'n earrann a 's treise d' ar spèis.
O! nach tèid sinn air ghleus, etc.

[9] Cuir-sa gu gnìomhach, duineil,
Do lion 's do ghunna air seòl,
Marbh dhuinn fiadh gu sithionn,
Iasg, is uibhean, is eòin.
Falbhamaid dh' ionnsuidh a' Pharsoin,
Is deanamaid seasamh 'n a chòir:
Pilleam, is suidheam, is guidheam,
Air uidheam gu faigheam an còrr.

[10] Ho ro! a Naoghais, bi treun!
Is cum do ghealladh rium fèin;
Cho liutha 's tha tabhairt ort comhairl,
Bhi 'g amharc mu 'n tabhair thu leum.
Ho ro! a Naoghais, bi treun! etc.

[11] Thèid mi gu clìeach, carach,
Mu 'n cuairt a mhealladh an fhèidh:
Is thèid mi air uairibh eile,
Gu bruachan eil-thir an èisg;
'S ged robh mo dhìlsean a' trod rium,
An grabadh no 'm magadh cha 'n èisd,

Ach cùmhnant, is eigheach na h-eaglais,
Pòsadh gun eagal gun èis.

Because what keeps me from taking the
advice
To heart is not before me.¹⁸⁸

Although there would be no cow to milk,
Sheep and goats but few,
Although there would not be a sheaf in
the barn,
You can find help in the mountains.
I know no more pleasing path
To riches when scarcity occurs,
Than for men to use a gun
In its intended fashion.

Oh, won't we go well-prepared?
And why shouldn't we demonstrate
That it is not ease or riches
That we esteem most highly?

Be energetic and manly,
Take your lint and your gun,
Kill deer as venison for us,
Fish and eggs and birds.
Let us go to the Parson,
And let us stand in his presence,
Let us return and sit and pray
On means to obtain the rest.¹⁸⁹

Oh, Angus, be strong!
And keep your promise to me;
As fast as I offer you advice,
To look before you leap.

I will go with cunning and encirclement
To trick the deer,
And I will go on other occasions
To the fishing-spot on the coast.
And although my relations argue with me,
I will not listen to their opposition or their
mockery,
But a contract, and announcement in the
church,
A marriage without fear or impediment.

¹⁸⁸ The minister may have advised Angus to be patient, which Angus found more acceptable in theory than in practice (i.e. when he was at the manse, instead of with Anna).

¹⁸⁹ Here Rob Donn not only offers to go hunting with Angus, but also to go with him to see the minister to obtain the latter's support for the marriage. He also suggests that a market existed (whether in cash or barter) for Angus to exchange deer, fish, eggs and birds for other necessities of life. This was truly a subsistence economy.

92. TO JOHN GRAY OF ROGART¹⁹⁰

- [1] Tha rògairean airtnealach, trom,
'N taobh bhos agus thall do na Chrasg,¹⁹¹
O 'n chual iad mu 'n cuairt an Ceann-cinnidh,
Gu 'n do dh'eug e an Siorramachd Pheairt.
Dh' aindeoin a dhreachdan 's a cheilg,
Cha do chreid duine riamh a bha ceart,
Aon smid thàinig mach air a bheul,
'S cha mhò chreid e féin Rìgh nam fear.
- Rogues are dispirited and sorrowful,
On both sides of the Crask,
Since they heard about their Chief's final
journey,
That he died in Perthshire.
Despite his tricks and his deceit,
No one ever believed in the truth
Of one word that came out of his mouth,
And no more did he believe in the Lord
Almighty.
- [2] Cha 'n aithne dhomh aon ni cho làidir,
'S an t-saoghal s', ri bàs, gu toirt teum;
'N t-stràchd thug e dràs'd' oirnn air aghairt,
Gun do mharbh e fear Roghaird do leum.
Tha Sàtan ro bhrònach, 's cha 'n ioghnadh,
Ged fhaigheadh e 'm fear-so dha féin,
Air son nach 'eil fathast air sgeul aig'
Fear a sheasas dha 'àite 'n a dhéigh.
- I don't know one thing so powerful,
In this world, as death, to give a sting;
The blow it gave us from now forward,
That it killed the laird of Rogart in a leap.
Satan is very sad, and no wonder,
Although he got this man himself,
Because he has not yet heard a word
Of any man that can replace him.
- [3] 'S fad o na chunnacas, 's a chualas,
Gur teachdaire gruamach am bàs;
Gidheadh gu bheil cuid ann an daoich ris
Thug rud-eigin gaoil da an trath-sa.
Tha dùil ac' an Cata' 's an Galladh,
Nach urr' iad a mholadh gu bràth,
Air son gur h-e féin thug a' cheud chàr
As an fear thug cùig ceud càr á càch.
- It has long been seen and heard
That death is a gloomy messenger,
Yet there are some who fear it
Who rather welcomed it this time.
In Sutherland and Caithness,
They can never praise it enough,
Because it played the final trick
On the man who cheated the rest five
hundred times.

¹⁹⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 56-58) with my translation; it is also found in Mackay (1829: 76-77) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 43).

The subject of this elegy is John Gray of Rogart, a landowner and businessman who died in December 1766 in Perthshire (as the first verse of the song attests). His "Testament Dative" was filed in Dunkeld Commissary Court in 1767 and 1768 by his son-in-law William Ross. 1767 GREY, JOHN [Reference CC7/6/6 Dunkeld Commissary Court], pp. 63-65, in <<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>, "Wills & Testaments"> [accessed 28 October 2013]; 1768 GRAY, JOHN [Reference CC7/6/6 Dunkeld Commissary Court], pp. 110-11, in <<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>, "Wills & Testaments"> [accessed 28 October 2013]. John Gray was apparently a landowner in Rogart, Sutherland, and a major player in the cattle business in the north (which would explain Rob Donn's familiarity with his business ethics). See 'Copy of the Examination of John Gray of Rogart, a Highland drover, in 1746', in *The Lyon in Mourning, or, a collection of speeches, letters, journals, etc. relative to the affairs of prince Charles Edward Stuart*, ed. by Robert Forbes, 3 vols (Edinburgh: 1975), III, pp. 144-151. However, he resided at Inverchroskie House, in the Parish of Kirkmichael, Perthshire at the time of his death.

¹⁹¹ "Crasg" — literally a "crossing" — is a common term in Sutherland for a way across a mountain from one place to another. John Mackay, "Sutherland Place Names: Parish of Lairg and Creich", 20 TGS (1895) 103-25 (p. 110). Here it apparently refers to a location still known as "The Crask" south of Altnaharra on the road to Lairg and Rogart.

[4] Sibhse tha mòr agus mion,
Sibhse tha sean 's a tha òg,
Thugaibh cheart air' air a' bhàs,
'N uair is beartaich' 's is làine bhuir cròg;
Oir thig e mar mheirleach 's an oidhch',

Ged robh sibh uile cruinn mu na bhòrd;

'S cha 'n fheudar a mhealladh le foill,
'S gu 'n do mheall e Ceann-feadhna nan ròg.

[5] Rinn deamhnan is triùcairean talmhaidh,
Election mu chealgair bhiodh treun,
Co bu staraich', bu charaich', 's bu chliceich',

'S a b' fheàrr chuireadh lith air a' bhréig;
B' e Sàtan am breitheamh bu shine,
Da 'm b' aithne gach fine fo 'n ghréin;

'S b' i 'bharail nach fhaigtheadh a leithid,

Mur robh e 's na Grèadhaich iad féin.

[6] Bu mhaith leam an ciontach a bhualadh,
'S cha b' àill leam duin' uasal a shealg.
'S ged chuireas mi gruaim air a' choireach,

Cha ghabh an duin' onorach fearg.
Tha Caiptein Rob Grè air a dhiùltadh,
Le breitheanas Prionnsa nan cealg;
Rinn coimeasgadh Reothaich a chumadh,
Gu uails' agus duinealas garg.

[7] Tha breugan is cuir air am fàgail,
Do 'n fhear a 's feàrr tàlann g' an inns';
Cha cheadaich a' chùis iad do Bhàtair,

Tha onoir is àrdan 'n a ghrìd;
Ge comasach Iain a bhràthair,
Cha 'n fhaigh e an dràs' i chion aois;
Ach an sin gheibh e obair an t-Sàtain,
Ceart comh-luath 's is bàs do fhear Chraoich.

You that are great and small,
You that are old and young,
Take proper notice of death,
When wealth and plenty are in your hand;
Because he will come like a thief in the
night,

Although you are all gathered about the
table,

And one cannot deceive him by trickery,
As he deceived the Chief of the rogues.

Devils and rascals of the earth held
An election about the worst cheater,
Who was the most cunning, sly, and
fraudulent,

And best at putting grease on the lie;
Satan was the oldest judge,
Recognized by every kindred under the
sun,

And it was his opinion the like could not be
found

If not among the Grays themselves.

I am glad to attack the guilty,
I do not wish to hunt a man of rank,
And although I put a surly look on the
culprit,

The honest man will not be angry.
Captain Rob Gray has been refused,
By judgment of the Prince of deceivers;
A bunch of Munros formed him,
To fierce pride and manhood.

Lies and tricks are left
To the man most talented in telling them;
The business will not permit them to
Walter,

Honor and eminence are in his substance;
However capable his brother John,
He will not receive it now for want of age;
But then he will get the work of the devil,
Just as soon as the man of Creich dies.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Because Gray was survived only by daughters, another male relative inherited his landed property. This was Robert Gray of Creich, a Captain during the '45, a factor for the Earl of Sutherland, "an extensive dealer in cattle, a former factor, and a ready proposer of schemes." See <<http://www.historylinksarchive.org.uk/picture/number6348.asp>> [accessed 31 October 2013]; Malcolm Bangor-Jones, 'Sheep farming in Sutherland in the eighteenth century', *The Agricultural History Review*, vol. 50, no. 2 (2002), pp. 181-202 (p. 184). The Walter and John mentioned in the last verse were probably John Gray's grandsons, mentioned respectively in John Gray's testament and that of his daughter Mrs. Elizabeth Grey Ross, who died in 1819. 1819 ROSS, ELIZABETH, MRS. [Reference SC9/36/1 Dornoch Sheriff Court], pp. 168-69, in <[http://www.scotlandpeople.gov.uk, \"Wills & Testaments\"](http://www.scotlandpeople.gov.uk, \)> [accessed 30 October 2013].

93. OH! I SLEEP, AND WAKE ME NOT¹⁹³

[1] Tha sinn fo mhulad 's a' coimhead a chèile, Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi; Tha Niall anns an tàbharn, a' tàmh ris na fèilltibh, Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi. Tha Niall air an fhèill, agus Cèitidh fuidh anshocair; 'S mise fuidh euslaint, 's mo chèile 'n a banaltruim, 'S ged tha sinn sàmhach, tha 'n càs-sa ro ainid dhuinn, Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.	We are sorrowful, observing one another, I am sleeping and let me not be wakened; Neil is in the tavern, waiting for the fairs, I am sleeping and let me not be wakened. Neil is at the fair and Katy is uneasy, I am far from well and my wife away nursing, And although we keep silent this situation galls us. I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
[2] Tha mi 'n am chadal air leabaidh chaol chlàra, Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi; Tha 'n làn s' air tigh'nn grad orm 's cha 'n fhada nach tràigh e, Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi. Thèid mise do Thunga, 's bidh 'n ionnsuidh ud eibeant' domh, 'S bheir mi garbh thunnsghadh do 'n rùm anns an coidil i, 'S milis am bùrn as a' chùp 'n uair a ghoidear e, Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.	<i>I am sleeping on a narrow wooden bed, I am sleeping and let me not be wakened; Fullness comes on me suddenly and does not long subside, I am sleeping and let me not be wakened. I will go to Tongue, however inconvenient, And give a sharp knock at the room where she's sleeping. Sweet is the drink from the cup that is stolen. I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.</i>
[3] Thug mi 'n sin ionnsuidh do Thunga a dh' fhiarachd, Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi; An cumadh e 'n stad s' orm cho fad ri bliadhna, Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.	<i>Then I made for Tongue, to inquire, I am sleeping and let me not be wakened; Whether he would contrive to frustrate me for a whole year, I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.</i>

¹⁹³ The text is from Morrison (1899: 260-65), and most of the translation is from Grimble (1999: 33, 49-53, 201); I translated all or parts of verses 2, 3, 9 and 13 (which Grimble omits). The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 185-89) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 71-72).

Grimble suggests (1999: 33) that the poem was composed between 1742 and 1744, when Rob Donn was young and newly married. This dating would be consistent with his frustration at being separated from his wife — in service in the big house at Tongue — as well as the tradition that he visited Skye at this time, as it is hard to imagine how he could have left home if his wife was elsewhere and they already had a family. On the other hand, if they had had only their first child, this would have qualified Janet to act as a wet-nurse, and the baby would have been with her (unless it had died in infancy).

Tha e 'g am sgiùrsadh do dhùthaich nan
Sgiathanaich,
'S cuimhneachadh Dhaibhidh cur gràin orm
mu 'n uighe sin,
Is eagal mo bhàis orm gun dean e Uriah
dhìom.
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

He's driving me off to the land of the
Skyemen,
And the thought of David gives me distaste
for the journey,
I've the fear of death that he'll make a Uriah
of me.
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

[4] Sheumais 'Ic-Culaich, nach duilich leat
m' ìre,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Gun bhiadh maith bhi làimh rium, 's mi luidhe
'n am aonar,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.
'N saoil thu nach làn mi do nàdur
a' mhaiteachais
Ma ni mi chaidh sìth ris a' mhnaoi ud thug
seachad mi,
'S gann domh, ged thill i, nach cuimhnich
mi 'm balc ud dhi,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

James MacCulloch, don't you pity
my predicament,
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
Without good food beside me, and sleeping
solitary?
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
Don't you think I'm filled with the spirit of
forgiveness
If ever I make peace with that wife who
abandoned me?
Dash me if I don't remind her, when she's
back, of that hardship I suffered,
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

[5] An sin 's e thuirt Seumas, mo nàire 'r 'd
èudeachd.
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Cha d' rinn i ort briseadh cho tric ri mo
chèile-s',
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.
Gur minic a thriall i, làn fiarais gun
fhathamas,
'S a dh' innseadh dhuit m' fhirinn, 's gur
saor mi gu maitheanas,
Dhùraicheadh m' inntinn do 'n mhnaoi sin
bhi 'm flaitheanas.
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

Then said James: "Oh, shame on your
jealousy."
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
"She hasn't let you down as often as my
wife."
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
"She has gone off frequently, feverishly
without warning,
And to tell you the truth, ready though
I am to forgive,
I wish with all my heart that woman were
in heaven."
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

[6] Chaidh mi air m' aghairt do thigh Iain
'Ic-Dhòmhnuill,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
'S dh' fhaighnich e bras rium, am faca mi
Seònaid,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.
Ged fhan i uait bliadhna, cha 'n fhiach duit bhi
'g acain sud,
Ma thig i gu rianail, neo-fhiarasach dhachaidh,
'S gun cum i deadh shìth ris a' mhnaoi sin tha
'n taice riut.
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

I went on my way to the home of John
of the Donalds,
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
And he asked me briskly whether I'd seen
Janet,
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
"Though she stays away a year, it's not
worth lamenting
So long as she comes home well-disposed
and good-natured
And has a civil tongue for the girl in your
company."
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

[7] An sin 's e thuirt mise ri Is'beil nigh'n
 Dàibhidh,
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
 Cionnus tha 'm fleasgach-s' 'n a thlachd
 do mhnaoi t' àbhaist?
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.
 Innis domh 'n fhirinn, 's bith saor ann
 ad fhocal,
 'N e do nàdur a chrìon, no do chiall a chuir
 bacadh ort?
 Na cionnus a tha thu, o dh' fhàg Iain
 Thapaidh thu?
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

Then I had a word with David's daughter
 Isabel,
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
 "How can one like you take pleasure in
 that fellow?"
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
 "Tell me the truth and be frank in your
 speech:
 Is your nature getting worse, or your good
 sense affected?
 And how are you faring since Iain Tapaidh
 left you?"
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

[8] An sin 's e thuirt Is'beal, tha mise ro
 shìthicht',
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
 Ghabhainn a lethsgèul aig Seisean na sgìre,

 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.
 Ged bha iad ag ràdh ris, gur nàir da bhi
 fanadh uam,
 Tha agam do dhà shiubhal, àl a tha ainid
 domh,
 Seòsaidh is Bàbaidh, Bhàtair is Anabal.
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

Then Isabel said: "I am quite *contented*,"¹⁹⁴

 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
 "I would *accept* his explanation at the Kirk
 Session,"¹⁹⁵
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
 "Although they were telling *him* that his
 absence was shameful,"¹⁹⁶
 I've a troublesome brood from only two
 confinements,
 Joseph and Barbara, Walter and Annabell."
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

[9] Bha bean Mhaighstir Murchadh gu
 falchaidh'n a teaghlaich,
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
 'S e 'thurus do Mhoraidh chuir deireadh is
 call oirr',
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.
 Tha 'm Morair mar b' àbhaist, air 'fhàgail 'n
 a shuidheachan,
 'S e rinn droch ainm dha, gu 'n d' earb iad
 an dithis ris,
 Tè dhiubh bhi diombach, 's gu 'n tè dhiubh
 bhi buidheach dheth,
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

The wife of the Reverend Murdo was
 deceiving her family,
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
 It's his trip to Moray that caused her
 trouble and deprivation,
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
The Lord, as usual, has been left in his seat,

And it hurt his reputation when he trusted
those two women,
One of them to be displeased, and one of
them to be pleased with him.
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

¹⁹⁴ Grumble (p. 51) has "peace-loving", but this word has a more general meaning of "glad, pleased, contented" in Sutherland Gaelic. Charles M. Robertson, 'Sutherland Gaelic', in 25 *TGSI* (1901-1903), 84-125 (p. 124) (using this poem as an example).

¹⁹⁵ Grumble (p. 51) has "take"; "accept" is more appropriate for an explanation or an excuse.

¹⁹⁶ Grumble (p. 51) has "me", although Mackay and Morrison both say "ris", so this must be a mistake.

[10] Thuirt Cèitidh, 's i tilleadh, 's a' filleadh
a h-aodaich,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Thèid mi do Mhusal gu m' uile sgeul
innseadh,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.
Oir tha bean chòir ann do 'n eòl m' aobhar
chasaidean,
Innsidh mi dhise 'n tul-fhìrinn mar thachair
dhomh,
'S cruaidh leath' mo chàs, ged nach fàir i
mo leasachadh.
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

Said Katy, returning and folding up her
clothes,
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
"I'm off now to Muisel to tell my whole
story."
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
"For there's a woman there who understands
my grievances;
I'll tell her the whole truth about all that
befell me,
And she will give me sympathy although
she cannot help me."
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

[11] Chaidh i air aghairt gu bean Dhòmhnuaill
Foirbeis,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Fhreagair ise starach, oir b' fhearas di
eirmseachd,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.
Tha iad falbh uainn gu ràitheach, ach tàmhaidh
iad seachdaineach,
Cha 'n iongnadh 's a' chùis sin, ged dhùrachd
sinn dachaidh iad.
'S an latha bhios cùirt ann, bidh sùil aig ri
achmhasan,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

She went on her way past the wife of Donald
Forbes,
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
She answered artfully (a quick retort was
like her),
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
"They leave us for three months, then they
stay only a week with us,
It's hardly surprising if we wish them
home again.
And on the day the court's held he can look
to get a reprimand."
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

[12] Dh' fhalbh i le srachadh, 's i pasgadh
a còitein,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
Is rinn i a casaid ri bean Domh'll 'Ic-Sheòrais,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.
Chèitidh bi sàmhach, oir 's nàir duit bhith
casaideach,
Ged bhitheadh t' fhear fèin air an fhèill uait
ochd seachduinean,
Na 'm biodh tu stuama, cha luaidheadh tu
focal dheth,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

She went tearing off, putting on her coat,
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
And complained to the wife of Donald, son
of George,
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
"Katy, be quiet, your grumbling's
disgraceful.
Supposing your husband were eight weeks
at the fair,
A sensible person wouldn't say a word
about it."
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

[13] Thuirt Anna nigh'n Uilleim, tha iomas
'n ad nàdur,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
'S tha sin ann an iomadh nach innis do chàch e,
Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

Said Anna the daughter of William, "there
is trouble in your nature,"
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
"As it is in many who do not tell others."
I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

Tha mise cho deònach air Domhnall thigh'nn
 dachaidh,
 'S nach robh mi a' cunntadh air aon dad
 a thachair domh;
 'S bu shubhach mi 'n oidhch' sin gu 'n
 d' fhoighnich e maitheanas.
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

*"I am so willing for Donald to come home,
 That I did not tell him one single thing
 that happened to me;
 And I was merry that night when he asked
 my forgiveness."
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.*

[14] An cuala sibh chomhairl' a labhair
 an Taoitear,
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi;
 Tha fuireach air deireadh, 's cur thairis
 cho millteach,
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.
 Innsidh mi dòigh dhuibh, nach còir dhuibh a
 a sheachnadh,
 Gun bhi fad as an dùthaich, no dùr aig bhur
 dachaidh;
 Cha 'n ainmeil sìor chairbheist, 's cha
 seirbheis na stracaidhnean.
 Tha mi 'n am chadal, 's na dùisgear mi.

Did you hear the judgment given by the
 Tutor,
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened;
 That always staying at home and kindness
 are fatal?
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.
 I'll tell you the habit you'd best try to
 cultivate.
 Don't stay away too long or be surly in your
 house;
 Continual flogging's *infamous* and blows
 achieve nothing.¹⁹⁷
 I am sleeping and let me not be wakened.

¹⁹⁷ Grimble (1999: 53) has "useless", but if "ainmeil" is "famous" (Dwelly 2001: 16), its opposite should be "infamous".

94. WILLIAM MACKAY AND ELIZABETH ROY¹⁹⁸

Sèist:

Heich h-eile hò ro, ho bò, ho èile,
Heich h-eile hò ro, ho bò, ho èile,
Hillin 's na ho rò, nach mòr a ni an èigin,
'N uair thogair fear gu pòsadh
na siùrsaich aig Davie.

[1] Tha Uilleam dona gòrach,
Gu pòsadh air èigin,
Tha Ealasaid 'na h-òinseach,
'N uair dheònaich i fèin e,
Shaoil leath' o 'n bha pròis' oirr',
Gu 'm pòsadh i 'n dè e,
Ach chuir an nighean chàrn,
Anns an àm s' dheth an fhèill e.

[2] Tha cuplaichean an nàdur,
Chaidh dheanamh r' a chèile,
Ma chunnaic mise h-aon diu,
'S ise agus èise.
Tha Ealasaid ag radh
Nach stà aic air lèirsinn,
Ged bhiodh e bodhar, dall,
Ach gu 'n ceangladh sud brèid oirr'.

[3] A Bheataidh, so am bargan,
A dhearbhu gu 'n robh feum ort,
Ge olc a radharc cinn,
Cha 'n e 'n inntinn a 's gèire.
Cha robh a' bheag de 'n ghaol ud,
Air sìneadh o reuson,
Ach dìreach cleas an ainmhidh,
Ga d' leanmhuinn mar chèile.

Chorus

Heich h-eile hò ro, ho bò, ho èile,
Heich h-eile hò ro, ho bò, ho èile,
Hillin 's na ho rò, what a great compulsion
When a man desired to marry
Davie's whore.

Poor William is foolish
To marry under duress;
Elizabeth is a fool
To seek it herself.
It was expected, since she is proud,
That she would marry him yesterday,
But the deceitful girl sent him
In this time off to the fair.

There are couples in nature
That were made for each other;
If I ever saw one of them,
It was she and he.
Elizabeth says that
She has no need for intellect;
Even if he is deaf and blind,
As long as he ties the married woman's
kertch on her.

Betty, here is the betrothal
That proved you were desperate,
Although his prospect is terrible,
And his mind is not the sharpest.
The smallness of that love
Was not founded upon reason,
But merely the trick of an animal
To follow you as a spouse.

¹⁹⁸ The text is from Morrison (1899: 326-27) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 40-41).

This vicious little song condemns the marriage plans of a couple, each of whom had previously committed fornication with someone else. In 1764, Elizabeth Roy had apparently borne an illegitimate son to David Sutherland (Morrison 1899: 326). In addition: "Ach tè eile, bha air leth-mhaise, bhi torrach aige 's an àm sin, a b' aobhar gu grabadh chur 'n am pòsadh car greis" (Mackay 1829: 40). If I understand this correctly, it means that, at the time of the impending marriage, another woman was pregnant and suspected of carrying William's child, so that some wanted to postpone his marriage to Elizabeth until it was determined whether the unborn child was indeed his. I am not sure whether Rob Donn believed that fornicators should never marry, or that they should only marry the other parent of their children. But it must have been very difficult for a single mother to support herself and her child, not to speak of the disapproval of the community. In any case, the poem was composed after 1764.

95. THE COURT AT TONGUE¹⁹⁹

[1] Thèid mise an dèigh Sheòrais,
Oir is còir dhomh bhi 'm fagus da;
Oir 's bràithrean ann an ceòl sinn,
An còmhradh beòil 's am feadaireachd,
Oir is duine ciallach e,
Da 'm bi luchd-fiarais freagarrach,

'S tha dùil agam gu 'n tàir mi e,
'S an tigh tha mhàn o 'n eaglais.

[2] A' chùirt bha ann an Tung' againn,
Gur fada 's cuimhne 'n cleachdaidhnean;
Bha brìtheamh agus clèireach ann,
Gun reuson no gun cheartas ac',
Bha 'm Foirbeasach le 'lùban ann,
Bha Hùistean ann 's an Sasunnach,
Gur dona an aon triùir tha 'n sud,
Na h-uile taobh an tachair iad.

I will go in search of George,
Because I ought to be in his company,
Since we are brothers in music,
In the language of mouth and chanter,
Because he is a man of sense
And it is fitting one should enquire about
him;

And I expect I shall encounter him
In the house below the church.

The court we had in Tongue —
Long will we remember its proceedings —
A judge and a clerk were there
Without reason or justice in them.
Forbes was there with his wiles,
And Hugh and the Englishman.
How evil that trio is
Wherever it assembles.

¹⁹⁹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 426) and the translation from Grimbale (1999: 95-96); it also appears in Mackay (1829: 240-44) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 48).

Grimble (1999: 95) argues convincingly that the song was composed in the aftermath of the legal proceeding in which Rob Donn escaped prosecution for treason based on his post-Culloden poem “Òran nan Casagan Dubha”, which dates its composition to 1746 or shortly thereafter. George is George Macleod the piper, Forbes is Donald Forbes the Sheriff-Substitute, Hugh is Hugh Mackay of Bighouse, and the identity of the Englishman is not specified.

96. FAOLAN²⁰⁰

Sèist:

Gu neartaich an sealbh, 's gu leasaich
an sealbh,
An t-abhagan marbh ud, Faolan;
Gu neartaich an sealbh, 's gu leasaich
an sealbh,
An t-abhagan marbh ud, Faolan.

[1] Thig Ealasaid Mhòraidh, 'n uair chromas
a' ghrian,
Do 'n eilthir a nios o 'n dìthreabh,
Oir chual' i 'n a chagaraich' bheaga aig càch,

An t-urram bha ghnàth air Faolan.

[2] Thàinig oirnn Iain le naicheachd a nuas,
Cha chreid mi nach cual' an sgìr' e,
Gu 'n deachaidh uainn Curstaidh le briosgadh
do Chlurraig,
Air eagal bhi trom aig Faolan.

[3] Tha Curstaidh is Deònaidh, is Cèitidh
nigh'n Deòrsa,
Is Màiri bhuidh' òg nan caorach,
'G an deasachadh mòr, gu leasachadh pròis,
A fhreasdal 's gu 'm pòs iad Faolan.

[4] Tha Curstaidh bheag Dhonn, 's a cridhe
ro throm,
Air eagal nach crom rith' Faolan;
Tha Màiri ag ràdh nach buin i fèin da,

Nach 'eil e ni 's feàrr na caolain!

[5] Tha Deònaidh mhòr Spàinneach 'n dùil
ri ar fàgail,
'S i dol air sàil do Char'lina;

Chorus:

To strengthen their stock and improve their
stock,
That lifeless little dwarf, Faolan;
To strengthen their stock and improve their
stock,
That lifeless little dwarf, Faolan.

When the sun descends, Elizabeth Murray
will come
Down from the uplands to the shore,
Because she heard in the wee whispers of
the rest,
The honor that was due to Faolan.

John came down to us with news —
I can't believe the parish did not hear him,
That Kirsty went away suddenly to
Clurrag
Afraid to be pregnant by Faolan.

Kirsty and Joanie and Katie, George's
daughter,
And young fair-haired Mary of the sheep,
Are busily and proudly provisioning
In case they marry Faolan.

Little Kirsty Donn, her heart very heavy,

Is afraid that Faolan does not favor her;
Mary says she will have nothing to do with
him,
That he is no better than sheep-guts!

Big Spanish Joanie is planning to leave us

And go overseas to Carolina;

²⁰⁰ The text is from Morrison (1899: 254-57) with my translation. The versions in Mackay (1829: 179-81) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 96) are expurgated, altering or omitting parts or all of verses 5, 10, and 12. Gunn and MacFarlane also omit the last verse about the four extra-marital pregnancies. Grimble does not discuss the poem at all.

Morrison notes (1899: 254) that Faolan was a "poor, diminutive creature who assisted the poet at Balnacille. The poet chides his daughters and other young women of the parish for having a sneaking regard for Faolan. The young men of the parish were all away in the army." In this remarkable piece of ribaldry, Rob Donn manages to insult not only Faolan, the young man who assisted him on Lord Reay's farm at Balnakeil, but also his own wife (verses 6 & 7), his daughter Kirsty (verses 2, 3, 4, & 10), his daughter Mary (verses 3 & 4), and four other women. It would be interesting to learn what they thought of this song.

'S ann ghabh i mòr ghràin ri cuid
Iain Bhàin,
O 'n chunnaic i phlaigh do ghaoisd' air.

[6] Gu bheil a' bhean againn 'n luidhe ri làr,
'S i 'g acainn gu bràth a caol-druim;
Cha chuir i dhuinn tuilleadh a' mhin
air a' bhùrn;
Ach dheanadh i taobh ri Faolan.

[7] Tha bean-an-tigh' againn leth-cheud
do bhliadhnaibh,
'S tha i cho liath ri caora,
'S ged nach 'eil fiacaill idir 'n a ceann,
Cha lughad a geall air Faolan.

[8] An uair a fhuair Cèitidh sealladh dheth ris,
'S e thubhairt i fèin is faoilt oirr'.
Ged nach 'eil mi 'g a fhaicinn cho sgiobalt
ri pàirt,
Tha e beagan ni 's fèarr na shaoil mi.

[9] Cha 'n aithne dhomh nighean, no bean
air an fhòd,
A bheireadh d' an deòin an gaol da,
O 'n tha e gu siogaideach, rugaideach, marbh,
Cha bhoc, is cha tarbh, is cha laos-bhoc.

[10] Tha Cèitidh is Curstaidh, gu briosgant'
an cùil,
O 'n tha iad an dùil ri daoineibh;
'N uair bhios mi beartach, gu 'n toir mi
dhoibh gùn,
Na 'n deanadh iad mùn air Faolan.

[11] Cha 'n aithne dhomh nighean, no bean,
am bheil uails',
A ghabhadh bonn truais ri Faolan;
Oir tha e 'n a ghàrlaach ghrànda gun bhiadh,
Gun fhàbhor o Dhia no dhaoineibh.

[12] Comhairl' a bheirinn a nis ort a Phàdaidh,
O 'n nach 'eil nàir 'n ad aodann,
'N uair ni mi 'n ath chrathadh gun toir mi
dhuit greim,
Na 'n leigeadh tu breim air Faolan.

She took great loathing to the private parts
of Iain Bain,²⁰¹
Since she saw the plague of hair on him.

Even my wife is lying on the floor,
Complaining constantly of her back;
Saying that she will not send us any more
meal on the water
Unless she does it beside Faolan.

Our housewife is fifty years old,
And she is as gray as a sheep,
And although she has no teeth at all in her
head,
Not small is her desire for Faolan.

When Katie got a look at him again,
She said herself he is welcome to her.
Although I do not consider him as
attractive as some,
He is a little better than I imagined.

I don't know a girl or woman in the land
Who would love him willingly,
Since he is bony, long-necked and lifeless,
Not a buck or a bull or a wether goat.

Katie and Kirsty are busy in their back
room,
Since they are expecting men;
When I am rich, I will give them a gown,
So they would not even pee on Faolan.

I don't know a decent girl or woman
Who would give a measly coin to Faolan;
Because he is an ugly, emaciated weakling,
Without favor from God or man.

The advice I would give you now, Patty,
Since there is no shame in your face,
The next time I manage to get hold of you,
Is not even to fart on Faolan.

²⁰¹ Iain Bain may have been Faolan's real name. This verse also reveals Rob Donn's awareness of the emigration of Highland Scots to North Carolina in the period just before the American Revolution. This reference (and the fact that his daughter Kirsty had not yet married) dates the poem to the early 1770s.

[13] Shaoil leam nach labhradh tu mu 'n
a' bhun-tàt',²⁰²
'S nach robh thu cho pàight' 's a shaoil leat,
Na 'n tigeadh an donas do 'n bhail-s' 'n a
dheann,
Gu tugainn-s air cheann da Faolan.

I thought you would not speak about
the potato,
And you were not paid as you expected,
If the devil came to the village in a hurry,
I would give him charge of Faolan.

[14] Bheirinn mo mhionnan na 'm bithinn
'n am eilldeir,
Gu bitheadh am *fine* air aotrom,²⁰³
Ged bhitheadh ceithrear dhiubh torrach
is trom,
A' sparradh an clann air Faolan.

I would give my word if I were an elder,
That the fine on him would be light,
Even if four of them were pregnant,
Breeding the children of Faolan.

²⁰² This is a reference to Rob Donn's other song to Faolan, in which he reports to Rob Donn's wife that the bard is drinking at the inn rather than planting potatoes.

²⁰³ As Morrison explains (1899: 257): "The Kirk-session fined delinquents more according to their ability to pay than to the nature of their transgression."

97. PIBROCH OF AODH'S WIFE²⁰⁴

[1] Thogaireadh bean Aoidh,
Thogaireadh bean Aoidh,
Thogaireadh bean Aoidh
Uainn do dh' Aisir,²⁰⁵
Thogaireadh bean Aoidh,
'N aghaidh na gaoith',
'S rinn iad MacAoidh
Aig Lochan-nan-Glaimhidheach.

The desire of Aodh's wife,
The desire of Aodh's wife,
The desire of Aodh's wife
To leave us for Aisir;
The desire of Aodh's wife
Against opposition,
And they got a MacKay
At Lochan-nan-Glaimhidheach.

[2] 'S folluiseach a dh' fhalbh i,
Callaidheachd an dèigh Aoidh,
Thoilich i bhi 'n a mnaoi,
'N àiteachaibh fàsachail.
Chunnaic mise mar bha i,
Turraban an dèigh Aoidh;
'M Bealach Eadar-dhà-bheinn,
B' àill leo gu 'n tàmhadh iad.
Chunnaic mi rud eile ris,
Dh' innis domh nach robh sibh saor,
H-uile aona d' an ni,
Sgaoilt' feadh nan àiridhnean.
'S chunnaic mi thu fèin, Aoidh
'N uair a rinn thu 'm pill,
Gurraidh cruinn anns a' bheinn,
'S duilich dhuibh 'àicheadh.
'S folluiseach a dh' fhalbh i, etc.

It was obvious as she left,
By her quickness in following Aodh,
That it pleased her to be a wife
In remote places.
I saw how she was,
Moving after Aodh;
The Pass between Two Mountains —
It was their wish to dwell there.
I saw something else again
That told me you were not at liberty:
Every one of the cattle,
Scattered all over the shielings.
And I saw you, Aodh,
When you went to return them,
Hunkered around on the mountain,
It is hard for you to deny.

[Repeat verse 2]

[3] 'S suarach an t-uidheam,
Do ghruagach no nighin,
Bhi pronnadh 's a bruidhean,
Is cab oirre gàireachdaich.
Triall chun na h-uighe,
Gun gnothuch no guidhe,
A' mhealladh le bruidhean,
Pàisteachain bà-bhuachail.
Ma tha agaibh do chridhe,
Na philleas mo bhruidhean,
Thèid mis' air an t-slighe,
Is feuchaidh mi 'n t-àite,
An robh sibh 'n ur dithis,
'N ur luidhe 's 'n ur suidhe,
'S mu 'n ruitheadh beul duibhe,
B' fheàrr gun a chlàistinn.
'S suarach an t-uidheam, etc.

Inadequate is the preparation
For a young woman or girl,
To be distributing and speaking
And her mouth laughing.
A journey of hope,
Without business or intercession,
Enticing with speech
A child of a cattle-herder.
If you have any heart,
What will repay my words,
I will go on the path,
And I will investigate there,
Whether the two of you,
In your lying and in your sitting,
And before the black mouth runs,
It would be better not to hear it.

[Repeat verse 3]

²⁰⁴ The text is from Morrison (1899: 306-08) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 285-86).

²⁰⁵ "Aisir", anglicized as "Oldshore", is the area just north of Kinlochbervie and Loch Inchard on the west coast.

[4] 'N càirdean bu deala bha stigh,
 Chàirich iad iomadh fear roimp',
 Dh' fheuchainn an cumadh iad uaith,
 Ailghios nach fuilingibh 'n lagh',
 Thionndaidh i 'bus ris an fhraigh,
 'S bhòidich nach pilleadh i troigh,
 Chaidh gus an ruigeadh i 'n tigh,
 Am b' àbhaist do 'n ghille bhith roimh.
 Dh' fhàg i an t-aran a' bruich',
 'S dh' fhalbh i o thilleadh a' chruidh,

Dh' àicheadh i comhairl' 's am bith,
 'S mhèarsail i dh' Aisir uainn.
 Mhuinntir a thachair a muigh,
 'S iad a fhuair sealladh a' chluich',
 Anna 'n a ruith, teannadh o 'n tigh,
 'N deigh a' ghille chraiceanaich duibh,
 'N deigh a' ghille chraiceanaich.
 'N càirdean bu deala, etc.

[1] Thogaireadh bean Aoidh, etc.

Their keenest relatives in the house
 Placed many a man before her,
 Trying to keep from him
 A desire the law will not suffer.
 She turned her face to the side wall,
 And vowed she would never move a foot
 Until she reached the house
 That was already the home of the lad.
 She left the bread baking,
 And she went out from collecting the
 cattle,
 She rejected any advice,
 And she marched away from us to Aisir.
 To folk that happened out there,
 They got a vision of playfulness,
 Anna running, approaching from the house,
 After the dark, tousle-haired lad,
 After the tousle-haired lad.

[repeat verse 4]

[repeat verse 1 - ùrlar]

98. COLONEL MACKAY AND CHRISTIAN BRODIE²⁰⁶

[1] Thoir an t-soraidh s' gu mo Churstaidh,
Tha air slios a' Bhadchaoill,
D' an d' thug mi mo ghealladh,
'S bha a chomain d' a chinn,
Ach ma 's èigin dhomh innseadh,
Ni dh' fhàg mi-thoilicht' sinn,
'S e na dh' aontaich mi mar-riut,
'S na ghabh barail gu 'n till.
Tha mo thriall-s' do Shamaica,
Moran mhiltein o thìr,
Is tha m' inntinn a' tilleadh,
Gu h-iomall a' chaoil.
B' e mo dhùraichd bhi stiùradh,
'N dèigh mo chùrs thoirt gu crìch,
Seachad ruinn Rugh' na Faraid,
Tro na h-eileanan fraoich.

[2] Gabh mo lethsgèul, a Churstaidh,
'S dèan' maid misneach faraon,
Tha onoir 'g am èigheachd,
C' uim' nach èisdinn cia daor.
Gun a chosnadh tre chrùthaig,
Dearbh cha b' fhiùgh mi do ghaol,
Is ma chailleas mi t' fhàbhor,
'S mios a tha mi na shaoil.
Ach ma thèid mis, a nighean,
Air an t-slighe s' cho chinnt',
'S e bhi 'n dàn domh bhith cho sealbhach,
No cho tarbhach 's gu 'm pill,
Seasaidh 'n càirdeas mar bha e,

No ni 's àirde dà fhillt',
'S a chaidh tuilleadh cha 'n fhàg mi
Thu an làr a' Bhadchaoill.

*Give this greeting to my Kirsty,
On the slope of Badcall,
To whom I gave my promise,
And its favor was reciprocated.
But if I must say so,
What left us unhappy,
Is that I agreed with you
Not to rely upon my return.
My journey lies to Jamaica
Leagues from this land,
And my thoughts are returning
To the shores of the Kyle,
I look forward to steering
After ending my travels
Beyond Farout Head
Through the heathery islands.*

Accept my explanation, Kirsty,
And take courage for us both.
It is honor that summons:²⁰⁷
How could I not listen, whatever the price?
Without winning it through hardship
I certainly would not deserve your love,
And if I lose your favour
I am poorer than I thought.
But if I depart, lass,
Definitely on this path,
And if it be my destiny to be so fortunate
And so prosperous as to return,
I shall retain your attachment as it used to
be
Or increase it two-fold,
And never again shall I leave you
On the plain of Badcall.

²⁰⁶ The text is from Morrison (1899: 278-79). Most of the translation is from Grimble (1999: 58-59); I translated the italicized portions of verses 1 and 3 (which he omits). The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 214-15) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 90).

This is one in a series of poems in which Rob Donn speaks, alternately, in the voices of Hugh Mackay (a son of Iain mac Eachainn) and Christine Brodie, daughter of a minister near Scourie in Eddrachillis. The two were engaged when Hugh decided to seek his fortune in Jamaica, and they never reunited. See Grimble (1999: 57-62). Grimble dates their separation to the early 1740s. These poems reveal a delicacy of sentiment and expression quite at odds with the earthiness of many satires.

²⁰⁷ While to us the term "honor" may seem an odd description of making one's fortune in a colonial economy based on plantation slavery, that was plainly not Rob Donn's perspective in 18th-century Durness.

[3] 'S mò an cachdan leam t' fhaicinn
Làn reachd agus bròin,
Na gheibh mi do fhuthair,
Air an t-siubhal s', 's mi beò.
Cha 'n 'eil aon dad air m' inntinn,
Tha na chlaoidh do mo spòrs,
Nach do leag sud air m' àillteachd,
Bhi 'g ad fhàgail 's an t-Sròn.
Ri fàgail mo nighinn,
Tha mo chridhe gun sìth,
'S gu ceangal ni 's cruaidh' rium,
'S ann is truaighe leam i.
Ach na 'n creideadh tu m' fhocal,
Gu tìom t' fhaicinn a rìs,
An dèigh a chosnadh tre chruadal,
'S ro mhaith 'n duais leam do ghaol.

*Great my chagrin to see you
Full of deep emotion and sorrow,
I will not recover from your wound
On this journey, if I survive.
There is not a single thing on my mind
That so afflicts my happiness,
And so demolished my dignity
As to be leaving you on the Sron.
At leaving my lass,
My heart is without peace,
And to make it even harder for me,
I have caused her suffering.
But if you would believe my words,
Until the day when I see you again,
Having won it through such difficulties,
Great will be the reward of your love.*

99. NEIL MACKAY AND HIS CREW²⁰⁸

Sèist:

Tha mi fèin 's mo sgioba,
 Gabhail mòran eagail,
 Giorag gu 'm bris rioban,
 Air a' chulaidh fhada;
 Ciod a chuir mi idir
 Dh' fhuireach fo na creagan,
 'S nach 'eil àit an tig mi,
 Nach bi leannan agam?

[1] Thubhairt Niall MacAoidh,
 'S mis' th' air dol am mugha,
 Ann an Geoth-na-gaoith',
 Fo na creagan dubha;
 'S a liuthad maighdean rìomhach,
 A tha fo chumha,
 Air son nach 'eil mo bhirlinn
 A' tigh'nn do Smudha.

[2] 'S iomadh clòsaid àluinn
 'N robh mi tuiteam,
 'N uair bhithinn anns na Fàr-leus,
 Cha 'n fhaiceadh cus mi;
 'S a mhachair a stàn,
 Bheirinn Poll-a-ghlùp orm,
 'S 'n uair bhithinn air an tràigh,
 Bheirinn Poll-a-bhuic orm.

[3] 'N uair bhithinn an Diùirinnis,
 'N an teis meadhon,
 Bhiodh dithis no trìuir agam,
 Gu mo roghainn;
 'N uair thiginn do 'n Ghairbh-thir,
 Ged b' i bu leatha,²⁰⁹
 Bhithinn toirt mo thairgse
 Do Ni'-Neill-'ic-Iain.

Chorus:

“Myself and my crew
 Are in great fear
 That our ropes will part
 In the long coble.
 What on earth made me
 Lie to under the rocks,
 As there is not a place I come to
 Where I haven't a sweetheart?”

Said Neil Mackay,
 “I am going to perdition
 In the Windy Creek
 Beneath the black rocks.
 Many a beautiful maiden
 Is lamenting
 Because my galley is not
 Arriving at Smoo.

“There's many an elegant bedroom
 Where I would happen to be.
 When I'd be in Farlich
 Not too many would see me.
 Down on the machair
 I'd make for Pollaglup
 And when I'd be on the beach
 I'd make for Pollabuic.

“*When I'd be in Durness,
 In the very middle of things,
 I would have two or three
 To choose from.
 When I'd be in Garvir —
 Even if she were wider —
 I would make my offer
 To the daughter of Neil son of John.*

²⁰⁸ The text is from Morrison (1899: 177-80). The translation of the chorus and verses 1, 2, 4 and 8 are from Grimble (1999: 179-81); I translated the remainder. The text also appears in Mackay (1829: 52-54) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 81).

As Grimble explains (1999: 179): “One night Neil Mackay, who lived at Knapdale in Argyll, was detained by bad weather in his coble at Geò na Gaoithe — Windy Creek — of Fresgill and spent the night at the bard's home. He paid in laughter for his accommodation, as the bard described the heartbreak of the girls in other anchorages because the philandering sailor was storm-bound in Fresgill.” Grimble (p. 170) dates Rob Donn's residence in Fresgill to roughly 1757 to 1759.

²⁰⁹ This seems to be a pun, as “garbh” means “thick, not slender”. Dwelly (2001: 477).

[4] An tè a gheibh mi deònach,
 Gur beag mo cheist oirr';
 'N tè mu 'm bi mi eòlach,
 Gu 'm foghainn greis d' i;
 An tè sin tha chòmhnuidh
 Aig Ruith-na-cailce,²¹⁰
 'S fheudar dhòmhs' a leanmhuinn,
 O 'n tha i teicheadh.

[5] Thuirt Barbara gu geur,
 Na bi cho muiteil,
 Ged bhithinn ann ad fheum,
 Cha 'n innsinn duit e;
 Tha beachd agad fèin,
 Gur measail aig cus thu,
 'S gun fhios fo na ghrèin,
 Ciod an t-àit an tuit thu.

[6] 'N uair bha mi ann an Saingeo,
 O 'n 's e bu toigh leam,
 Dh' inntrig ann mo cheann,
 Dhol air mo sholar;
 Dh' fhàg mi na bha chlann ann
 Fo mhòran dorrain,
 Air son mi dhol oidhche
 Do dh' Ach-a-chorrain.

[7] Tha bantrach anns an dìthreabh,
 'S cha tàir mi aithn' oirr',
 'N uair bhios mis' a rìreadh,
 'S ann bhios ise fanoid;
 'M fear a dhèanadh cainnt rith',
 Ged tha i banail,
 Dh' fheumadh esan ceann
 Agus briathran gramail.

[8] Cha fhreagair mi fèin srann
 Do d' shuiridh' chumant,
 Iadsan a tha 'n geall ort,
 Tha iad an cunnart;
 Ged a bhiodh tu gealltuinn
 Pòsadh mu nollaig,
 Dh' fhaodadh tu fo Bhealltuinn
 Bhi 'n Cill-ma-thunnaig.

“The one I can get willingly —
 Small is my regard for her.
 The one I know already —
 A little while with her will do.
 The one who lives
 At Ruith na Cailce —
 I must chase her
 Because she runs away.”

*Barbara said sharply,
 “Don’t be so fickle;
 Even if I needed you,
 I wouldn’t tell you.
 You acknowledge yourself
 That too many are fond of you,
 With no idea under the sun
 Where you will happen to be.”*

*“When I was in Sango,
 Since it pleased me,
 It entered into my head
 To check out the prospects.
 I passed by those with children
 In great vexation,
 So I could go that night
 To Ach-na-chorrain.*

*“There is a widow in the uplands
 With whom I make no headway;
 When I am in earnest,
 Then she is mocking.
 The man who would speak to her,
 Although she is modest,
 Would need a sturdy head
 And resolute words.”*

*“Myself, I wouldn’t respond at all
 To your promiscuous wooing.
 Those who are keen on you
 Are in danger.
 Though you promised
 To marry at Christmas,
 By May Day you might
 Be back at Kilmahunack.”*

²¹⁰ This refers to Whiten Head (Morrison 1899: 178 n. 1).

100. THE THREE JANETS²¹¹

Sèist:

Seonaid agad, Seonaid agam,
Seonaid againn uile gu leir;
Seonaid agad, Seonaid agam,
Seonaid againn uile gu leir.

[1] Thug Seumas mac Iain 'Ic-Dhòmhnuill,
Tè do 'n fhòd-s' nach robh 'n a fheum,
Cha robh duine 'n so 'n a chòmhnuidh,
Gun droch Sheònaid aige fèin.

[2] Cho fad 's a ghleidheas sinn triùir dhiubh,
Cha bhi rùn gun chur an cèill;
An sgeula bheir Seònaid do Sheònaid,
Innsidh Seònaid d' a fear fèin.

[3] Ach 's i chrois mu 'm bi duin' eòlach,

Nith is sòlasaich' fuidh 'n ghrèin;
'S am fear a dheanadh iomlaid Seònaid,
Na mheall es' a Sheònaid fèin.

[4] Mach o 'n ghreubhair air bheil
Dòmhnall,²¹²
Tha againn Seònaidean gu lèir;
'S ged nach 'eil a bhean-s' 'n a Seònaid,
Tha i 'n a h-òineid gun chèill.

[5] Tha Seònaid Ni 'C Iain òig, ann,
Air a' bhòrd le 'cuideachd fèin;
'S ged nach 'eil a fear a làthair,

Tha mic àluinn aic' 'n a dhèigh.

Chorus:

Your Janet, my Janet,
All our Janets together.
Your Janet, my Janet,
All our Janets together.

James son of John MacDonald,
Gave us one who was no use to him;
There was not a man living here
Without his own wicked Janet.

As long as we keep three of them,
No secret will be untold;
The gossip that Janet gives Janet,
Janet will tell her own husband.

But it's a problem for a man who would
experience
The most gratifying thing under the sun;
For the man who confused the Janets
Would be untrue to his own.

Aside from the grievance named Donald,

We have an abundance of Janets;
And although his wife's not a Janet,
She is a fool with no sense.

There is Janet daughter of young John,
At the table with her own contingent;
And although her husband is not in
evidence;
He left her handsome sons.

²¹¹ The text is from Morrison (1899: 249-51) with my translation; it also appears in Mackay (1829: 172-74) and Gunn and MacFarlane (1899: 99).

Despite its title, this song actually describes six Janets (including the poet's wife) living around Durness in the 1770s. According to the editors, despite its references to other women, the main target of this satire was Janet Sutherland, then housekeeper and mistress (later wife) to Colonel Hugh MacKay, who had made his fortune in Jamaica and was now living at Balnakeil House. See Mackay (1829: 172); Grimble (1999: 261); Morrison (1899: 249). According to the latter, the pair had to appear before the Kirk Session on more than one occasion, beginning in 1773. But the most remarkable aspect of this arrangement is that the bard was actually employed by the Colonel as a cattleman at Balnakeil at the time he composed a number of songs criticizing his employer's conduct. Mackay (1829: 172). Moreover, despite the fact that Janet Sutherland "did not conceal her dislike for him on account of his frequent allusions in his songs to her conduct", I have seen no indication that the Colonel terminated his employment for that reason. See Morrison (1899: xxxi).

²¹² This was Donald Mackay, grievance to Lord Reay in Balnakeil, who married in 1774. Morrison (1899: 250 n. 1).

- [6] Seònaid Ni 'C Sheumais 'C Thòmais,²¹³
Tè aig am bheil mòran sprèidh',
Cha bhac ise Rob o 'mhiannaibh,
'S cha bhac es' a crìondachd fèin.
- Janet daughter of James son of Thomas,
One who has many cattle,
She will not hinder Rob from his purposes,
And he will not obstruct her prudence.
- [7] Fhuair Seònaid Ni' 'C Iain 'Ic Dhomhnuill,
Maitheas mòr r' a chur an cèill;
Duine gnìomhach, dìonach, toigheach,
'S e 'n a shoitheach lan do chèill.
- Janet daughter of John son of Donald
Can count her many blessings —
A husband industrious, reliable and loving;
He is a vessel full of sense.
- [8] Thionndaidh breitheanas gu tròcair,
Do mhac Ailein rògaich fèin,²¹⁴
Oir tha 'Sheònaid-s' eòlach, starach,
Ni si caraidheachd nach lèir.
- Fate took a merciful turn
For sly MacAllan himself,
Because his Janet is knowing and cunning
She will dispute without offending.
- [9] Tha Seònaid Nic-Aoidh, 's an Durainn,
'S cha chuir sinn a cliù an cèill;
Cha 'n fhaic sinn i chaoidh 's an tàbhuirn,
'S cha ruig sinn a fàrdach fèin.
- Janet MacKay in Durine,
We cannot describe her reputation;
We never see her in the tavern,
And we are not invited to her house.
- [10] Shaoil leam 'n uair thigeadh an Còirneal,
Nach biodh an còrr r' a chur an cèill;
'S e chuir a' chorc anns gach òrdugh,
An droch Sheònaid bh' aige fèin.
- I thought when the Colonel came,
The rest needed no description;
He disobeyed every order
With his own wicked Janet.

²¹³ This was the poet's wife. Morrison (1899: 250 n. 2).

²¹⁴ Macallan was a merchant in Keoldale (Morrison 1899: 250 n. 3); see poem #61.