

## Joyce's Burns Night: The Poetry of Robert Burns in *Finnegans Wake*

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### *Abstract*

This essay studies Joyce's use of the poetry of Robert Burns in *Finnegans Wake*. The main works covered in this work are Burns' poems "The Cottar's Saturday Night" which is used by Joyce in the "Fable of the Ondt and the Gracehoper"; "John Anderson, my Jo," which is an example Joyce using Scottish literature to develop the theme of duality in *Finnegans Wake* and "Auld Lang Syne," used by Joyce to deal with the passing of time and the forgetful situation of "the dreamer." The essay provides close readings of a number of sections of *Finnegans Wake* which integrate Burns' poetry and I discuss the role Burns and his work play in Joyce's text.

**Keywords:** Robert Burns, poems, Scottish literature, *Finnegans Wake*

**I**n this essay I consider James Joyce's symbolic use of Robert

Burns as a figure in *Finnegans Wake* and study Joyce's allusions to Burns and his works. As Adaline Glasheen pointed out in her correspondences with Thornton Wilder, "There's an awful lot of Burns in *FW*" (Burns and Gaylord 31). We know that Joyce held two collections of Burns' poetry in his Trieste

library. These were *The Poetical Works* published by Oxford University Press in 1919 and *The Poetical Works of Robert Burns* published by Milner and Sowerby in 1855 (Ellmann, *Consciousness of Joyce* 103). Since there is a relatively small amount of Burns in *Ulysses*—that Joyce composed mainly while in Trieste—we can perhaps conclude that Joyce kept the works for enjoyment’s sake at this time, rather than utilising them in his own creative endeavors. As *Finnegans Wake* contains a great deal of material relating to Burns, the poetry must have in some way become of use to Joyce during work on this project. Here is a list, taken from Matthew Hodgart’s *Song in the Work of James Joyce*, of fifteen Burns songs which appear in *Finnegans Wake*: “Rattlin, Roarin Willie,” “My Heart’s in the Highlands,” “John Anderson My Jo,” “The Rantin Dog, the Daddie o’t,” “Willie Brew’d a Peck o’ Maut,” “The Campbells are Comin,” “Afton Water,” “The Deil’s Awa wi’ the Exciseman,” “A Red, Red Rose,” “Green Grow the Rashes O,” “A Man’s a Man for a That,” “Auld Lang Syne,” “O, Whistle an’ I’ll Come to Ye, My Lad,” “Comin Thro’ the Rye,” “Charlie He’s My Darling.” I will comment on a small number of these songs in this essay as well as look at Joyce’s allusions to poems by Burns. The allusions vary in magnitude. Some, such as “Auld Lang Syne” amount to a large network of related *Wake* text, while it seems that others such as “Green Grow the Rashes O” are alluded to only once.

Why is it that *Finnegans Wake* contains so many more allusions to Burns’ work than *Ulysses*? One major reason could be that Burns’ work suits the atmosphere of HCE’s bar and of the wake itself. A further reason could be that references to Burns himself are used as ways of describing the artist figure Shem. The increase in attention to Burns fits in with a larger increase in Joyce’s interests in Scotland generally, as he sought to work more Scottish history and culture into the *Wake* than

his previous work. This could be seen as part of Joyce's attempt to include all of European culture in the *Wake* as part of its encyclopaedic nature but also perhaps as part of his look at the nature of the 'relations' of Ireland in the work, those nations who are racially linked to Ireland. The Picts and Scots motif of *Finnegans Wake*, which I have discussed elsewhere, would be a further example of this. Furthermore, I have argued that the character Crotthers of the 'Oxen of the Sun' and 'Circe' episodes of *Ulysses* reflects the ties between Ireland and Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

I would argue that singing, particularly the singing of popular folk or traditional songs such as the songs of Burns, though a major subject or theme of *Ulysses*, is more important to the structure of *Finnegans Wake* since the latter text's 'plot,' such as it is, deals in part with the rowdy, alcoholic and musical atmosphere of an Irish wake. The songs of Burns would have been well known in late nineteenth/early twentieth-century Dublin, where 'the bard' would probably have been second in fame as a songwriter only to Thomas Moore.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore plausible that the sleeping head of a Chapelizod publican would echo to the songs of Robert Burns along with other popular music. As Matthew Hodgart has pointed out, the songs of *Finnegans Wake* are not exclusively Irish:

It would be wrong to overstress the Irishness of the songs in *Finnegans Wake*. The demotic culture on which the book is based may be primarily Dublin-Irish, but . . . (t)here are several quotations from Scottish songs, particularly Burns's. (Hodgart 16)

The allusions to Burns greatly add to this representation of 'demotic culture.' Perhaps then the allusions to Burns are more naturalistic than references to Macpherson's *Ossian*, reflecting

the tastes of average men and women in Dublin. The same claim could not be made for the inclusion of *Ossian* in the *Wake*.

The Scottish song references in *Finnegans Wake* tend to be lines taken from Burns' songs, usually the title of the song or a line from the chorus. There are exceptions to this general rule. For example, there is a reference to the poem "The Cotter's Saturday Night" which I shall discuss later. I would suggest that the reason for this imbalance is not Joyce's lack of knowledge of Burns' poetry, since he owned two copies of Burns' works. Burns' songs fit in with the general treatment of song in *Finnegans Wake* and is similar to the treatment of the songs of Thomas Moore though less extensive. Matthew Hodgart and Mable Worthington discuss allusions to the songs of Moore in *Song in the Works of James Joyce*, and I would argue that some of their conclusions can be applied to the allusions to Burns' songs:

It may be asked with Joyce why Joyce went to such fantastic lengths to work in most or all of the *Melodies*: the answer is that these songs were entirely suitable to his purpose. First, their use is naturalistic, since every household that could afford it possessed a copy of the *Melodies* with the music, and the songs were on everybody's lips. Secondly, they provide a complete cycle, covering almost every topic of interest to the Irish and as such prefiguring *Finnegans Wake*. Though faintly absurd on the printed page, they come to life when sung, expressing simple feelings in subtle rhythmical patterns. Apart from Burns, Moore is almost the only writer of true songs since the end of the seventeenth century. Thirdly Joyce must have

enjoyed them as art (Hodgart and Worthington 11).

The use of Burns' songs would certainly be naturalistic as many would have been well known in Dublin in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so the inclusion of Burns' songs adds to the 'realism' of *Finnegans Wake* to some extent. In *Finnegans Wake* Joyce attempts to work in as much of European and world culture as possible. The musical traditions of Scotland would be pretty much unavoidable in the writing of such an enterprise, especially given Scotland's proximity to Ireland, the historical connections between the two countries and Joyce's own acquaintance with the country and its culture(s). Burns would be an obvious reference point for Joyce in his attempt to include Scottish culture(s) alongside the cultures of many other nations. Closer textual analysis will yield further insights into *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce's attitudes or 'conception' of Burns as a poet, and will also shed some light on Joyce's presentation of Scottish history and politics.

### **“John Anderson, My Jo”**

Robert Burns' song “John Anderson, My Jo” is used by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* to underscore different types of relationships or companionships and the effects time has on these relationships and on the individuals themselves. The point of view of the song “John Anderson My Jo” is that of an elderly female voice reflecting on the years spent with her ‘jo’ – her darling. The song mentions sleep, something that makes it appropriate for use in *Finnegans Wake*. The general themes of the song however are the passing of time and reflections on a relationship:

John Anderson my jo, John,

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When we were first acquent  
Your locks were like the raven  
Your bonie brow was brent  
But now your brow is beld, John  
Your locks are like the snaw  
But blessings on your frosty pow,  
John Anderson my Jo.

John Anderson my Jo, John,  
We clamb the hill thegither;  
And mony a cantie day, John,  
We've had wi' ane anither:  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
And hand in hand we'll go;  
And sleep thegither at the foot,  
John Anderson my Jo. (Burns 336)

The theme of the song is very similar to the perspective of the closing piece of Book IV, the final section of *Finnegans Wake*. In this section ALP, the feminine voice of *Finnegans Wake*, reflects on the time she has spent with HCE before, as a river, she flows out into the sea. With its evocations of time passing and its sense of a gradual winding down, it is odd that the song does not appear in Book IV where it would perhaps most closely match the context. However, the song and the final section are very close in tone and content, with ALP inviting HCE to recall memories of some kind of rural visit: “You know where I am bringing you? You remember? When I ran berrying after hucks and haws. With you drawing out great aims to hazel me from the hummock with your sling” (*FW* 622.16-19). ALP also plans for the couple to climb a hill together: “The rollcky road adondering. We can sit us down on the heathery benn, me on you, in quolm uncomsciounce. To

scand the arising" (*FW* 623.24-26).<sup>3</sup> This sort of romantic activity is also employed by the female voice of Burns' song.

The first verse concentrates on the aging of the body and passing of time, which are both important themes in the *Wake*. The second verse moves to a reminiscence in which the couple have "clamb the hill thegither," suggestive of the mountain figure HCE's "benn" in the section above but must now "totter down" like the river figure ALP and "sleep thegither at the foot." The inclusion of the word "sleep" may have been part of the reason Joyce uses this particular Burns song, since *Finnegans Wake* is a representation of sleep. This flowing or 'passing out' of the river ALP forms the conclusion of *Finnegans Wake*, if the text can be said to have a conclusion. Perhaps we can regard allusions to this poem as in some way foreshadowing ALP's reminiscences. However, Joyce's main use of the song seems to be as a device with which to work with ideas connected to companionship, duality and possibly the 'Other.' In these respects, Joyce's use of the song resembles the motif of the Picts and the Scots which also functions as a signifier of duality.

The first allusion to "John Anderson, My Jo" in *Finnegans Wake* appears in the paragraph of chapter I.iv which runs from 94.23 to 96.24. This paragraph appears in a section in which "The Four Old Judges rehash the case and argue over the past" (Benstock xvii). The four judges are often associated with the Burns song "Auld Lang Syne," a subject I shall return to later in this essay. The passage from 94.23 to 96.24 is a section dealing with memories, which is appropriate given the theme of remembrance in "John Anderson, My Jo." Scots language as well as Scottish song appear on the page with the question "Do I mind" (*FW* 95.02) —*mind* being Scots for remember: "Yerra, why would he heed that old gasometer with his hooping coppin and his dyinboosycough and all the birds of the southside after her, Minxy Cunningham, their dear divorcee

darling, jimmies and jonnie to be her jo?" (*FW* 95.9-10). *Jo* is the Danish word for 'yes,' linking this passage to Molly Bloom's famous soliloquy at the end of 'Penelope,' the final chapter of *Ulysses*: "and yes I said yes I will Yes" (*U*, 732). This usage means that a contrast is set up between the marriage proposal of *Ulysses* with a "divorcee darling" in *Finnegans Wake*. The rivalry of the brothers James/Shem and John/Shawn seems to be present here with "jimmies" and "jonnies." The brothers are connected to a phrase which stresses separation — "divorcee" (*FW* 95.10)— which is ironic considering the song Joyce is alluding to. The passage as a whole is dealing with HCE however: the old man of the *Wake* is associated with the aging John Anderson of the song.

The second passage alluding to the song deals not with divorce but with marriage. The passage is in keeping with the nostalgic theme of Burns' song since it discusses the "oldways" (*FW* 318.19) and the passing of "sampling years":

Him her first lap, her his fast pal, for ditcher for  
 plower, till deltas twoport. While this  
 glowworld's lump is gloaming off and han in  
 hende will grow. Through sampling years where  
 the lowcasts have aten of amilikan honey and  
 datish fruits and a bannock of barley of Tham  
 the Thatcher's palm. O wanderness be  
 wondernest and now! Listeneath to me, veils of  
 Mina! He would withsay, nepertheloss, that is  
 too me mean. I oldways did me walsh and  
 preechup ere we set to sope and fash. Now eats  
 the vintner over these contents oft with his sad  
 slow munch for backonham. Yet never shet it  
 the brood of aurowoch, not for legions of  
 donours of Gamuels. I have performed the law  
 in truth for the lord of the law, Taif Alif. I have



## JOYCE'S BURNS NIGHT

held my hand for the holder of my heart in  
Annapolis, my youthrib city. Be ye then my  
protectors unto Mussabotomia before the guards  
of the city. Theirs theres is a gentlemeants  
agreement. Womensch plodge. To slope through  
heather till the foot. Join Andersoon and Co.  
(FW 318.12-28)

This line “glowworld’s lump is gloaming” is an adaptation of the “The glow-worm’s lamp is gleaming, love” from Thomas Moore’s song “The Young May Moon.” This is an example of allusions to the pre-eminent songwriters of Scotland and Ireland being featured together. Perhaps Joyce associated the two songwriters and featured allusions to the work of one as a result of the presence of references to the work of the other. Once again Scots language is present on the page with the phrase “duinnafear” which adapts *dinna fear*, meaning ‘do not be afraid.’ The phrase could also incorporate the Irish words *duine* meaning person and *fir* meaning man. So, Scottish and Irish song and language are combined in the same section.

As I mentioned earlier, the passage is a look back at the deeds carried out through life: “I have performed”; “I have held out my hand,” an appropriate section in which to feature an allusion to “John Anderson, My Jo.” The appearance of the words “lap,” “alp” and “Annapolis” indicate the presence of the maternal figure ALP in the passage. Moreover, the section begins with a description of first love and marriage, “her his fast pal, for ditcher for plower, till deltas twoport,” which of course plays on the words of a marriage vow. However, it seems as though things have turned sour, with the phrase “vintner over these contents” alluding to the “winter of our discontent” of Shakespeare’s *Richard III* while alluding to the public house profession of HCE in “vintner.” The two allusions

to Burns' song "John Anderson, My Jo" are "han in hende will grow," a play on the phrase "hand in hand we'll go" and the lines "To slope through the heather till the foot. Join Andersoon and Co." which namechecks the song itself. I would suggest that the allusions to "John Anderson, My Jo" deal with both marriage and divorce simultaneously. The word "womensch" combines 'women' with *mensch*, German for man, while "han in hende" is suggestive of the Norwegian *han i hende* — 'he in her.' The words "Join" and "agreement," deal with contracts or unions, with a sense of conjunction present in the particle "And." "Co." could mean the company or friendship of wedlock rather than company in a business sense, and "plodge" is perhaps a combination of pledge and lodge, the pledge of matrimony coupled with the decision to live together. So, the phrase "womensch plodge" brings together the words women, men, pledges and the idea of co-habitation. As *ander* is the Greek for 'second' or 'other,' "Anderson" can also function as a signifier of a partnership or relationship or perhaps as suggestive of duality. The fact that *anders* is Dutch for 'different' would chime with this idea. Given that the section features allusions to two songwriters —one Irish and one Scottish— it could be that Joyce is bringing the similarities and differences between these two countries into the text here. It is possible that Joyce saw the two countries as being both married in the sense of being racially related but divorced in other ways, for example in terms of religion.

In III.i, on page 413 of *Finnegans Wake*, two figures entitled Mrs. Sanders and Mrs. Shunders are another couple connected to the song "John Anderson, My Jo": "She was well under ninety, poor late Mrs, and had tastes of the poetics, me having stood the pilgarlick a fresh at sea when the moon also was standing in a corner of sweet Standerson my ski" (*FW* 413.11-14). Shaun's identity seems to be breaking up, he is

dissolving into “multiple Mes” (*FW* 410.12) at this point, during the section in which he is being interviewed by ‘the Four.’ It could be that Joyce’s splitting up of single identities into composite doubled parts here is related to the writer himself, since “John Anderson, My Jo” shares Joyce’s initials ‘J.A.J.’ or James Aloysius Joyce. Joyce’s neologism “shunder” is suggestive of this process since it seems to be based on the word ‘sunder,’ meaning to separate or divide. This would not be the only instance where Joyce alludes to Burns in order to compose binary oppositions in the *Wake*, since, as I mentioned earlier, Burns is frequently involved in the presentation of the adversarial brother figures Shem and Shaun. Furthermore, since Joyce had been identified with Burns as a young man in Dublin, perhaps Joyce viewed the Scottish poet as kind of artistic double. According to Joyce’s brother Stanislaus, in 1903 “there was some talk about my brother’s wild life, in which John Eglinton, who was present, and Gogarty, the source of my information, took part. Eglinton has heard that my brother ‘was going the way of Maginn and Burns to ruin’” (Stanislaus Joyce 247). Perhaps Stanislaus passed on this rumour to Joyce, and no doubt it would have amused him to be associated with the heavy drinking and womanizing exploits of Burns.

Another possible reason for Joyce’s use of “John Anderson, My Jo” in this particular section is Shaun’s association with another of Joyce’s alter-ego figures, the singer John McCormack:

Shaun is a type of John McCormack, the alter ego whose career the tenor Joyce observed with overt disdain and transparent envy, probably since the day his inability to read music cost him a victory in the *Feis Cheoil*, which had just

launched McCormack's spectacular career.  
(Gordon, *Plot Summary* 220)

John McCormack had a close friend named Mary Anderson. Perhaps this association reminded Joyce of Burns' song and led him to introduce an allusion into the section.

Joyce seems in general to be working with the idea of the alter-ego or doubles with his allusions to Burns' "John Anderson, My Jo" in *Finnegans Wake*. This impression is reinforced by the material on page 413 which includes the name "Standerson" (*FW* 413.14). The name "Standerson" contains both the 'Anderson' of Burns' song but also 'Sanderson,' one of the many names given for HCE's own menacing alter-ego along with 'Sackerson,' 'Sigurdsen' and 'Saxon.' This alter-ego figure is usually given the name Sackerson. John Gordon has discussed HCE's fears that the manservant or constable figure Sackerson is actually the father of the young girl Issy:

The implications are grave enough to figure in the dreamer's apprehension and fantasies of divorce: the four old men recall an HCE type feeling suicidal and receiving a parliamentary bill of divorce (in other words, a divorce granted on grounds of adultery) 'all on account of the smell of Shakeletin' (392.30-393.01), presumably detected on his wife's person.  
(Gordon 55)

Divorce is also mentioned on page 95 where a previous allusion to "John Anderson, My Jo" appears, as well numerous references to smell. For example, "telsmell" (*FW* 95.12), "I mind the gush off the mon like Ballybok manure works on a tradewinds day" (*FW* 95.2-3). Although the name Anderson is

not mentioned on page 95, there may be a cryptic suggestion of the presence of Sackerson through the reference to "John Anderson, my Jo." There seems to be a link between Burns' song, the figure Sackerson and divorce. It could be that the song appears as a way of signalling that the dreamer's insecurities regarding his marriage and the origin of his daughter are surfacing.

I would argue that Joyce's use of the Burns song "John Anderson My Jo" is, like the motif of the Picts and Scots, used to treat the theme of duality, one of the main subject matters of *Finnegans Wake*. Elsewhere in Joyce's work the character of Crotthers in *Ulysses* is linked to duality through his origins in "Alba Longa,"<sup>4</sup> as well as an image, the twoheaded octopus of 'Lestrygonians' and 'Circe.' Joyce has also linked ancient Scottish history to duality through his references to the Picts and Scots. As I have written elsewhere, the theme of duality in *Finnegans Wake* is created in part through allusion to Scottish prose such as the works of Robert Louis Stevenson and James Hogg. Now we see that, through reference to the work of Robert Burns, Joyce also links Scottish songs to duality. The main representatives of duality in *Finnegans Wake*, the rival twins Shem and Shaun, are also connected to the next Burns work I will discuss, the poem "The Cottar's Saturday Night."

### **"The Cotter's Saturday Night" and the Fable of the Ondt and the Gracehoper**

At length his lonely *Cot* appears in view,  
 Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;  
 Th' expectant wee-things, toddlan, stacher through  
 To meet their *Dad*, wi' flichterin noise and glee.  
 (Burns 87-8)

The domestic scene of Burns' poem "The Cotter's Saturday Night" with its 'Cot' or house, the farmer's "wifie" and his children or "expectant wee-things" is perhaps something the dreamer of *Finnegans Wake* would recognise since Joyce's work is, on a basic level, the story of a particular family living in Chapelizod. One of the main attractions of the Burns poem for Joyce would probably have been that it has a nocturnal setting and contains the word 'Night' in its title, since *Finnegans Wake* is designed to be a book set during and describing the night. Probably any small incentive such as this would have been enough for Joyce to include the poem in his work. Aside from this, the poem is a description of rural hard work and piety, something which can be used as a contrast to the lifestyle of the 'Gracehoper,' a figure who is associated with the artist Shem. During the interview of Shaun in III.i, Shaun offers a story or parable entitled "The Fable of the Ondt and the Gracehoper" and as part of this fable there is a notable inclusion of the title of Burns' poem:

...and with tambarins and cantoridettes  
 soturning around his eggshell rockcoach their  
 dance McCaper in retrophoebia, beck from bulk,  
 like fantastic disossed and jenny aprils, to the ra,  
 the ra, the ra, the ra, langsome heels and  
 langsome toesis, attended to by a mutter and  
 doffer duffmatt baxingmotch and a myrmidins of  
 pszozlers pszinging *Satyr's Caudledayed*  
*Nice and Hombly, Dombly Sod We Awhile* but  
*Ho, Time Timeagen, Wake!* (FW 415.12-15)

Here the words "satyr," a genus of butterfly, and "pszozlers"—*pszczola* is Polish for 'bee'—fit in with a general focus on insects in the fable in keeping with its basis in "The Fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper." The passage is replete with

insect-related vocabulary and distorted insect names into words such as “rockcoach” (*FW* 415.10) and “hornitosehead” (*FW* 415.3). The “pszinging” is part of the Burns-like music and dancing of the “hoppy” existence of the Gracehoper. This Gracehoper, is “always making ungraceful overtures,” and has “a partner pair of findlesticks” —grasshoppers ‘sing’ by scraping their hind legs together. Other musical or dance-related words in the passage include “artsaccord” (*FW* 415.18) and “jigging” (*FW* 414.22). The attention paid to dancing and music here in connection with the songwriting of Burns is similar to the section that alludes repeatedly to ‘Tam O’Shanter.’<sup>5</sup>

The titles of the songs the “pszozlers” are singing are versions of the nursery rhyme ‘Humpty Dumpty,’ the Irish American folk song “Tim Finnegan’s Wake” as well as Burns’ poem “The Cotter’s Saturday Night.” Here Burns is placed in the company of other examples of demotic or popular culture, rather than in proximity to other poets or songwriters. The relevance of the first two songs are fairly obvious, ‘Humpty Dumpty’ representing the fall, an important theme of

*Finnegans Wake* and “Tim Finnegan’s Wake” is, of course, one of the main plot sources for the *Wake* with its subject matter of death and resurrection. In the phrase “*Satyr’s Caudledayed Nice*” the first two syllables of Saturday have been isolated and converted into “*Satyr*,” which is a genus of butterfly as well as a pipe-playing figure from Greek mythology. “Caudle,” a hot drink, could reflect the “heated” (*FW* 415.20) summer months in which the “sunsunsuns still tumble on” (*FW* 415.22) as well as generally reflecting the bacchic existence of the Gracehoper. The buzzing of bees can be heard in the alliteration of ‘z’ in “pszozlers pszinging,” evoking the leisurely summertime the Gracehoper basks in, instead of doing any work. Perhaps the activity of the bees in

their collection of pollen is also a contrast to the Gracehoper's laziness. "*Nice*" would also relate to the hedonistic lifestyle the Gracehoper enjoys, in binary opposition to the Ondt who is not a "sommerfool" (*FW* 415.27). In contrast to the introduction to the Gracehoper from 414.22 to 415.24, the description of the Ondt seems set in winter, with words such as "chilly," "icinglass," "windame" and "cold" appearing.

I would argue that in addition to alluding to Burns' poetry here, the 'public persona' or reputation of Burns as a womanising, heavy-drinking songwriter is utilised by Joyce. This image of Burns as a dissipated degenerate helps to construct the picture we are given of the Gracehoper. Perhaps Joyce is relating Burns to himself again, since the Gracehoper is clearly identified with Joyce in the following line: "The Gracehoper was always jogging ajog, hoppy on akkant of his joyicity" (*FW* 422.22-23). Despite his carefree existence, the Gracehoper fails to "beat time" (*FW* 419.8) or "kick time" (*FW* 415.24). Alternatively, it could be that the hard-working ploughman aspect of Burns' life is being contrasted to the lazy, feckless existence of the Gracehoper. It is curious that a carefree summer celebration should allude to a poem which deals in part with hard work and the winter cold:

November chill blows loud wi' angry sugh;  
The short'ning winter-day is near a close  
The miry beats retreating frae the pleugh; (Burns 87)

Furthermore, the poem is an evocation of "The toil-worn COTTER," or peasant farmer, who has been working hard all week. The Cotter has been behaving in exactly the opposite fashion to the feckless and lazy Gracehoper. This poem then would at first seem to be more suited to the practical Ondt character. It is true that the Cotter in Burns' poem also enjoys



“the social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet,” but only after a week of hard graft on the farm.

Perhaps then, the poem functions as a warning to the Gracehoper or an indication of the fate that is waiting for him. Along with the nursery rhyme “Humpty Dumpty” which warns of a fall and “Tim Finnegan’s Wake,” which signals the passing of time, the “Cotter’s Saturday Night” is an ironic choice for the “pszozlers” to be singing or to be associated with the Gracehoper, since it deals partly with “rustic toil.” “Night” is turned into “Nice” perhaps as the Ondt has no thought for the future, only for current enjoyment or “luxury’s contagion” as Burns might have put it. Perhaps Joyce’s (or Shaun’s) suggestion is that the Gracehoper, another of the *Wake*’s Shemish figures related to Burns, is destined to follow Burns, Humpty Dumpty and Tim Finnegan to some kind of fall or ruin. Joyce utilises Burns’ poetry at this point, perhaps in keeping with the connection between Burns’ poetry and duality we have seen in his allusions to “John Anderson, My Jo,” but mainly as it is an appropriate poem to use in a fable that deals with work or the avoidance of it. The poem is used again in a section which stresses the opposition of the brothers, this time in terms of their attitudes to work according to Shaun. Perhaps the allusion to the poem is Shaun’s way of highlighting what he sees as especially repugnant in his brother. The public image of Burns is also present here, as a Gracehoper-like figure.

### “Auld Lang Syne”

Of all the Burns songs and poems alluded to in *Finnegans Wake*, probably “Auld Lang Syne” has received the most critical attention. Presumably the reason for this is that material based on lines from “Auld Lang Syne” are so prominent and

frequently alluded to in the *Wake* that it is impossible for *Wake* scholars to ignore the song. It is arguably the most famous of all Burns' songs and perhaps critics have focussed on it for this reason. Unfortunately, this does not mean that there has been substantial attention paid to it, only more than almost non-existent attention paid to Burns' other work in the *Wake*. Of course, it should not be particularly surprising that "Auld Lang Syne" should appear in the *Wake*, considering its primary subject matter is the passing of time and that it is a drinking song, well suited perhaps to the atmosphere of HCE's public house. It barely needs pointing out that *Finnegans Wake* is saturated in the songs and atmosphere of the public house and that alcohol is central to the 'plot' of the *Wake*. In *Joyce's Kaleidoscope*, Philip Kitcher discusses the appearances of "Auld Lang Syne" with reference to the 'Four Masters', who seem to have adopted Burns' song as their group anthem:

Auld Lang Syne, the song that traditionally celebrates the passing of the year, with its evocations of the old days, is an appropriate song for the four old men, and it recurs through their conversation: here, the cup of kindness – "kindest yet" – is a palliative, a momentary relief for the condition to which they find themselves reduced. (Kitcher 184)

For Kitcher, the use of the song in association with the four old men is primarily as a signifier of the passing of time and suits the activity of the four old men since it is a drinking song. The song is frequently associated with 'the Four.' In II.iv where the Four are spying on the journey of Tristan and Iseult there are a number of references such as that to the name of the song itself "auld lang syne" (*FW* 384.17 and 393.16). Other phrases based on lines from the song include "for a cup of kindness yet" (*FW*

386.8-9 and 397.19); “for auld acquaintance” (*FW* 389.11 and 398.14); “never brought to mind” (*FW* 390.21); “be forgot” (*FW* 390.23) and “auld luke syne” (*FW* 398.26) where the line is adapted to connect it with one of the four old men, Luke Tarpey. Other than the fact the four old men are generally nostalgic or obsessed with the past and that they seem to enjoy drinking, another reason that they are so fond of “Auld Lang Syne” could be that one of their number, Johnny, seems to have at least a semi-Scottish derivation. Usually the four old men are associated with the four provinces of Ireland.

However, Johnny MacDougal is described as “Poor Johnny of the clan of the Dougals, the poor Scuitsman, (Hohannes!) nothing if not amorous, dinna forget” (*FW* 391.4), a description which contains the Scots “dinna” meaning ‘do not.’ Perhaps it is Johnny who is singing “Auld Lang Syne” in a fit of homesickness. It could be that the appearance of a Scottish or partly Scottish character brings with him Scottish song in the same way that the Scottish medical student Crothers brings Scottish language to the ‘Oxen of the Sun’ chapter of *Ulysses*.

While Philip Kitcher identifies “Auld Lang Syne” primarily with ‘The Four’ and sees it as indicative of the desire of the Four to drown their sorrows, in *Joyce’s Book of the Dark* John Bishop stresses how Joyce adapts Burns’ lyrics as a way of creating the obscurity, amnesia, and confused chronology of sleep:

Evidence given about exact dates and times (“he would be there to remember the filth of November...the dates of ould lanxiety”) designates as well the absence of perceived historical time altogether –discrete “fifth” slipping into blacked-out “filth” and “the days of our anxiety” blurring away into “Auld Lang Syne” (where “auld acquaintance” “be forgot”

and is “never brought to mind” [389.11, 390.23, 21, II.iv]). (Bishop 46)

I would argue that both Bishop and Kitcher’s interpretations are valid; the allusions work both as descriptive of the four old men and also of the experience of sleep. References to the song work as both signifiers of the void in which the ‘dreamer’ finds himself but also as evocations of the passing of time. As is well known, “Auld Lang Syne” is traditionally sung at New Year’s Eve or Hogmanay as it is called in Scotland. There could be a connection here between the beginning and ending of the year and the cyclical or repetitive nature of history as presented in *Finnegans Wake*, since New Year is both a beginning and an ending. This would be another reason for the song to be associated with ‘the Four,’ since one of their main roles in the *Wake* is as historians.

In a contrast to the way he uses James Macpherson’s poetry, Joyce seems to utilise the actual meanings and language of the poems by Burns he alludes to. As I have discussed, Joyce uses Macpherson to express the general idea of forgery, recycling or of an ‘heroic age’ or simply to create what Fritz Senn called an Ossianic “atmosphere” (Senn 25). This suggests that Joyce was more interested in Burns as a poet and paid more attention to the content of his poems than he did with the work of Macpherson. With the use of Macpherson in *Finnegans Wake*, it seems that any language from the Ossianic work will suit Joyce’s purpose, since anything from *Ossian* will necessarily be associated with Macpherson’s status as a ‘forger.’<sup>6</sup> When Joyce uses allusions to Burns or includes lines from his poetry, he selects specific poems to connect with the surrounding material such as the section dealing with ‘the Four.’ In other words, Joyce’s use of Macpherson is largely as

a symbol whereas Burns can be used in various different ways depending on the subject matter of the poem or song.

### **Joyce, Scotland, Ulster and Ireland**

As I have discussed earlier, Joyce links Ulster Scots and Scottish history in his poem "Gas from a Burner." A similar linking of Ulster and Scotland occurs in *Finnegans Wake*. During a particularly ill-tempered section of the interrogation of Shaun by the four masters or historians of *Finnegans Wake*, a discussion begins to display an Ulster accent while alluding to various Scottish songs, poems, writers, locations and items, including a striking reference to Robert Burns:

Angly as arrows, but you have right, my  
celtslinger! Nils, Mugn and Cannut. Should  
brothers be for awe then? So let use off be octo  
while oil bike the bil and wheel whang till  
wabblin befoul you but mere and mire trulloses  
will knaver mate a game on the bibby bobby  
burns of. Quatsch! What hill ar yu fluking about  
ye lamelookond fyats! I'll discipline ye! Will  
you swear or affirm the day to yur second sight  
noo and recant that all yu affirmed to profetised  
at first sight for his southerly accent was all  
paddyflaherty? Will ye, ay or nay? (*FW* 520.22-  
31)

Further signals of the text taking on a Scottish theme include references to a "highlandman's trousertree" (*FW* 521.7), a "dram" (*FW* 521.8) which is a Scottish measure of whisky, a "scotty pictail" (*FW* 521.11) which alludes to the ancient tribes

the Picts and the Scots, as well as a use of “Guid” or the Scots word for good (*FW* 521.31). Furthermore the word “invertedness” (*FW* 522.21) appears, in which the Highland city Inverness is alluded to. Alongside these Scottish elements, the primary subject of the exchange is obviously Ulster or “Northern Ire” (*FW* 522.4), signified in part by references to Bushmills or “Bushmillah!” (*FW* 521.15), the Belfast civic motto “*Pro tanto quid retribuamus?*” (*FW* 521.10-11) and perhaps Queen’s University: “Queen’s” (*FW* 521.35). Furthermore, the text begins to take on an Ulster accent: “Ef I chuse to put a bullet like yu through the grill for heckling what business is that of yours, yu bullock?” (*FW* 522.1-2). A religious and political divide also becomes apparent in the section: “did any orangepeelers or greengoaters appear periodically up your sylvan family tree?” (*FW* 522.16-17). The argument here between Shaun and his interrogators begins to display features of the history of the northern part of Ireland.

The paragraph which reads “So let use off be octo while oil bike the bil and wheel whang till wabblin be foul you but mere and mire trulopes will knaver mate a game on the bibby bobby burns of” not only name-checks Robert Burns as “bobby burns” and his poem “A man’s a man for a’ that,”<sup>7</sup> but borrows the tune of the well known Scottish traditional song “Loch Lomond.” It seems the song was a favourite of Joyce’s.

Jacques Mercanton has described how Joyce and his circle of friends would amuse themselves in Paris in the Autumn of 1938 as “the threat of war loomed of the forthcoming publication of [Joyce’s] book” (Mercanton 93):

Music alone could cheer those anxious hearts. Mrs. Jolas sang a few Negro spirituals, Joyce, old Irish songs in that warm voice of his, capable of such gentle modulations. Seated around the table, we took up the refrain in a

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chorus, or else accompanied his light singing with our humming, "Loch Lomond" or "Drink to me only with thine eyes," which he sang in a restrained, an almost interior, voice, his face illuminated by the grace of the moment. (Mercanton 106)

As with the melodies of Thomas Moore, probably one of the reasons "Loch Lomond" appears in *Finnegans Wake* is simply because Joyce enjoyed it, as the above anecdote shows.

The passage from page 520 is not the only occasion in *Finnegans Wake* where the tune and lyrics of "Loch Lomond" are included by Joyce. In II.iii, during the Butt and Taff section where two television comics who are also versions of the brothers Shem and Shaun perform, there are three separate units of allusion, where Taff mocks Butt:

Scutterer of guld, he is retourious on every roudery! The lyewdsky so so sewn of a fitchid! With his walshbrushup? And his boney bogey braggs? BUTT (after his tongues in his cheeks, with pinkpoker pointing out in rutene to impassible abjects beyond the mistomist towards Lissnaluhy such as the Djublian Alps and the Hoofd Ribeiro as where he and his trulock may ever make a game). The field of karhags and that bloasted tree. Forget not the felled! For the lomondations of Oghrem! (FW 340.1-9)

The three allusions are "boney bogey braggs," "*where he and his trulock may ever mate a game*" and "lomondations." On previous pages the descriptions of Butt and Taff's own utterances include references to the Scottish traditional song

“The Flowers of the Forest” or “the florahs of the follest” (*FW* 339.25) which is associated with Scotland’s defeat at the Battle of Flodden in 1513 and to Burns’ poem “Sweet Afton” —“Till even so aften” (*FW* 338.14). Here the phrase “boney bogey braggs” seem to represent Shem and/or the youthful Joyce and his emaciation —“boney”; his quasi-satanic status “bogey”; and his tendency to boast —“braggs.” Butt, who is the Shemish figure, is named a “Scutterer,” which echoes “Scuts” (*FW* 245.28) or ‘Scots’ and he laments the Jacobite defeat at Culloden. It is probably a play on the word ‘stutterer’ which would link Butt to the guilty speech disorder of HCE. Through an allusion to Thomas Moore’s “Forget Not the Field” also known as “The Lamentations of Aughrim” —which deals with James II’s defeat at Aughrim in 1691— Joyce again brings together the figures of the Scottish songwriter Burns with the Irish songwriter Moore. Joyce thus links the rebellious artist figure Shem to failed Catholic rebellions of both Scottish and Irish histories.

The section from page 520 of *Finnegans Wake* is rather opaque, even by the notoriously obscure standards of the work. However, it seems that the funeral games or rituals discussed in previous pages of the *Wake* are again being brought up:

With the funeral comes ‘funeral games’ ... the encounter becomes the subject of a trial in which the testimony – here about the antagonists rolling around ‘togutter’ in the ‘Black Pig’s Dyke’ (517.13-15), earlier involving two brothers and a pig in a ‘mudstorm’... (Gordon, *Plot Summary* 245)

It seems that there has been some kind of altercation between the brothers in the dirt, “some clever play in the mud” (*FW*



517.3), “they rolled togutter into the ditch together?” (*FW* 517.14). This discussion of the confrontations between the brothers continues on page 518 with an allusion to the rival tribes the Picts and the Scots, a subject I have discussed in a separate article. Another allusion to the Picts and the Scots occurs after the reference to Burns at *FW* 521.11. The different streams of Scottish material or strings or allusion converge in this section, against the background of a northern Irish altercation. The section is another Scottish/Irish ‘nodal point.’ Again, I would suggest that the fighting in the “ditch,” or bed since they are virtually indistinguishable in *Finnegans Wake*, continues in the section which alludes to Burns. The word “octo” probably relates to the eight hours of the day spent in sleep but perhaps there is an echo of the twoheaded octopus of the ‘Lestrygonians’ and ‘Circe’ chapters of *Ulysses*. *Whang* is a Scots word meaning “a stroke, blow; a cut with a whip” according to the *Concise Scots Dictionary*. Burns himself uses the word in his poem “The Ordination”:

Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her,  
For Heresy is in her pow’r, And  
gloriously she’ll whang her Wi’  
pith this day (Burns 185)

This usage would continue the violent language of previous sections of the *Wake*. Furthermore, a separate section of the *Wake* also used the word to mean whip:

...whang her, the fine ooman, rouge to her  
lobster locks, the rossy, whang, God and  
O’Mara has it with his ruddy old Villain Rufus,  
wait, whang, God and you’re another he hasn’t  
for there’s my spoil five of spuds’s trumps,  
whang, whack on his pigskin’s Kisser for him  
... (*FW* 122.15-19)

*Wabble* is another Scots word meaning to “walk unsteadily, totter, waddle” (CSD). So, I suggest that “wheel whang till wabblin befoul you” means something like ‘we’ll beat each other up until your unsteadiness topples you and you are covered with filth and cannot see properly.’ Of course, such a ‘translation’ lacks both Joyce’s economical use of language and the lilting melody of “Loch Lomond.” I would suggest the filth they are liable to fall into is the earth of the grave, which in *Finnegans Wake* is also a cipher for the obscurity and ‘burial’ of sleep. If a fall into death or sleep occurs to the brothers here, they may also end up “lamelookond” (*FW* 520.27) or “limelooking” (*FW* 95.14). In other words, sleep or death has rendered the brothers literally or figuratively ‘blind’ or as Gordon suggests, suffering from glaucoma (Gordon, *Plot Summary* 245). The word “limelooking” also suggests the burying of a body covered in lime. Furthermore, if the brothers are deceased then “lomondations” (*FW* 340.9) or lamentations may need to be sung. In a sense, the song “Loch Lomond” is a lamentation of sorts since its subject matter is a couple who “will never meet again” as one has died in battle and is taking the “high road,” i.e. he has ‘ascended’ to Scotland. “Loch Lomond” is a suitable song for Joyce to select for inclusion in *Finnegans Wake* since it deals with a Shem/Shawn type separation: “You tak the high road and I’ll tak the low and I’ll be in Scotland afore ye.” As I have previously noted, the song was also a favourite of Joyce’s circle of friends in Paris so Joyce may have wanted to include it simply because he enjoyed the tune. In *Finnegans Wake* it seems to function as part of sections dealing with burial and death.

The next part of the section, “but mere and mire trulopes will knaver mate a game on the bibby bobby burns of” suggests to me that the fraternal struggle of Shem and

Shaun may never cease. The phrase “mate a game” suggests a victory in some sort of competition since *mate* can be used as a verb meaning to “overcome, defeat, subdue” (OED) as in chess for example. Such a victory may “knave,” or never, occur in the confrontation between Shaun and Shem. Furthermore, it seems as though this unending struggle has landed both participants in the “mire.” Since “befoul” can mean to become foul in a moral sense,<sup>8</sup> perhaps this fight has had an unpleasant effect on the fraternal adversaries. *Finnegans Wake* takes a ‘cosmic’ view of history, in which the events of one thousand years ago such as the movement of the *Scotus* to Argyll are connected with modern history such as Robert Burns. The intervening time is collapsed and, in this way, all events gain an equal level of importance. Joyce’s technique in *Finnegans Wake* attempts to provide an expansive, panoramic overview of the convergences and divergences and recurrences of all of human history. In the case of the recurrent, cyclical shared histories of Ireland and Scotland, Joyce achieves the formidable task of presenting a network of allusions to poets and poetry, migrations and alliances, battles and invasions, which provides a representation of over a thousand years of Scottish and Irish inter-connections, from the founding of Scotland to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The above fraternal altercations may seem to be a negative commentary on Irish and Scottish confrontations. However, as with most things in *Finnegans Wake*, things are not so easily explained away and the line “mere and mire trulloses will knave mate a game” is ambiguous. The word ‘mate’ can also of course relate to sexual reproduction and *mere* French for mother, and suggestive of *mer*, French for the sea. Earlier in the *Wake* in another Scottish and Irish meeting, the early sexual life of the mother figure ALP is described in the following terms:

O, wasn't he the bold priest? And wasn't she the  
naughty Livvy? Nautic Naama's now her navm.

Two lads in scoutsch breeches went through her  
before that, Barefoot Burn and Wallowme

Wade, Lugnaquillia's noblesse pickts, before she  
had a hint of hair at her fanny to hide or a  
bossom to tempt a birch canoedler not to  
mention a bulgic porterhouse barge. (*FW* 204.4-  
9)

Two boys are wading through the water here, but since ALP is conceived as a river in the *Wake*, this also seems to be an act with an erotic dimension. The two washerwomen also discuss how she was “first licked by a hound” (*FW* 204.11-12), an act that really only makes sense if we remember ALP's representation as a river. Here again it seems that Burns or “Barefoot Burn” is associated with violence, with “breeches” also suggestive of sexual activity. The word “noblesse” suggests the French *blesé*, meaning to be hurt in an emotional or physical sense. This word adds to the murkiness of the passage that combines sexual activity with violence or pain. Therefore, the burning here, since it is in connection with the river goddess figure ALP, perhaps suggests fertility. It could be that the type of fertility Joyce had in mind is the type restored to savannahs after fires. The convergence of conflict and sex are also displayed in the other allusion to “Loch Lomond” I mentioned earlier: “trulock may ever make a game” (*FW* 340.7). The word “trulock” is obviously based on the words “true love” of the lyrics of “Loch Lomond,” but ‘lock’ also suggests a room or situation in which one may become trapped. However, in another connection to violence, Trulock was also a Dublin gun manufacturer (McHugh 340).

In the above passage Joyce seems to be taking advantage of the ambiguity of the word ‘Burn,’ which could of

course relate either to the physical sensation of a youthful sexual encounter but also to the destruction of warfare. Such an ambiguity is explored by Yeats' great poem "Leda and the Swan," and this poem is alluded to in the lines following the above section: "And ere that again, leada, laida, all unraidy, to faint to buoy the fairiest rider, too frail to flirt with a cygnet's plume" (*FW* 204.9-11). Perhaps then, 'Burn' here signifies a stream-like fertility of foreign influx, much in the same way that the HCE-related Norwegian invasion of Ireland is conceived of as both destructive and somehow creative in *Finnegans Wake*. This would connect with the Phoenix imagery of the *Wake*, since burning here implies both destruction and creation.

As I mentioned earlier, Burns seems to function as another signifier of the split or dissociated personality in *Finnegans Wake* in connection with the associations and dissociations of Irish and Scottish histories. In the section above the two boys are versions of the brothers Shem and Shaun, who form the binary-opposition of the *Wake*. Coupled with this is the inherent fire and water duality of Burns' name which Joyce sought to take advantage of. This activity is most clearly displayed in the above section. Burns, in the sense of heat or injuries —"scalds and burns" (*FW* 189.32)— is present along with the violent associations the word carries, since the context carries a good number of military allusions. For example, there is a reference to 'Sligo's Noble Six' or "noblesse pickts" (McHugh 204). However, Burns here is also used to signify water. *Burn* is the Scots word for a stream, as in Bannockburn which is named after the Bannock Burn, a stream which runs into the River Forth. That Joyce is using 'Burn' in this way seems likely considering the aquatic nature of the section. It is demonstrable that Joyce was aware of the Scots word *burn* since he also uses a variation of it in relation to

bodies of water: “No, he skid like a skate and berthed on her byrnie and never a fear they’ll land him yet, slitheryscales on liffeybank, times and times and halve a time a pillow of sand to polster him” (*FW* 525.36).

As I have discussed elsewhere, pages 518 to 522 of *Finnegans Wake* seem to develop the binary and contrasting relationship of Shaun and Shem into a presentation of the different occurrences of Scottish and Irish meetings or confrontations. The Picts and the Scots are the most ancient of this type of convergence. Also obviously present here is the spectre of the Ulster Plantations as well as other earlier Scottish migrations into Ulster. What is most interesting here in a study of Burns is that his name, barely altered, appears in Joyce’s presentation of Scottish influence on Ulster. As Liam McIlvanney has discussed, Burns’ initial popularity was at its greatest outside of Scotland in Ulster:

In the wake of the Kilmarnock volume, Burns appears to have been almost as popular in the North of Ireland as in Scotland. The first edition of Burns’s poems outside Scotland appeared in Belfast in 1787, and there were sixteen editions of his poems locally printed from 1787 to 1826. If in England Burns was received as something of a literary curiosity, in Ulster he achieved what one historian calls an ‘immense and immediate popularity.’ (McIlvanney 224)

So perhaps the popularity of Burns in the north of Ireland is being signalled in this section of *Finnegans Wake*. In general references to the name Burns seem to be used simply as a signifier of the partial Scottishness of Ireland, in particular the north of Ireland, the reverse side of the motif of the Picts and

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Scots which showed the partially Irish roots of Scotland. Joyce demonstrates the symmetry of Irish and Scottish history by not only working on the Irish roots of Scottish history but, through the figure of Burns, the impact of later Scottish influences in Ireland. Burns is used by Joyce as a convenient shorthand for Scottish influence in Ireland, sometimes in direct juxtaposition to phrases which stress the Irish impact on Scotland. Allusions to Burns in *Finnegans Wake* function as part of a larger look at the recurring patterns of mutual interference between both countries.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Barlow, "Crotthers: Joyce's 'Scots Fellow' in *Ulysses*." *Notes and Queries* 57. ii (June 2010): 230-33.

<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, a number of conjunctions of the lyrics of Moore and Burns appear in the *Wake* as I will discuss in this essay.

<sup>3</sup> In the present article I use the following abbreviations: *CSD*: Mairi Robinson, ed., *Concise Scots Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Polygon at Edinburgh, 1999); *FW*: James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Penguin, 2000), references are given in the standard form i.e. page number followed by line number; *U*: James Joyce, *Ulysses*. Edited by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> See Claire A. Culleton, *Names and Naming in Joyce* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 58-9.

<sup>5</sup> For Adaline Glasheen's thoughts on "Tam O'Shanter" in *Finnegans Wake*, see Edward M. Burns and Joshua A. Gaylord, eds., *A Tour of the Darkling Plain*. (Dublin: University of Dublin Press, 2001) 462.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion on Joyce and Macpherson see Richard Barlow, "James Macpherson in *Finnegans Wake*," in S. Alcobia-Murphy, L. Milligan, and D. Wall, *Founder to Shore*. (Aberdeen: AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Culture, 2010) 33-42.

<sup>7</sup> This Burns poem is also alluded to in the 'Oxen of the Sun' episode of *Ulysses* on page 382.

<sup>8</sup> The *OED* gives a line from Macaulay to illustrate this: "Fox had stumbled in the mire, and had not only been defeated but befouled." (*OED*).