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The language of Older Scots poetry (1983)[1]

Edited by Caroline Macafee, 2015

Editor's note: in this seminal paper AJA draws upon his extensive knowledge of and sensitivity to Older Scots diction and stylistic variation (already treated in some detail in 'Variation and variety in written Middle Scots', 1981, 2015), combined with observations of other aspects of style, including metrical form and grammatical complexity, over a very wide range of reading in Older Scots poetry. He offers a taxonomy of Older Scots verse types, and descriptions of the various stylistic resources that characterise them. A summary of 'The Language of Older Scots Poetry' is incorporated in 'A History of Scots to 1700' (Macafee and †Aitken, 2002: ch. 9). That chapter also includes a detailed account of alliteration, phonaesthetic effects and metrical licences. General discussions of Older Scots poetic style can also be found in Agutter (1988), and the relevant chapters of Corbett (1997) and Smith (2012), q.v. for further references.

[18] 1 Introduction

This essay sets out some ideas which I have long held about the ways in which Older Scots poets deployed their linguistic and stylistic options. To some readers the gist of what I say, and some of the details, will be familiar. I have expounded the generality and some of the particulars that follow in lectures and hand-outs since the early 1950s. These have included a public lecture with the same title as the present essay which I gave in 1972, and which has since then been accessible in xeroxed form. I am especially grateful to Dr Suzanne Romaine for publishing recently a neat and very fair summary of this (Romaine, 1982: 22–5). But the following will be the first published account by myself.

As a characterisation of the linguistic and stylistic markers of Older Scots verse and a survey of their distribution in the corpus of that verse, the following manifestly falls far short of the fully detailed and meticulous account which must some day be presented by someone. Some features, which I have not yet found time to examine, are left unexamined, such as the body of pervasive tags and formulae of different types, some generally distributed and others confined to particular modes: *iwis*, *bedene*, *but lese*, *but layne*, *in hy*, *but peir*, *al and sum*, *I trow*, *as I wene*, *holtis hair*, etc. Other important topics, such as the dictions characteristic of simple and alliterative narrative, have had to be dismissed with no more than a mention.

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[1] Originally published in J. D. McClure, ed., *Scotland and the Lowland Tongue. Studies in the Language and Literature of Lowland Scotland in honour of David D. Murison* (Aberdeen University Press, 1983), 18–49.

The text has been edited for uniformity of style with other Aitken papers. The original page numbers are shown in square brackets. Since digital publication does not suffer the same constraints of space as hard copy, examples are laid out more expansively, though it will sometimes be obvious that they started off as connected text in the original. Quotation marks around some technical terms have been dropped. All notes are editorial.

Despite these deficiencies I hope that this partial survey of certain stylistic traits of Older Scots verse may be of use for the time being.

Underpinning this theory of Older Scots verse styles (and a roughly similar theory of prose styles is possible)[2] is the belief that the Middle Scots poets shared a system of modal decorum to which all of them fairly faithfully adhered. So too did their predecessors the Early Scots poets, though their system was a simpler and more limited one. On closer examination it turns out that even such an apparently eccentric work as *Colkelbie Sow* conforms to the Middle Scots system, as C. D. Jeffery has now shown (1981: 207).

[19] To serve as a frame of reference for the generalisations about distributions of particular types of feature which occupy the remainder of this survey, I propose the following categorisation of Older Scots verse modes, according to criteria of theme, metre and style. In its general outline, this resembles similar schemes expounded by C. S. Lewis (1954: 68–76) and Ellenberger (1977: 71–5); and the much earlier one implied by George Bannatyne's division of the poems of his collection (the Bannatyne Manuscript) into five 'parts' (the fourth of these further subdivided).

(i) Plain narrative verse

Plain narrative verse in at first tetrameter (octosyllabic), or, later more usually, pentameter, (decasyllabic) (or 'heroic') couplets, such as Barbour's *Brus*, most of the *Wallace*, the Asloan MS *Buke of the Sevyne Sagis*, Lyndsay's *Squire Meldrum*, and a large body of other poetry. These poems employ, for the most part, fairly plain vernacular language, unpoetic in vocabulary and unelaborate in syntax, except for some of the diction of poetic synonyms shared with alliterative verse, and some favourite formulae and tags used especially in combat episodes. Also to be excepted are the very occasional passages of heightened rhetoric and courtly diction in some courtly, hortatory or didactic prologues and digressions, and occasional courtly laments, such as the passages opening books VI and IX (in Moir's 1889 STS edition) of the *Wallace* (see further below).

(ii) Alliterative verse

Alliterative verse, in the three longer narrative poems in the 'Scottish' thirteen-lined rhyming stanza of alliterative long-lines and wheel (*The Buke of the Howlat*, *Golagros and Gawane*, *Rauf Coilȝear*), employs an, on the whole, plain vernacular language like that of the plain narrative poems. The alliterative poems, however, are much more pervasively laced with elements of poetic diction from a repertory of words and formulae characteristic of late Medieval English and Scottish alliterative verse – 'alliterative diction'. They resort frequently to straining or extending the meanings of words. And in syntax they accumulate co-ordinated or appositional redundancies – parallelism – to produce a highly repetitive, diffuse style, advancing the narrative at a very leisurely pace. (The only detailed account of these characteristics of this body of verse is in Mackay, 1975.) Sharing these linguistic characteristics of the longer alliterative narrative poems are a number of other poems, either in alliterative long-line and wheel stanzas, such as *Sum Practysis of Medecyne* attributed to Henryson, Douglas's Prologue to *Eneados* VIII,[3] and, in an elaboration of this stanza, 'In May in a morning' (one of Bannatyne's 'ballattis of luve', *Bannatyne MS* fos. 225b–226a), or

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[2] AJA wrote on prose in 'A sixteenth century Scottish devotional anthology' (1957, 2015), and in 'Oral narrative style in Middle Scots' (1978, 2015). He had intended to say more about prose in 'Variation and variety in written Middle Scots' (1971, 2015); the present edition of that paper includes some of his rough notes as an Addendum. For a cogent description of Older Scots prose styles, see Smith (2012: 61 ff.).

[3] Douglas's *Eneados* is also referred to *passim* as his 'Æneid translation'.

in alliterative blank verse, Dunbar's *The Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*; but on account of their content and other features of their style one might rather wish to assign these to other modes following below.

There exist also several poems in either a rather simpler alliterative stanza of short lines or stanzas of regularly alliterated syllabic verse, approximating [20] stylistically to those just specified – Henryson's *Ressonyng betuix Aige and Yowth*, *King Hart*, *Tayis Bank* (*Bannatyne MS* 229a–b), *The Murning Maiden* (*Maitland Folio MS* cxxx), and others.

(iii) Elaborate narrative verse

Elaborate narrative verse, lexically more wide-ranging, syntactically, rhetorically, and, in many cases, metrically more elaborate than the simple narrative verse – a half-way house between the latter and the narrative of courtly allegories and visions (cf. (vi) below). Examples of this sort of verse are the narrative parts of Henryson's *Fables*, *Cresseid* and *Orpheus*, the narrative portions of *Lancelot of the Laik*, Douglas's *Æneid* translation, notably wide-ranging and eclectic in language (see Bawcutt, 1976: ch. 6), and portions of the latter part of Lyndsay's *The Testament of the Papyngo* (lines 647–1171); and we might prefer to place here rather than in (i) the narrative of Rolland's *Sevin Seages*. All of these are in the accredited 'Chaucerian' metres, either rhyme royal (on which see, especially, Pearsall, 1962: 58, and (vi), below), or heroic couplets, and all more or less 'Anglo-Scots' (see section 2).

(iv) Instructive and hortatory verse

Instructive and hortatory verse, secular, religious, social or moral, more overtly and straightforwardly didactic than courtly allegory. This includes a number of early works mostly from Cambridge University Library MS Kk 1.5, No. 6 (the *Ratis Raving* MS). These are in octosyllabic couplets, whereas later examples of this mode are mostly in Chaucerian stanzaic metres, or, less often, heroic couplets. Instances include Henryson's *moralitates*, and other parts of Henryson's work, such as the general Prologue to the *Fables* and the introduction to *The Preaching of the Swallow*, as well as the *Contemplatioun of Sinnaris*, several of Douglas's Prologues to the *Eneados* (I, IV, VI, X, XI), Lyndsay's *Dreme* (the 'Epistil' and 'Prologue' excepted), the 'Epistil to the Redar' and the latter part of Lyndsay's *Monarche*, and moralising introductions, digressions and culminations in other works such as *Colkelbie Sow* and *The Quare of Jelusy*, Douglas's *The Palice of Honour* (e.g. lines 1963–2057), and the moralising testaments of Lyndsay (to the *Papyngo* and to *Meldrum*), and that of *Duncan Laideus*. Similar in tone and content to these longer works of instruction are numerous relatively short pieces, notably the majority of those occupying the first two parts of George Bannatyne's collection (*Bannatyne MS*, fos. 1–96), most of Henryson's minor poems, others of Douglas's Prologues and his *Conscience*.

(v) Moralities, love lyrics, simple allegories, etc.

A wide variety of stanza forms, some quite complex and many in shorter lines than the Chaucerian iambic pentameters obligatory for elaborate narrative and courtly verse, characterise reflectively personal poems such as Dunbar's 'Into thir dirk and drublie dayis' and most of the other pieces which Kinsley groups together as 'Moralities' in his edition of Dunbar (1958). Perhaps the 'Epistil' to Lyndsay's *Dreme* belongs here, and also love lyrics such as Dunbar's 'Sweit rois of vertew and of gentilnes' and most of the pieces, including many [21] by Alexander Scott, in the opening section of the fourth part of Bannatyne's

collection, and simple allegories such as Henryson's *The Garmont of Gud Ladeis* and Dunbar's *Bewty and the Presoneir*.

These last three kinds of verse, groups (iii), (iv), and (v), largely eschew the stereotyped diction of the simple and alliterative narrative modes, and only incidentally and relatively sparsely draw on the staple vocabulary of the low-life poetry (see section 8). The diction and rhetoric of the courtly poetry (see sections 4–7) appear more often, albeit in much less profusion than in the courtly set pieces (group (vi) below), and sometimes appear to be used as it were allusively, as if borrowing or quoting from material which more properly resides within the courtly mode. The content of the abstractly didactic pieces and passages naturally attracts a high density of Latinate vocabulary (see section 6), but Latinisms are quite infrequent in the lyric poems. The degree of syntactical complexity (see section 3) varies, and appears, predictably, to be in general higher in the discursive verse. Conversely, anglicised forms (section 2) seem most favoured by the narrative verse. Over-all the level of style in these three kinds of verse is middle to high, closer to that of the courtly verse than of any other kinds.

(vi) Courtly verse in the grand manner

Courtly verse in the grand manner, that collection of passages within other poems and entire poems in what C. S. Lewis calls "the full-blown high style" (1954: 74). Poetry in this manner comprises several elaborate dream-allegories more or less saturated with classical, as well as, rather more incidentally and cursorily, scriptural, allusion (Douglas's *The Palice of Honour* and Rolland's *The Court of Venus*), somewhat simpler love-allegories and dream-visions and debates, such as *The Quare of Jelusy* (in part), the *Lufaris Complaint*, Dunbar's *The Goldyn Targe* and his *The Thrissill and the Rois*, Bellenden's *Proheme of the Cosmographe*, and, among much later examples, the vision in praise of Marie Maitland (*Maitland Quarto MS* lxix) and E. Melville's *Godlie Dreame*; grandiose panegyrics and laments, such as those by Dunbar on Bernard Stewart and Lyndsay's *Deploratioun*, and, later, Patrick Hume's *Promine*, and the religious counterparts of these, the ballats of Our Lady. Almost all of this is in more or less elaborate Chaucerian stanzas, mostly of seven, eight or nine lines of inter-rhyming pentameter lines, such as rhyme royal or the 'Anelida's Complaint' stanza.[4]

Set pieces in the courtly manner are also prefaced or appended to, or introduced into, works mainly in the narrative and didactic modes – as more or less conventional and pretentious prologues and prohemes, and conventional panegyrics and hymns, and some 'complaynts' or laments – e.g. to or in *The Buik of Alexander*, Henryson's Fables and *The Testament of Cresseid*, the *Wallace*, *Lancelot*, Lyndsay's *Dreme*, his *Testament of the Papyngo*, and his *Monarche*, even *Duncan Laideus' Testament* and Montgomery's *The Cherry and the Slae*.

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[4] Also known as 'Anelida and Arcite', by Chaucer. The first stanza is:

> Thou ferse god of armes, Mars the rede,
> That in the frosty contre called Trace,
> Within thy grisly temple ful of drede
> Honoured art as patroun of that place;
> With thy Bellona, Pallas, ful of grace,
> Be present and my song contynue and guye;
> At my begynnyng thus to the I crye.
> > (quoted from Gerard NeCastro, 'eChaucer'
> > http://machias.edu/faculty/necastro/chaucer/texts/anel/anel07.txt, accessed 16 March 2014)

There is a useful Appendix on 'Common Stanzas in Scots poetry' in Corbett (1997).

[22] This sort of verse draws repeatedly on the following pieces of business: the zodiacal setting or other astronomical introduction to indicate or reiterate the time of the year or time of day, the landscape and weather setting, most often verdant and summery, occasionally wintry (see (ix) below), most usually in prohemes or introductions but sometimes at later points also, the gorgeous vision following a *chanson d'aventure* adventure or encounter, or as a variant of this, the dream, often allegorical; the presence of Dame Nature; parades of classical gods and goddesses and their retinues of personified qualities; allusions to classical authors such as Homer, Tullius, Ovid, Boethius and (notably by Douglas) others; innumerable catalogues of (mostly attractive or interesting) objects or personages – birds, beasts, flowers, jewels, musical instruments, hunting instruments, deities, personifications, authors, *et al.*

The verdant summer-morning *descriptiones loci amoeni* feature a large number of highly recurrent (many of them virtually invariable or obligatory) clichés of descriptive detail in the equally recurrent formulae in which these are regularly verbalised: the hot beams of rising Phoebus dispelling the dew which nevertheless continues to drop down glistening as a balmy liquor, the various colourfully gleaming jewels (beryl, topaz *et al.*) to which the dew or the flowers or the sunbeams are compared, the tender shoots of the trees in which a bird or the birds sing "from the spleen" or as Venus' choristers, the medicinal nature of the herbage, the floral 'garth' or garden, the mead with its adjoining river the sound of which lulls the poet to sleep and so to dream his beautiful vision peopled by a lady or ladies of ravishing beauty, followed by the allegorical action or the colourfully instructive vision which makes up the body of the poem.

Other recurrent set pieces or *topoi* of the courtly verse include passages in praise of earlier masters of rhetoric or poetry and panegyrics of noble persons or of the virgin, largely in a series of declamatory or invocatory formulae which describe or address the object of adulation as a lantern, flower or jewel of some admirable class of beings or admirable quality (see below): such are Dunbar's panegyrics in *The Goldyn Targe*, his Bernard Stewart poems and his *Hail! sterne superne*.

Still another set piece is the interpolated *captatio benevolentiae* or the concluding modesty *envoi*, commonly in a deliberately contrasting style (see section 11).

All of this clearly derives at least in part from earlier works in some of the same stanzas and a similar manner, albeit with rather less profusion of cliché and lower concentration of formulae, by Chaucer (such as *Anelida and Arcite*, *The Parliament of Fowls* and several of the short poems), Lydgate (whose *Complaint of the Black Knight* is ubiquitous, in its Scottish title 'The Maying and Disport of Chaucer', in the Scottish sources), and Hoccleve (whose *Moder of God* or 'Oracio Galfridi Chaucer' is also current in the surviving Scottish sources). Despite the arguments against the use of the term by Lewis (1954: 74–5) [23] and others in recent decades, I believe there is a good case for applying the designation Scottish Chaucerian, or, still more aptly, Scottish Lydgatian, to this particular branch of Older Scots poetry, since almost all of its typical superficial features result from quite conscious imitation by the Scottish poets of characteristics displayed by these English works, especially those of Lydgate. Though many of these Scots pieces display considerable originality, both in spirit and in technique, this is nevertheless much the most derivative kind of Older Scots poetry.

(vii) Low-life verse

Low-life verse, Lewis's 'comic poetry' (1954: 69 ff.), lies at an opposite pole from courtly verse. This is that varied class of burlesque, comic and vituperative poems, a large sample of which is included by Bannatyne in the third part of his 'book', consisting of 'mirry balletis' (*Banmatyne MS* 98a–211a). This includes flytings and lampoons – the reverse of the

laudatory pieces and passages in the courtly tradition – such as Dunbar and Kennedy's *Flyting*, Dunbar's lampoon on John Damian and most of his *The Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*, and John Roull's *Cursing*. Dunbar's *The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis* also belongs here; and a number of highly realistic pieces with a low-life setting, namely the mock-tournaments and the 'country fair degenerating into a free-for-all' group of *Peblis to the Play* and *Christis Kirk on the Grene* – the reverse of the idealised visions and dreams of the courtly poetry – and the simple rural comedies, *The Wyf of Awchtirmwchty* and *The Wowing of Jok and Jynny*. Like Bannatyne, I would wish to assign also to this class such *double entendre* pieces as Kennedy's *Against Mouth Thankles* (*Bannatyne MS* 268a, *Maitland Folio MS* cxxxi), Dunbar's 'Madam, ȝour men said thai wald ryd', Balnaves' 'O gallandis all', and Robert Sempill's poems on Margret Fleming (*Bannatyne MS* 123a) and on Jonet Reid (*Bannatyne MS* 125b).

One must also include here a group of what are superficially highly unrealistic poems, such as *The Droichis Part of the Play*, the *Ballad of Kynd Kittok*, *The Gyrecarling*, *King Berdok* and Lichtoun's *Dreme* – poems, that is of burlesque and whimsy, which mingle parody of the more far-fetched romances of love and derring-do, mockery of the more preposterous elements of popular folklore (giants, fairies and witches), and a more or less persistent lacing of deliberate nonsense by self-contradictory or merely preposterous statement. But the main point of these poems is to bring all this fantasy down to earth by associating it with the homeliest and most domestic of persons settings and objects. And they are stylistically of a kind with the other poems of this class.

Many of these poems have approximate antecedents in Middle English: such as the Northern alliterative *Tournament of Tottenham* for the mock-tournaments and the small-town fracas poems, Chaucer's *Sir Thopas* for the romance parodies, and Chaucer's, Lydgate's and Hoccleve's passages and poems of personal abuse for the poems of vituperation. But in their language and diction [24] (see sections 8, 9 and 10) these are the most distinctively Scottish among all the kinds of Older Scots poetry, as also are many individual poems in the parochialism or domesticity of their allusions.

In their choice of metres also, the poems of this class have little in common with the courtly verse or with the instructive verse which most nearly resembles it metrically and stylistically. There is a little comic verse, such as Lichtoun's *Dreme*, in heroic couplets, a metre shared with some poems, such as Douglas's *Æneid* translation, which we might wish to assign to the 'elaborate narrative' class; and Dunbar and Kennedy's *Flyting* is mainly in pentameter lines arranged in a stanza of Chaucerian type. Otherwise the low-life and comic poetry entirely eschews rhyme royal and other Chaucerian stanza-forms characteristic of courtly verse.

The types of verse-line found in this class of poetry range from regular alliterative long lines, e.g. in *Kynd Kittok* or *The Nyne Ordour of Knavis* (*Bannatyne MS* 157b), through variants of the alliterative long line (by various 'irregular' combinations of first half-line and second half-line types) in some of the speeches of the Pauper and John the Commonweal in Lyndsay's *Satyre* (but we might rather wish to assign these to the following class (viii) of poetic kinds) or in Sempill's 'Crissell Sandelandis' (*Bannatyne MS* 124a) or in *King Berdok* or in the 'Skeltonics' (which arguably originated with the Scottish poets) of *Colkelbie Sow* and *Lord Fergus' Gaist*, to iambic tetrameters (i.e. octosyllabics), perhaps the commonest line of all, and also trimeters and dimeters, as well as (as we have seen) pentameters.

These various options combine into a varied gamut of stanzas, some but not all of which are to be found earlier in Middle English (mostly non-Chaucerian) poetry: simple couplet and quatrain arrangements of tetrameter lines or the elaboration of the latter in the stanza of *The Wyf of Awchtirmwchty* and Sempill's 'Margret Fleming', and similar arrangements of alliterative lines; tetrameters and trimeters arranged in six- or eight-line tail-rhyme stanzas in

a number of poems of this class, or in the linked quatrains of the *Peblis to the Play* stanza; another favourite stanza combines dimeters and trimeters as in Balnaves' 'O gallandis all' and Sempill's 'Jonet Reid'; and there is the regular 'Scottish' alliterative stanza of *Sum Practysis of Medecyne* and its doggerelised variants (for motives of parody, most likely) of *The Gyrecarling* and *Kynd Kittok*.

So strikingly different are these patterns from the staid pentameter stanzas of Chaucerian verse that in Lyndsay's *Satyre* the speeches of the comic and low-life characters stand out at a glance from those of the grand and serious personages. On examination they also prove to differ in content and style in the ways described elsewhere in this essay.

Some of the typical stylistic features of this group of poems (see sections 8 and 9 below) are shared by many incidental low-life, and also horrific, passages within other poems, whether comic or not: these are commented on in section 11 below.

[25] *(viii) Verse of denunciation, protestation and petition*

Verse of denunciation, protestation and petition for reform or reward, including the poems entitled in original editions and/or by modern editors, 'complaints', 'supplications', 'remonstrances', 'petitions'. Such are the poems by Dunbar and Lyndsay so entitled, Douglas's Prologue to *Eneados* VIII, pieces or passages of denunciation of critics and sceptics, and many of Bannatyne's 'ballads' of 'remedy', 'contempt' and 'reproche' in the latter half of the fourth part of his book. Most of these are in tetrameter lines in couplets or simple stanzas, or in other non-Chaucerian metres. They are comparatively simple in syntax, and employ a vernacular diction: one less densely Northern and Scottish than that of the flytings and other personal invectives, but equally low in Latination and almost devoid of anglicised forms. This is a style which approximates to that of low-life verse.

(ix) Realistic nature verse

The small body of more or less *realistic nature verse*, namely Henryson's description of the seasons and the countryside in *The Preaching of the Swallow* and his brief winter setting of *The Testament of Cresseid*, and the winter scene of Douglas's Prologue to *Eneados* VII. These are virtually free of clichés like those which make up the stereotyped summer-morning descriptions – the *descriptiones loci amoeni* – noticed above as part of the courtly verse gamut. But by the time of Lyndsay (Prologue to the *Dreme*) and Rolland (*Court of Venus* I. 1 ff.) the winter passages too had become stereotyped in descriptive detail and diction (see sections 6 and 7). In the summer descriptions of Prologues XII and XIII of Douglas's *Eneados*, realistic description in country-life terminology is commingled with the conventional rhetoric, imagery and diction of the *locus amoenus* descriptions of courtly verse. Lyndsay similarly laces the winter description of the Prologue to his *Dreme* with *locus amoenus* formulae and diction, ostensibly by way of contrastive reminiscence, as in:

> Oursylit ar with cloudis odious
> The goldin skyis of the orient
>   (lines 106–7)

The syntax of these pieces resembles that of the simple narrative verse, and they employ a predominantly, though not exclusively, unpretentious vernacular vocabulary adapted to their particular subject-matter.

The narrative modes and the low-life verse include a considerable amount of more or less realistic dialogue in a level of style not far removed from that of the narrative itself.

I dare say this scheme will accommodate virtually all surviving Older Scots verse down to the reign of James VI, no doubt with some give and take for particular pieces or some hesitation between adjacent categories for others. The various modes, too, have their parodies, such as Dunbar's *Dregy* or his 'Lucina schynning in silence of the nicht'.

A few longer poems, such as Barbour's *Brus* or *Golagros and Gawane*, and many shorter ones, are almost throughout consistent examples of single modes. [26] Other longer poems, however, are modal medleys with identifiably different verse-kinds succeeding one by abrupt transitions of style and often of metre (since as we have noted, the various modes each have their preferred verse-forms): such as Holland's *Howlat*, all three of Henryson's major works, *Colkelbie Sow*, *Lancelot of the Laik*, Douglas's *Palice of Honour*, Dunbar's *The Tua Mariit Wemen*, Lyndsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, Rolland's *The Court of Venus* and his *Sevin Seages*.

Many poems or passages which are chiefly of a single mode and in a single manner are not wholly consistently so. The categories are not stylistically watertight; none has an exclusive monopoly of its salient stylistic features. Rhetorical colours and amene diction (sections 4–7 below) are to be met in kinds other than the courtly, albeit in less profusion. In particular, descriptions of heaven or paradise in discursive or narrative verse naturally attract the language, diction and rhetoric most characteristic of courtly verse: for example, Adam and Eve in Paradise in Lyndsay's *Monarche* 785 ff.; an address to a noble patron calls for the grand style of courtly panegyric as at the 'Epistil' to Lyndsay's *The Testament of the Papyngo*; and conversely, mentions of Hell or of horrible and fearsome matters are accompanied by diction and phonaesthetic effects like those of low-life verse and other anti-aureate verse (see further section 11 below). The most densely Latinate kinds of verse (section 6) are the solemn discursive and the courtly; but occasional Latinate expressions occur in virtually all other kinds of verse, the low-life narrative pieces only excepted: this is true even of Dunbar and Kennedy's and others' flytings (see further below), since the authors of these are to be taken as educated persons. Equally, although items of heroic (narrative) diction, such as *berne* or *wy* (man, person), or *brand* (sword), are most often found in simple and alliterative narrative verse, and, less regularly, other verse of the more vernacular kinds, there are nonetheless also stray occurrences of these items in courtly and didactic or mock-courtly works such as *The Quare of Jelusy* (line 256) or Dunbar's 'Lucina schynning' (line 43). Some similar strayings out of context of l-vocalised and other reduced forms most characteristic of low-life verse are mentioned in section 9.

2 Anglicised forms

Anglicised forms – forms imitated from Southern English usage where, but not in Scots, they are regular, the typical features of the poems which C. D. Jeffery calls 'Anglo-Scots' (1978, 1981)[5] – occur as options with corresponding native (Northern or Scottish) equivalents in poems of every kind but for the following exceptions: in low-life verse (all but Part I of *Colkelbie Sow*), one alliterative poem (*Rauf Coilȝear*) and a number of early couplet narrative poems (Barbour, the *Legends of the Saints*, Wyntoun, the Asloan *Sevyne Sagis*, the *Prestis of Peblis*), anglicised forms are all but absent. These restrictions in their distribution seem securely to identify anglicised forms as literary, non-Scottish, non-vernacular.

[27] In only one of the poems in which they occur at all frequently do most or all of the anglicised forms appear to be non- (or rather post-) authorial. It seems that the quite copious (and not wholly coincident) anglicisations of the two texts of the *Scottish Troy-book* are most

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[5] The term 'Anglo-Scots' is usually reserved for texts in a thoroughly mixed language such as James I's *Kingis Quair*, but AJA uses it more broadly here, for anglicised texts generally.

or all of them post-authorial (McIntosh, 1979, takes a somewhat different view). At least, there is only one anglicised rhyme in the poem which when restored to a Scottish form is impossible to a poem like Barbour's *Brus* in ordinary Early Scots – for example, when one replaces the text's *mo* (make) : *two*, at *Troy-book* II. 421–2, by normal Early Scots *ma* : *twa* – the one exception is *slo* (slay) : *þo* (then) at II. 2597–8, which looks like a genuine piece of authorial anglicisation. The motive for these anglicisations may have been so that the surviving Scots texts, used to plug gaps in versions of Lydgate's *Troy-book*, should not look too incongruously Northern there. They include 'hyper-anglicisms' (see p. 30 below) like *o* (for the indefinite article *a*), *mok* (for *make*), *spok* (for *spake* 'spoke'), *tone* (for *tane* 'taken') and, as we have seen, *mo* (for *ma* 'make'), the Southern Middle English form *hem(e)* (for 'them', Scots *thaim*) otherwise unrecorded in Older Scots, and many other anglicised forms (McIntosh, 1979: especially 13 and 17 n. 2).

In other poems also it is certain that copyists have replaced non-anglicised forms of their original with anglicised ones in their copy – for idiosyncratic or stylistic reasons – and conversely. But it is also true that in every poem which is at all Anglo-Scots, some and often most of the anglicised forms are likely to be authorial. This is evident from the fairly frequent rhymes which will chime only if one of the rhyme-words has the anglicised form, such as *more* or *sore* (Scots *mare* and *sare*) rhyming with, say, *before* or *thairfore*, very frequent in the *Wallace*; or only if one rhyme-word has the distinctively Northern or Scottish form and the other the anglicised form – rhymes between (Scots) *glore* and (anglicised) *sore* (e.g. in Dunbar's *Ballat of our Lady*) or (Scots) *donk* and (anglicised) *ronk*, *bonk*, *thonk* (Dunbar's *The Goldyn Targe* 93 f.), are of this sort. Sometimes, too, verse-lines demand anglicised inflected verb-forms in *-in* (see below) to complete their syllable counts. All of these imply authorial intention.

The different types of anglicised forms are distributed through the Anglo-Scots canon along an implicational scale. The least anglicised poems of all – the early narratives in octosyllabic couplets, namely Barbour, the *Legends of the Saints*, Wyntoun, the underlying original of the *Scottish Troy-book*, and the Arbuthnot *Buik of Alexander*, confine their anglicisations to forms such as *one*, *allone* rhyming with personal names such as *Jhon*, *Sampsone*, *Babilone*, and *go* with *Nero*, *Cupido*; indeed, Barbour offers in all one single example of this, *Jhone* : *ilkone* (XI. 382, in MS C; MS E has *Jhane* : *ilkane*). (The form *more*, as against the apparently more regular Scots *mare*, confirmed in rhyme in the same works, has a different explanation as a genuine Scots form, analogous to *lord*: see DOST s.v.)

Almost all the rest of Older Scots verse, other than the exceptions mentioned [28] at the beginning of this section, employ a much more extensive range of these '*o* for *a* forms' – those words spelled with <o> (or sometimes <oi> etc.) after Southern English forms in /o/, where the corresponding native Scots word is spelled <a> (or <ai> etc.) and (in Middle and Modern Scots) pronounced with the /e/ phoneme,[6] as:

quho for *quha* (who),
fro for *fra* (from),
go and *gone* for *ga* and *gane*,
one for *ane* (one) (also, as a hyper-anglicism (see below), 'a'),
allone for *allane*,
anone for *onane*,
none for *nane*,
more for *mare*,
moste for *maste*, *maist*,
bold for *bald*, *bauld*,

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[6] Vowel 4.

cold for *cald*, *cauld*, etc.

As we noted above, such forms as these occur frequently in rhyme with, on the one hand, exclusively Northern or Scottish words such as *glore* (glory), *schore* (menace) as well as, on the other, words common to Southern English and Scots ('common British' forms) such as *ho* (cessation) *expone*, *dispone*, *before*, *thairfore*, *ost* (army), *bost*, *frost*, *gold*, *fold* and *mold* (both 'earth', in the tags *on fold* or *on mold*), anglicisms of other types such as *ago*, *tho* (then), *forlore* (forlorn, lost), proper names such as *Jhone* or *Cupido*, and Latin tags such as *in verbo regio*.

Both throughout the Anglo-Scots canon and even, for two common words, *no* and *so*, in those pieces which otherwise eschew anglicised forms, *o* for *a* forms are common *within* the verse-line; in this case we can of course only surmise whether the choice of the <o> rather than the <a> spelling is the copyist's or his original's. Within the Anglo-Scots canon itself, they are also everywhere a regular option in rhyme, varying with native Scottish forms as the rhyme requirements dictate: in Cresseid's 'Complaint' in Henryson's *Cresseid* (lines 407 ff.), we have, on the one hand, (native) *evermair* and *sair* rhyming with 'common British' *cair* (sorrow), *bair* (bare) and *wer* (past tense of 'to be'), the three last offering no <o> options; on the other hand, we encounter (anglicised) *so* and *stro* (Scots *stra* 'straw') rhyming with *tho* and *ago*, and also, elsewhere in the poem, *moir* rhyming with *befoir* and *thairfoir*.

A large part of the Anglo-Scots canon – poems of the plain narrative mode such as the *Wallace* and the Asloan MS *Sevyne Sagis*, alliterative narrative such as the *Howlat* and *Golagros and Gawane*, elaborate narrative such as most of Henryson, almost all of the didactic and lyric verse such as Dunbar's 'Quhome to sall I complene my wo' (No. 63 in Kinsley's edition) – confine their anglicisation to this *o* for *a* feature, and in the stylistically more vernacular of these (those first mentioned, that is) apparently solely as a rhyming convenience.

Dunbar's and Lyndsay's courtly poems or passages (and Cresseid's 'Complaint' in Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*), as well as the still more anglicised pieces mentioned below, add to this several other anglicisation features. One of these serves also as a valuable rhyme-extending facility namely, those forms which add to a verb-stem ending in a vowel the inflection *-n*, in imitation of the Midland and Southern Middle English *-en* ending of the infinitive and the plural present indicative: forms such as *bene* or *beyn*, *seyn*, [29] *sayn* for *be*, *se* and *say*, and also, more rarely, *fleyn* for *fley* (fly), *leyn* for *le* (lie), and *gane* for *ga* (go). Examples of this abound in the poems specified, for example in Dunbar's *The Goldyn Targe*, where *bene* (be, are) and *sene* (see) rhyme with *amene*, *grene*, *quene*, *schene* etc. Rather more rarely, and this time not as a rule in rhyme, the same poets employ in the same works present indicative verbs inflected in *-ith* (after Southern Middle English present tense verbs with *-eth* in the third person singular, and, in some dialects, the plural). In both these instances the Scots poets not infrequently blunder in employing these inflections in persons and numbers which contravene the rules of Southern Middle English grammar (e.g. in the first person singular): the Middle Scots poets were less accurate in their imitations of Southern usage than a modern philologist might be.

These authors also make use in the same poems of a range of periphrastic constructions with the auxiliary *do*, often or always apparently as a mere metrical convenience (to gain a syllable – stressed or unstressed – and/or to shift the main verb stem into the rhyme position). Some of these constructions are peculiar to Scots, but it is at least a tenable theory that the practice of using *do* periphrastically in these ways has an 'anglicised' origin. There are seven examples in the six stanzas beginning at line 22 of Dunbar's *The Thrissill and the Rois*, such as:

> The lork hes done the mirry day proclame (line 24)

> Doing all sable fro the hevynnis chace (line 56)

and

> The birdis did with oppin vocis cry (line 59).

In the same poems we encounter also the repertory of Chaucerian words, borrowed from the English poems of Chaucer, Lydgate and others, and met with in Scots chiefly or only in elaborate narrative and courtly poetry: *frome* (Scots *fra*, anglicised *fro*), *lyte* (Scots *litill*), *morrow* (Scots *morn* or *morning*), *morrowing* (ditto), *tho* (Scots *than*), and *twane* (Scots *twa*). When in *The Thrissill and the Rois* we meet:

> ... Haill Rois both red and quhyt
> Most plesand flour of michty collouris twane
> <div align="center">(lines 171–2)</div>

and

> And thus I wret as ye haif hard to-forrow
> Off lusty May upone the nynte morrow
> <div align="center">(lines 188-9)</div>

twane and *morrow* (as well as the *o* for *a* forms *both* and *most*) mark these as Chaucerian lines. Commonly associated with these items are the native Scots words *garth* and *to-forrow* and other items of 'consecrated diction' and [30] 'embalmed phrases' discussed in section 7 below. Bannatyne's text of Dunbar's *The Thrissill and the Rois* includes one apparent hyper-anglicism (a form which does not exist in Southern English but might have been supposed to do so on the analogy of regular Southern English/Scots correspondences) in *lork* (lark) (line 24). Lyndsay's printer John Scot (or Lyndsay himself) has another in *one* for the indefinite article *ane*, in *The Testament of the Papyngo* and the *Monarche* (*one* for the *numeral ane* is, conversely, a regular '*o* for *a*' anglicism). But *o* for the other form of the indefinite article *a* is, however, apparently confined to the still more thoroughly anglicised *Troy-book* (see above), *Colkelbie Sow*, *Lancelot* and *The Quare of Jelusy*.

An extensive range of anglicised forms is displayed in *Colkelbie Sow*, including, in addition to forms already mentioned, *mich* (much, Scots *mekil* etc.), *quich(e)* or *quhich* (Scots *quhilk*), and a number of examples of the feminine pronoun *sche* (the only form in rhyme; *scho* occurs as a non-rhyming variant). A somewhat similar range of anglicised forms is that of a poem very different in all other respects, *The Kingis Quair*.

The most thoroughly anglicised of all Anglo-Scots poems are two poems which alternate the elaborate narrative, courtly and discursive modes, *The Quare of Jelusy* and *Lancelot of the Laik*. To the anglicised forms found in all other Anglo-Scots poetry, these poems add still others, including:

sich or *such* (Scots *swilk* or *sic*),

aȝhane (Scots *again*),

schall (Scots *sall*),

shude (Scots *suld*),

stant (*standis*),

the hyper-anglicisms *to* and *tone* (*take* or *ta*, *taken* or *tane*), *mo* (*make* or *ma*), *lowe* (*law*: *Quare Jel.* 63), *ȝf* for *gif* (give),

as well as both *o* and *one* indefinite article (on which see above);

frequent, though optional, use of the infinitive and present tense inflection *-in* or *-ing* (also *-en*), which thus supplies, as needed, an additional unstressed syllable (imitated like the *-n* ending on vowel-final stems, from the Middle English inflection *-en* in Chaucer and other Middle English writers), e.g. "No lady ... That schall thar for hyme hating or dispis" (*Lanc.* 133), or "Set oft tyme thai contenyng gret effece" (ibid. 140), or, "To gladin hir and plesyn ... with their chere" (*Quare Jel.* 129);

and past participles without inflection and/or with the prefix *i-*, *y-*, as *y-grave* (*Lanc.* 1798), *iclosit* (ibid. 53), *stond* (ibid. 2029), *y-fret* (*Quare Jel.* 548), *ymurderit* and *yslawe* (ibid. 174), (likewise imitated from Southern Middle English usage).[7] The only uninflected past participle at all widespread in Scots sources (not however in the most vernacular texts) is *forlore* (Scots *forlorin*, 'forlorn, lost'). Otherwise forms of this sort are confined to this group of ultra-anglicised poems and to Gavin Douglas.

For most of his canon, with the Prologue to *Eneados* VIII as a notable exception, Gavin Douglas anglicises much as do Henryson and Dunbar rather than as do the authors of *The Quare of Jelusy* and *Lancelot*. But he does also make free and constant recourse to the verb-forms just described, as, for example, *behaldyn* in "And frely may behaldyn and espy Tha lakis quhilkis thame langis to vissy" (*Eneados* VI v 73–4); and past participles such as *schaw* [31] (Scots *schawin*), *ytak* (Scots *taken* or *tane*), *ybe* (Scots *bene*), occur *passim* (see further Bawcutt, 1976: 144–5). And he does have instances of the feminine personal pronoun form *sche* (Scots more regularly *scho*) in rhyme, e.g. at *Eneados* XI xi 136.

Without doubt all of these anglicised forms result from an original impetus by Scots poets in the relevant modes to be at one with, imitate and adapt from, in spelling and morphology as in other respects, the English masters whom they so admired and extolled and imitated in other ways (see above), as well as to benefit from the additional rhyming and metrical resources these practices provided. In these imitations they were adapting not so much to the appearance of England-derived manuscripts and prints as to the partially Scotticised Scots copies of the English classics with which they were doubtless more familiar (such as those in Selden B 24, the Asloan MS and the Chepman and Myllar prints). Nor, as we have seen, were they concerned that their imitations should be philologically perfect.

3 Syntax

No variety of Older Scots verse compares for average syntactic complexity with the most syntactically elaborate kinds of prose – the sustained orations in Bellenden's and the Mar Lodge translations of Boece and similar works. But, though of course no kind of poetry has a monopoly of either syntactically complex or syntactically simple sentences, it is a reasonable generalisation that a much higher frequency of complex structures displaying much hypotaxis (i.e. in which the noun-phrase and verb-phrase elements of sentences are modified by words, phrases and clauses) is a normal concomitant of the less vernacular styles, and so is often found in courtly verse (witness, for example, the two opening stanzas of Dunbar's *The Thrissill and the Rois*, which make up what may be analysed as a single sentence through a number of dependent constructions) and didactic or discursive verse (such as *The Contemplacioun of Synnaris*). Equally, it is these less vernacular kinds of prose and verse which more often overtly state the connections between principal statements by dependent phrases or clauses (as "Quhen this was said, depairtit scho, this quene", Dunbar, *The Thrissill and the Rois* 43) rather than simply imply these by the ordering of statements.

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[7] I have corrected the wording of the original ("and uninflected past participles, with or without the prefix *i-*, *y-*"), which did not correspond with the examples given, some of which are inflected weak verbs.

The converse of this could be described as a non-hypotactic syntax favouring simple sentences in parataxis, or co-ordinated by the emptiest connectives, displaying little dependency and modification except what is grammatically obligatory, and with frequent asyndeton (omission of conjunctions of coordination and subordination and of relative pronouns, and some other types of ellipsis) and occasional parenthesis. While obviously there is no kind of verse writing which remains consistently at this extreme of baldness, it is towards this pole that the more vernacular kinds of poetry incline – simple narrative and 'oral narrative' verse. (For a much fuller treatment of grammatical tendencies of these [32] sorts in Older Scots writings, see Aitken, 1978, 2015; and for an account of stylistic variation in the choice of various alternative forms of the relative construction, see Romaine, 1982: 166–7.) A cumulation of vocative noun-phrases simply in apposition or minimally linked is a natural feature of passages of personal abuse, such as occupy large chunks of Dunbar and Kennedy's *Flyting*.

Asyndeton, including prosiopesis (ellipsis from the sentence of initial words of low information content) and parataxis, is common also in the alliterative narrative verse such as Holland's *Howlat* (for example at lines 497 ff.). But the ultimate extreme of a paratactic, asyndetic syntax, with frequent prosiopesis, of quite minimal complexity of sentence-structure, and eschewing overt sentence-linkers, is sustained with high consistency in the narrative of Hary's *Wallace*.

Whereas courtly verse favours as the periphrastic narrative tense of verbs that formed with the auxiliary *did* (cf. above), the construction with the auxiliaries *gan*, *can*, *couth*, *coud* (normally, except in the highly Chaucerian or Anglo-Scots *Lancelot*, without *to*) is highly characteristic of the several narrative modes: "They fand the toun and in blythlie couth gang" (Henryson *Fables* 259), "scho tuke her leif and furth can ga" (ibid. 353).

4 Colours of rhetoric

Although most other kinds of Older Scots verse, including simple and alliterative narrative, contain incidental passages of rhetorical display (such as Barbour's celebrated "Ah! fredome" passage in his Book I), sustained and concentrated use of the stylistic artifices then apparently known as 'colours of rhetoric' (DOST s.v. *Colour* 4) is strikingly a feature of courtly verse, particularly its set-piece stylistic climaxes. 'Colours of rhetoric' ("rethorik colouris fine", Douglas, *Palice of Honour* 819) was, it seems, the designation of the figures of speech listed, named and prescribed in the classical and medieval treatises on poetic or rhetoric (see e.g. Atkins, 1943: 200–4; Murphy, 1974: 365–74) as supplying elegant amplification. These include elaborate periphrastic metaphors, pathetic fallacies, apostrophes, exclamations and rhetorical questions, the device of paralipsis (more usually called then *occupatio* or *occultatio*), whereby something is narrated or described under the guise of not doing so (notable examples, among many others, are the long series of these at *Lancelot* 209–98); various repetitive devices, namely, *expolitio* or elaboration, *interpretatio* or repetition of a statement in different words, *repetitio* (i.e. anaphora) or repetition of the same word at the beginning of separate phrases, clauses and sentences, and various other kinds of verbal repetition; and numerous other figures of speech including antithesis and hyperbaton, and, see below, *pronominatio* or antonomasia. Passages copious in these figures are commonly arranged in elaborate syntactical patterns, involving the balancing or repeating of syntactical structures in half-lines, juxtaposed lines, stanzas and successive stanzas – a further addition to the tropes and figures specified in the treatises.

[33] Among the most concentrated displays of these artifices in Older Scots verse, or indeed anywhere, are those in Dunbar's *The Goldyn Targe*, earlier in the Middle Scots period, and Patrick Hume's *Promine*, later; but their profuse occurrence is simply a regular feature of the

courtly kind (for their copious use by Douglas see Bawcutt, 1967: xlvi-xlviii, and 1976: 57 and 63–4). All of this appears solemnly done, with, unlike Chaucer on occasion, no hint of tongue in cheek.

Concentrated and sustained use of rhetorical colours are conversely not a feature of low-life verse, or, except in isolated passages, of the other kinds of verse in mainly vernacular diction. The simple devices favoured in oral folk-tale and also in low-life verse, some of which, I have suggested, is self-consciously in a folk-tale style (Aitken, 1978: 103 ff.; 2015), only partly overlap with the gamut of high-style colours. Repetition, simultaneously verbal and of content, is not uncommon in some poems, though not as a rule sustained beyond a single re-statement. But the other devices characteristic of the 'rhetoric' of low-life verse – litotes, certain types of word-order inversion, frequent recourse to the narrative present tense – seem not to be common in courtly verse or other solemn kinds of verse.

5 Unvernacular word-choice of dignified verse

In its diction as in other respects, courtly verse is literary and fairly slavishly derivative from earlier exemplars in the same or similar kinds in Scots and more especially, in Southern English. In direct opposition to low-life verse and to a lesser degree, the other kinds freely resorting to vernacular diction, it is by intention unvernacular, deriving from literary rather than spoken tradition, directed towards elegant and ornamental expression free from the banal associations of daily speech. So this kind of verse, in particular, and also other sorts of non-narrative serious verse, the instructive and the lyric, are notable as displaying very low incidences of Northern or peculiarly Scottish words, which evidently were avoided as inelegant or barbarous. The 189 lines of Dunbar's *The Thrissill and the Rois*, which is not untypical of its kind, contain, by my reckoning, only seven more or less exclusively Scottish or Northern words, if one includes the onomatopoeic hapax legomenon *swirk* v., the legal *compeir* v. and the poetic (especially courtly poetic) *garth* n. and *to-forrow* adv., as well as *cluvis* (paws), *dully*, and *skaith*. Even those few northernisms which do occur in this sort of poem are clustered within the brief anti-aureate passages which intentionally point up the typical courtly style by contrast (see further section 11).[8]

6 Courtly diction: Latinate

The unvernacular character of courtly and other non-narrative serious verse results not only from the avoidance of lexical northernisms, but also from the frequent employment of many comparatively recent word-borrowings of Latin and French origin, here designated Latinisms and Gallicisms, the two together [34] being called Latinate diction. These are presumably an important if not the sole constituent of the body of "heich, pithie and learnit wordis" which James VI recommended for "ane heich and learnit purpose" in his *Ane Schort Treatise conteining some Revlis and cautelis to be obseruit and eschewit in Scottish Poesie* (hereafter '*Reulis and Cautelis*') (Craigie, ed., 1955: I. 75). Both as types and as tokens, loanwords of this sort are common in English and Scots by the fifteenth century: Ellenberger counts 830 Latinisms as types contributing 2352 tokens out of a total of (my own conjecture) around 40,000 tokens *in toto* in the Dunbar canon, and the figures for Henryson are similar (Ellenberger, 1977: 22) and the Gallicisms mentioned below would doubtless supply at least as many types and tokens again. These words had begun to appear in English in some numbers quite early in the thirteenth century. But the great majority were more recent adoptions and most of those most favoured by our poets date from Chaucer's time onwards,

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[8] Cf. Samuels' concept of a 'colourless standard' (1963, 1989).

including not a few (over 85 for Henryson and Dunbar according to Ellenberger, 1977: 150) which first appear in the Scottish poets' work itself.[9]

Both referentially and morphologically these words were restricted in range. Almost all of them refer to the less basic and general notions in their particular semantic fields: according to Ellenberger (1977: 49) Dunbar's kinship and family terms from this source consist of four items:

genetrice, *matern*, *matremony*, *successioun*.

Whereas French supplied a few conjunctions and prepositions:

except, *maugré*, *suppose* and others,

the Latinisms are exclusively words of semantic weight – nouns (predominantly), adjectives (forming adverbs by native word-formation) and verbs. Though they include a few mono- and disyllabic non-derived forms consisting of the Latin stems only, such as:

dulce, *glore*, *laud*, *sanct*, *trone*, *vult*, *favour*, *defend*, *propone*, *promit*

and a few unchanged Latinisms such as:

dirige, *limbus*, *requiem*,

the overwhelming majority are polysyllabic derived forms, displaying the (limited range of) Latin derivational prefixes and suffixes:

com-, *con-*, *pre-*, *pro-*, etc., and *-abill*, *-all*, *-ance*, *-at*, *-ence*, *-ent*, *-ene*, *-ine*, *-ive*, *-ioun*, *-atioun*, *-ude*, *-our*, *-ment*, etc.

For the most part (an exception is *-at*, F *-é*, as in *ornat*, MF *orné*), these conform to the French rather than the Latin morphological shape (whether or not the corresponding word is actually recorded in Middle French; generally it is): with, e.g., such suffixes as:

-ance (F *-ance*, L *-antia*), *-ité* (F *-ité*, L *-itas*, *-itātem*), *-ioun* (F *-ioun*, L *-io*, *-iōnem*), etc.

It is usually impossible to tell, and scarcely seems to matter, whether it was the existence of a French or a Latin etymon or just the availability of the pattern which instigated the borrowing of any particular item. Perhaps, as Ellenberger argues (1974), more often than not it was Latin.

It seems convenient, in any case, to dub such items 'Latinisms' and to associate with them, as sharing much the same stylistic distributions and connotations, those other items of more or less similar morphological shape, with or without cognates in Latin itself, whose origins are more indubitably Old [35] or Middle French. These Gallicisms include a number of nouns with the suffix *-age* (F *-age*, L *-aticum*, a kind of converse case to that of *-at* above), such as:

curage, *langage*, *umbrage*, *vassalage*, *visage*.

Some words of this sort exist alongside cognates directly (and usually more recently) derived from Latin, like:

delit and *delitabill* beside *delectabill*,
pennance beside *penitence*,
riall beside *regall*;

and others such as *jugement*, *penetrive*, *plesance*.

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[9] For further information on borrowing from Latin and French, quantitative comparisons of loans from the two sources, and a chronological comparison of borrowing into English and into Scots, see Macafee and Anderson (1997); summarised in Macafee and †Aitken (2002: ch. 4).

Doubtless most of both these kinds of words – Latinisms and Gallicisms both – remained markedly literary in their provenance and connotations. They occur only sparsely in the more colloquial kinds of writing (such as low-life verse), but they are profuse in the instructive verse and only less so in most of the courtly verse (with Rolland's *Court of Venus* as perhaps the most Latinate work of all), as well as in all the more literary registers of prose (see Ellenberger, 1977: 70, for some frequencies in different kinds of writing). Though this can scarcely have been true of all of them, it is likely that many of these words remained unfamiliar to uneducated persons – the "lewit" or "landwart" or "uplandis" persons with whom the poets pretended with obvious insincerity to class themselves in the modesty passages. Ability to use them freely and comprehend them marked one as a member of the élitist in-group of cultivated persons. In addition, many such words were marked apart from the unlearned vernacular by their morphological forms – the Latin or French derivational prefixes and suffixes and their polysyllabicity. These properties, as well as what possibilities they offered of a range of reference beyond that of their vernacular equivalents, helped no doubt to commend them to authors of dignified or pretentious verse, no less than the rhyming convenience which was presented by their limited range of suffixes. In such ways they maintained the dignity of overtone which they had, no doubt, originally derived from their literary and learned beginnings.

So it is unsurprising to find the rhetorical and pretentious courtly verse, especially in its most rhetorical and pretentious passages, employing these words on principle whenever they are available. So in the opening passage of Dunbar's *The Goldyn Targe*:

> *matutyne* has preference over *morning*,
> *mansuetude* over *mekenes*,
> *revest* over *clethit*,
> *apparalit* over *graithit*, etc.

Similarly, Dunbar's *The Thrissill and the Rois*, not the most Latinate of its class, averages a Latinate word every second line or so.

In addition to the general body of Latinate words which are common to the courtly poems and other Latinate kinds of writing (such as didactic verse and prose), the authors of the courtly poems also possessed a special and restricted stock of highly recurrent Latinate expressions, predominantly epithets, belonging to a limited range of semantic fields, on which they drew copiously and repetitively for their conventional set pieces, the *locus amoenus* descriptions, panegyrics, and pseudo-critical passages in praise of the masters of poesy, all three of these sharing this body of diction largely in common. Common Latinisms in this diction are:

> *angelicall, aurorall, celestiall, celicall,* [36] *etheriall, imperiall, nocturnall, palestrall, regall, terrestriall, triumphall, virginall; incomparable; aureat, deificat, laureat, mellifluat, ornat, purpurat; clarifeit, depurit, poleit, sugurit; eloquent, eloquence, indeficient, orient, redolent, redolence, resplendent, radiant, radiance, reverend, reverence; precellent or precelling, preclare; illustir; glorious, radious; cristalline, divine, matutine; regine, rosine; nutritive, restorative; amene, dulce, facound; rethor, rethorik; celsitude, mansuetude, pulchritude; dyademe, paradice; habitakle, signakle; lucern, matern, supern; odour, vapour; clarify, decore, illumine, compile.*

Accompanying these are such Gallicisms (mostly di- or polysyllabic), out of courtly Medieval French literature, including that of the *Grands Rhétoriqueurs* (on which see e.g. Bawcutt, 1967: xxxv–xxxvi), but mostly mediated by the Middle English courtly poets, and equally favoured for Middle Scots courtly set pieces, as:

bening, *gentil*, *depaynt*, *plesant*, *plesance*, *polist*, *tendir*, *nobill*, *riall*; *countenance*, *portrature* ; *chevallere*, *genetrice imperatrice*, *victrice*, *salvatrice*; *chevalrie*, *gentillesse*, *gentrise*, *prowes*, *richesse*; *grace*, *mercy*, *glore*, *glorie*; *liquour*, *ordour*; *fluris*, *flurist*, *annamalit*, *annamaling*, *attemperit*, *reconfort*, *revest*, *endyte*.

These words possessed, to an enhanced degree, the properties of Latinate vocabulary generally. Like the latter, their value included the addition they made to the stock of rhyme-words, specially valuable in the complex inter-rhyming stanzas of this kind of poetry. Notable in this are rhymes between the Latinate suffix –*all* and vernacular words, such as *all*, *small*, *wall* with the unvocalised form of this sequence, as *all* : *imperiall* : *riall* : *celicall* : *terrestriall* (Dunbar *Goldyn Targe* 253 ff.); *small* : *principall* (*The Thrissill and the Rois* 176–8); etc. This contrasts with rhymes dependent on l-vocalised forms of the same sequence, characteristic of the low-life poetry (see section 9 below).

Even more than the general body of Latinate vocabulary, the Scots poets derive this more restricted and stereotyped body of diction from their chosen poetic mentors; most of all, it appears, from Chaucer and Lydgate. For the opening and closing stanzas of Dunbar's *The Goldyn Targe*, for example, the dictionaries assign first occurrences in English of the following Latinisms and Gallicisms:

to Chaucer *desolat*, *imperiall*, *laureat*, *triumph*;

to Lydgate *matutine*, *celicall*, *aureat*, *redolent* (and *redolence*);

to Chaucer and Lydgate the figurative use of *sugurit*;

to Hoccleve *ornat*;

to thirteenth-century Middle English *revest*;

to fourteenth-century Middle English *annamalit*, *cristallyne*, *illumine*, *rethor*, *rethorik*, *riall* (but with Chaucer and Lydgate among their earliest users, Lydgate first with the figurative use of *cristallyne*);

to fifteenth-century Middle English *illuminat* p.p., *terrestriall*;

to Henryson *mellifluat*;

to Dunbar the earnest figurative use of *annamalit*.

Though many of the items we have discussed in this section were metaphors whose original reference was concrete, perhaps only the most classically minded authors and readers may have remained fully aware of this; perhaps they were for most people nearly as opaque then as they are today. This and the refined [37] associations they had from their normal literary and precious contexts no doubt meant that they were less immediate and sensuous in their connotations than their mono- and disyllabic everyday vernacular equivalents, such as:

gilt or *giltin* beside *aureat*,
hony-swete (roughly) beside *mellifluat*,
brichtin or *lichtin* beside *illumine*,
swete beside *dulce*,
swete-smelland beside *redolent*, etc.

Thus the imposingly erudite character of this vocabulary and its absence of unrefined homely associations made of its free employment a stylistic elegance, appropriate for a genteel kind of poetry, behind which stood an élitist critical theory of what constituted the best literary language. Equally, referring to the sun as Phoebus or Titan or Apollo, the moon as Cynthia or Lucina, the dawn as Aurora, the winds as Eolus, the flowers as Flora, and so

on, by the variant of the 'colour' or *pronominatio* or antonomasia favoured in this kind of verse, was another means of exoticising the commonplace. Conversely, the typical diction of low-life poetry was employed for exactly the reverse effects (see section 8).

It is the diction just described that modern scholars appear chiefly to recognise as the 'aureate terms' first referred to by the old makars themselves (as "termes aureat", also "poleit termis", "facound wordis", etc.) (see Ellenberger, 1977: 82–4). Whether the makars themselves would have wished to restrict the reference of these expressions to this particular element of the grand style, or to take in also, say, rhetorical colours (section 4) and native courtly diction (section 7) seems moot (see further Zettersten, 1979). Nor is it apparent whether they would have wished to embrace under the same label the corresponding, albeit much less extensive, body of diction consecrated to the conventional winter description, which served as an alternative of different mood to the *locus amoenus* setting including (from Bellenden's *Proheme of the Cosmographe*, Lyndsay's Prologue to the *Dreme* and Rolland's *Court of Venus*):

> *boreall*, *bustious*, *penetrative* (and *penetrive*), *perturb*, *poleartik*, *pungitive*, *sabill*, *tempest*.

(See further Bawcutt, 1976: 64–5.)

7 Courtly diction: native

Latinate diction is not the only kind of special diction used in the courtly poetry. Especially, but not solely, in the summer morning *descriptiones loci amoeni*, the poets draw on a traditional, highly poetic and uncolloquial diction which is nevertheless very predominantly of native origin. It is partly for this reason that the courtly poems overall score a little lower for frequency of Latinisms in Ellenberger's estimates (Ellenberger, 1977: 77 and 66–9) than do some straightforward moralising poems such as 'Dunbar at Oxinfurd'.

This non-Latinate courtly diction includes a few words more or less exclusive to the favoured *topoi* (in verse) or to serious poetry more generally, and so they may be reckoned as 'poetic diction', namely:

> *besene* ('arrayed'), *garth*, *gent*, *glete*, *gleter*, *hals* v. ('to greet'), *hew* ('hue'), *lake* ('water'), *leme* ('gleam') *meid* ('meadow'), *schene* ('beautiful, fair, bright'), *strand*, *vale*, *weid* ('clothing').

Alongside these words, the same passages constantly draw on a [38] much lengthier list of non-Latinate words of less restricted distribution, which had nevertheless by long tradition out of earlier English poetry – pre-Chaucerian and Chaucerian – become a regular part of the verdant, summery countryside scenes in verse, words such as:

> *balme*, *balmy*, *balmyt*, *bank*, *beme*, *beuch*, *blome*, *blomyt*, *blossom*, *bruke*, *clere*, *fair*, *fleit*, *fresch*, *glaid*, *herb*, *hevinly*, *lusty*, *mirthfull*, *soft*, *stannir*, *swete*;

several words in this set refer specifically to the favourite notions of brightness or shining:

> *beme*, *gleme*, *glance*, *schine*, *sterne* ('star')

in addition to the more exclusively poetic words with similar reference:

> *glete*, *leme*, mentioned above;

the effect of variegated light and brightness is heightened with a profusion of names (non-Latinate and Latinate) of flowers, jewels and precious stones, of colour or of colours, singly or in decorative lists, such as:

> *flour*, *flour delyce*, *garland*, *lilly*, *rose*; *beriall*, *charbunkill*, *cristall*, *emerant*, *jem*, *gilt*, *gold*, *goldin*, *perle*, *ruby*, *silver*, *topace*; *blew*, *colour*, *goulis*, *grene*, *red*, *purpur*, *quhite*; etc.

Many of these words conform to the phonaesthetic requirements of these passages (see section 11) and supply suitable rhymes for them. The words which comprise this diction, especially those consecrated to the *descriptio loci amoeni*, were available both as a set of syntactically free items and also as constituents of the traditional embalmed phrases or conventional, much repeated, formulae, of which the favoured descriptive passages were a tissue:

> *the fair firthis*, *grene meidis*, *cristal knoppis*, *perly droppis*, *lemand beriall droppis*, *silvir schouris*, *mery foulis*, *mirthfull morowis*, *Phebus bemis schene*, *goldin skyis of the orient*, *blossom upon spray*, *dewis donk*, *stanniris clere as sterne*, leaves etc. floating (*fleit* v.) *in balm*, and the rest

(for an idea of the highly traditional character of this phraseology, see, for example, the notes to Dunbar's *The Goldyn Targe* in Small *et al.* eds., 1893).

The panegyric and the pseudo-critical passages share some of this diction. A favourite formula of these passages has as its grammatical head a term for a shining object such as lamp, lantern or star, or the name of a flower (in general, as *flour*, in particular, as *rose*, *lilly*, etc.) or the name of a jewel, such as *beriall*, *charbunkill*, etc., *of* (some class of admired things or beings or some admired quality such as *chevalry* or *gentilnes*) in the general sense 'paragon' (of the class or quality). The same imagery too pervades the pseudo-critical discussions of (say) the rose-garden of rhetoric of which the roses etc. have been plucked in advance by the masters of poetry (e.g. Lyndsay, *The Testament of the Papyngo* 57–60; etc.)

The winter scenes too (see above) have their more limited body of non-Latinate diction of favoured words and formulae:

> *blast*, *donk*, *daill*, *sleit*, *snaw*, and *penetrative air*, *frostis penetrive*, *pungitive wedder*, the *boustious blasts* of *austeir Eolus*, *mystie vapouris*, *stalwart stormis*, *Florais dule wede*, *Priapus' gardingis bair* and *stormy weid*.

[39] 8 Vernacular diction and vulgarisms of low-life verse

The most obvious thing about the diction of the low-life verse is that it is, quite unlike that of the courtly verse we have mainly been examining in Sections 5, 6 and 7, much the most densely Scottish of any kind of writing in Older Scots. In part, this follows from what these poems are about. Many of them relate how certain grotesque or rustic or working-class characters have preposterously far-fetched or merely farcical adventures or behave in a boorish or clumsy or uninhibited way, and do this in a homely parochial setting amid everyday objects, livestock and fauna. The poems of vituperation specify directly, in a series of insulting invocations, declamations or descriptive narratives, various repulsive or ridiculous personal traits of the person addressed or described. Since these homely or undignified topics were presumably infrequent in most of the English and other literatures known to the Scottish poets, the only known terminology for them was native, local and colloquial.

More or less by definition this was the kind of vocabulary which contained the highest proportion of northernisms, though of course not all of it was exclusively Northern. So the only readily available terms for items like:

> *gusis cro* or *hut* or *bowkaill stok* (lines 3 and 6 respectively of *King Berdok*);

or, in the low-life interlude in the *Howlat*, the names of the *tuchet* (lapwing) or the *gowk* (cuckoo) (*Howlat* line 821);

or that familiar character in the Medieval Scottish scene, the vagabond *baird* (*Howlat* 822);

or *thevisnek* (the lapwing's cry, *Howlat* line 823);

were these purely Scottish terms. At the same time it is doubtless also true that the statement itself in these passages was often deliberately contrived so as to get in as many as possible of these Northern terms for domestic objects: *King Berdok*'s choice of topics seems to illustrate this, for example.

So in vocabulary this sort of poetry aims at being as thoroughly Scottish and vernacular as possible. And this was more than simple necessity, resulting from the nature of the subjects. The intense Scottishness was no doubt sought after because its local and unliterary associations heightened the desirable down-to-earth effect.

As well as these domestic or culturally Scottish terms, and also of course many 'common British' words used in the same passages for the same sorts of things, there is another semantic class of words which, partly because of the nature of their content, is very copiously represented in these poems: words expressing or implying disapproval or hostility or denoting loud noise and violent or ungainly action. Naturally a good many, though again not all, of these, are exclusively Scottish.

In etymology, the characteristic and criterial diction of low-life poetry, as a predominantly Scottish, or Northern and Scottish, vernacular diction, comprises long lists of (invariably mono- or disyllabic) words deriving from the following sources. For items of known derivation, one can list (most of the [40] examples following have been taken from Dunbar's *Flyting*) many mainly or exclusively Northern words of Anglo-Saxon origin, such as:

ble, *brat*, *derch*, *dreg*, *modwart plat* (a buffet), *rerde* (loud noise'), *swaittis*, *(upon) wry*; *elriche*, *haw* adj., *holkit*, *sweir*; *flyte*, *rare*, *skyte*, *thraw*, *threpe*, *wary*;

others again from Scandinavian, as:

craig, *gate*, *gett*, *carling*, *lisk*, *lug*, *mauch*, *nowt*, *skeil*, *smaik*, *tedder*, *waith*; *bla*, *blaiknit*, *boun*, *ug(sum)*; *flyre*, *host*, *rame*, *rowp*, *rug*, *skar*, *skirl*, *traik*; *gar*;

from Low Dutch:

cute, *dok*, *dub*, *gek*, *loun*, *scaff*; *swanky*;

from (? spoken) Old French:

aver, *barret*, *botine*, *cummer* n. (gossip, female crony), *Mahoun*, *grunӡe*, *lunӡe*, *menӡe*; *bribour* and *bribry*, *pelour*, *trumpour*; *brangill*, *cummer* v., *skowder*, *syle*;

from Gaelic:

baird, *bledoch*, *cabrach*, *catherene*, *cryne*, *glen*;

as well, of course, as many other words of the same origins of more widespread regional distribution, such as:

bich, *ers*, *hairt* (also in the sense 'stomach'), *tedder*, *lowsy*, *ruch* adj., *pyke* v.; *grisly*, *mirk*, *tyke*; *hobill*; *carioun*, *harlot*, *hurcheoun*, *graceles*, *lipper*, *luge*, *port* (appearance, countenance), *powder*, *savour* (the three last in somewhat specialised senses), *nice*, *prevy*, *sawsy*, *hidwis*, *petwis*, *defoul*, and the exclamation *fy!*

In addition to such items of known origin, a strikingly large proportion of the words favoured by low-life and flyting verse have been written off by the etymologists as of

unknown or uncertain origin. They include for example (again chiefly from Dunbar's *Flyting*):

(nouns) *boy, choll, clod, crele, cufe, dowsy, gane, gild, glar* (mud), *gully, irle, larbar, limmer, lokman, nagus, rehatour, scarth, skill, skyre, skrumple, smaik, smy, tod, tramort, wirling; ladry, limmery; caribald, haggirbald, haschbald, luschbald; averill, gruntill; bumbard, dastard, dowbart, scutard; duddroun, ladroun, wilroun;*

(verbs) *clasch, glowr, goif, gowk, lounge, roy, scale, skirl, swap, ȝoul; hirkill, hirpill, jingill, rattill, wraggill; bikker, clatter, scunner, skomer;*

(adjectives) *glunschoch, harth, queir; limmerfull; bony, gend; gowkit, gukkit, glaikit* (all three 'foolish'); *swappit; skolderit* ('scorched').

It is a reasonable conjecture that many of these are Medieval coinages in folk-speech, and indeed the derivations of some can be so conjectured:

limmer (from *lim(b)*, e.g. of Satan),

scunner (from the root of *shun* v.),

dowbart (? *dulbard, from *dull* adj. + suffix *-bard*, cf. *coward, dastard* and *-bald* as in *caribald* etc.),

gukkit (? from *guk-guk* the cry of the cuckoo),

and *gowkit* (? from *gowk* the name of the cuckoo),

glaikit (? from *glaik* 'a flitting sunbeam', itself a coinage on the *gl*-phonaestheme as in *gleme, glete, glitter* etc.),

skolderit (? connected with *scald*, with frequentative suffix).

Several nouns and verbs seem to be echoic or onomatopoeic in origin:

clasch, roy, skirl, swap, clatter, rattil.

The frequentative endings *-ill* and *-er* are active in forming verbs of this set. The suffixes *-ard, -bald,* (? and *-bard*: see above), *-roun* and *-it* form abusive descriptive terms (*-bald* and *-roun* virtually restricted to this body of diction in this kind of verse), and *-ry* forms pejorative collective nouns, such as *harlotry, ladry, limmery, lounry*. Some items, as was pointed out above in passing, are simply specialised applications of existing words of already identified (known and unknown) origins.

[41] The flytings and lampoons include many novel abusive compounds:

those on the verb-noun pattern of *byt-buttoun*, (perhaps) *crawdoun, hurlebehind, lik-schilling, nipcaik, rak-sauch;*

others formed on agent-nouns like *girnall-ryvar, muttoun-dryvar;*

and others of various formations such as *gallow-breid, purs-pyke, tramort, widdefow, chitterlilling, wallidraggil.*

The literary embalmed phrases of the courtly descriptions are matched in the low-life verse by formulae and proverbial clichés, no doubt out of everyday informal parlance, such as:

to lauch one's hairt sair,
to get one's paikis,
to mak biggingis hair or *waistie wanis* (to impoverish oneself),
to brek someone's *gall* (to break his spirit),

he had na will to mow, *it was na mowis*,
the gallowis gaipis (for someone),
quhat man settis by (one's adversary)?,
quhat or *quhare devill?*, (one's adversary or butt is)
(some notoriously disreputable individual's) *air*,
(to sink in something) *up to the ene* (eyes).

Many of the words and phrases distinctive of the low-life poetry are special in their lexicographical histories (as distinct from their etymologies), appearing fleetingly or intermittently on record. Of those whose origins are known (such as *flyre* and *carling* and *lug* and *smaik* from Scandinavian) a high proportion (*carling* and *lug* and *smaik* in this instance) are unrecorded or all but unrecorded between the source language and their emergence in the low-life Scottish poetry. The same is true of several of the words listed above as of Anglo-Saxon origin, such as *elriche*, *haw*, *plat*, *swaittis*: these remain unrecorded between Old English and their re-emergence in Older (sometimes Middle) Scots. A still higher proportion of the items of unknown origin make their first or almost their first appearance in the Scots poetry. Some of these have a later history in English, though often, as with *lounge*, *queir* and *up to the ene*, only after a long interval of a century or more. Some do have a continuous history in Scots. Others are ephemera which fail to outlast the sixteenth century – *gane* (face), *gend* (silly), *larbar*, *smy* and others.

Many of these words too are rare in Older Scots itself. Some are hapaxes or occur only twice or three times in the low-life poetry only. Others are found also in a quite restricted set of other contexts: violent or condemnatory passages in other verse and prose, and passages of alleged direct speech cited in court records and in certain works of narrative prose in later Middle Scots, beginning with Knox's *History*. An example of the latter sort is this passage from the *St Andrews Kirk Session Register* (1561, Dickinson ed., 1949: 106–7):

> Wyliam Mortoun of Cambo oppinlie in the public essemble manest boistit and injurit the said minister in the pulpet, saying thir wordis following or sicklyik in effect: My brother is and salbe vicar of Crayll quhen thaw sall thyg thy mayt fals smayk. I sall pul the owt of the pulpet be the luggis and chais the owt of this town.

This passage is typical of many similar incidental prose passages of 'flyting and bairdrie' which crop up in the court records through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for this activity was very common in the streets and even, [42] as we see, in the churches of sixteenth-century Scotland, as well as in the poetry.

The discontinuous lexicographical history and general rarity of some of these words can be simply explained from the fact that the kind of detailed attention to domestic operations, intimate personal characteristics and physical traits given in this class of poem does not happen in any other kind of Older Scots writing: an example is the process of butter-making described in *The Wyf of Awchtirmwchty*[10] but nowhere else in Middle Scots, so that the terms *bledoch* (buttermilk) and *ʒyrn* (curdle) occur only there. But the rarity of other words of this diction has a less trivial explanation. They belonged to an essentially colloquial or slang register and so were appropriate only in writings which imitated this, like the prose passage just quoted and the low-life verse itself. Their emergence into the limelight of literature had to await the appearance of this copious body of writings in an exaggerated vernacular or colloquial style.

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[10] The language of this poem is discussed by AJA in 'Oral narrative style in Middle Scots' (1978, 2015).

A glance at virtually any portion of the poems or passages specified will readily confirm these generalisations. In the low-life interlude in the *Howlat* (lines 794–845), for instance, what appear to be colloquial register items are:

flyrand (*flyre*, 'to grimace, especially jeeringly') (all its occurrences seem to be in flytings or flyting-like contexts),

gukkit (rather similarly distributed),

hiddy-giddy (only in a few comic and earthy poems),

and *smaik* ('a rascal') (in verse flytings and reported prose-flytings).

Smad (a LG word meaning 'to stain, smut, begrime') occurs only here in Older Scots but is quite common in Modern Scots.

As a small specimen of verse-flyting we may take the following from Dunbar's *Flyting with Kennedy*, lines 121–8:

> Lene larbar, loungeour, baith lowsy in lisk and lonȝe,
> Fy, skolderit skyn, thow art bar skyre and skrumple;
> For he that rostit Lawarance had thy grunȝe,
> And he that hid Sanct Johnis ene with ane womple,
> And he that dang Sanct Augustine with ane rumple
> Thy fowll front had, and he that Bartilmo flaid;
> The gallowis gaipis eftir thy graceles gruntill,
> As thow wald for ane haggeis, hungry gled.

In this passage occur, *inter alia*, a collection of favourite flyting expressions for 'the face', viz.:

grunȝe, literally, 'a snout', used contemptuously in flytings for the face of a person;

gruntill, mostly 'a pig's snout,' here used like *grunȝe*;

and *front* 'the forehead of a person or front part of anything' and in flytings (for the first time here) 'a person's face'.

Besides these,

larbar, *loungeour* (the first occurrences of this rare slang word, *lounge*, belong to Dunbar's *Flyting*),

the cliché *the gallowis gaipis eftir*,

and the abusive use of the adjective *graceles*

are all apparently colloquialisms.

Skyre as a noun of obscure origin and meaning is found only here,

and *skrumple* as a noun (its origin is uncertain) only here in Older Scots: the same word is not uncommon in Modern Scots, [43] meaning 'something dried up or burned to a crisp'.

Items with a frequentative ending like this seem also to be favourites in flytings and the like; and indeed what we might call the sound effects, as well as the diction itself, of the passages we have just considered, are also typical of this kind of poetry (see section 11).

By way of comparison, the reported prose-flyting cited above from the *St Andrews Kirk Session Register* has, in *thyg*, a chiefly Northern and Scottish word for 'to beg', and *smayk*, the flyting word which we identified above. *To pul* another out of a place *be the luggis* is

presumably a colloquialism; at least, *lug* itself, applied to the human ear, seems from the hostile or contemptuous contexts in which it regularly occurs, to have had slangy overtones.

In view of all that has now been said, it will not surprise the reader that the Latinate diction, 'consecrated' or merely 'general', and the native amene vocabulary which we have identified in the courtly poetry are almost totally absent from most low-life poetry. This is unquestionably true of the more rustic and (seemingly) unpretentious of these works, such as *Peblis to the Play*, *Christis Kirk* and *The Wyf of Awchtirmwchty*, and the other works of this subset. As befits their educated contestants, a small proportion of Latinisms and Gallicisms is indeed present in the flytings and lampoons of such learned protagonists as Kennedy, Lyndsay (who did not forget that he was addressing the King), and Polwart, and (even fewer) Henryson, Dunbar and Montgomery (Dunbar's *Flyting* is among the least Latinate of his works, though even less so is his *Twa Cummeris*, Ellenberger, 1977: 68).

Except in parody of courtly diction ("Boece said, of poyettis that wes flour", *King Berdok* line 47), the only body of poetic diction which does occasionally supply a few items to low-life and flyting verse is the native diction most characteristic of alliterative verse, in a few of its synonyms for 'man', such as *berne*, *freke*, *sege*, and in a few tags such as *on raw* (all of these, for example, in Dunbar's *Flyting*). In the tournaments, the 'fair and fracas' poems, and the burlesques, this is sometimes presumably mock-heroic or by way of parody.

So the vocabulary of the low-life verse is vernacular, domestic, vulgar and ribald, favouring words whose distribution and meaning suggest slang or colloquial overtones, mono- or disyllabic rather than polysyllabic, predominantly Northern and Scottish in provenance, of vernacular spoken rather than literary origin, un-Latinate, and in all of those ways the opposite of the courtly and to an only slightly lesser extent the instructive and the lyric kinds of Older Scots verse.

9 Reduced forms

Unlike all other kinds of Older Scots poetry, these low-life poems do not display, in rhymes or elsewhere, any of the anglicised forms described in section 2 above, and their copyists also, sensitive to stylistic proprieties, normally impose none on them (with the sole exceptions of the all-pervasive spellings *no* [44] and *so*). Low-life poetry does, nevertheless, have its own formal stylistic markers. Whereas those of Anglo-Scots poetry are more or less sporadic and sometimes inaccurate imitations of spellings and inflections seen (on the written page by the eye) in the prestigious writings of Chaucer and the other English paragons of "lusty fresch endyte", low-life poetry's formal markers mimic in writing recent innovations in the pronunciation of spoken Scots (as heard in everyday local speech by the ear). All of them involve phonetic reduction, the shortening of fuller forms of words by the vocalisation or loss of consonants. All were probably still only optional in speech, existing alongside alternative full-form options, as indeed most continue to do in modern Scots today. Specifically, these are:

aw, *caw*, *gaw* etc. beside *all*, *call*, *gall* etc.,
haus beside *hals* ('the throat'),
now beside *noll* ('the head'),
bowt beside *bolt*,
fow, *pow* beside *full*, *pull*,

among the forms which resulted from l-vocalisation in early fifteenth-century Scots. Other reduced forms result from the loss of intervocalic and word-final *v*, such as:

deill beside *devill*,
ein and *eining* beside *evin* and *evening*,

gein beside *gevin* 'given',
ha, *ge*, *lo* beside *have*, *geve*, *luve*,
and *ser* beside *serve*;

forms due to loss of (originally voiceless) *th*, namely:

mow, *uncow*, and *no*, beside *mouth*, *uncouth* and *noth* or *nocht*;

others similarly losing final *f* or *v* in:

himsell, *thairsell(is)*;

various other reductions including:

en and *sen* beside *end* and *send*;

and *beid*, *dude*, *ford*, *kend*, etc. for *be it*, *do it*, *for it*, *ken it*, etc.

All of these forms occur in low-life verse in general, including both narrative and invective passages. Only the reduced pronoun-verb operator phrases:

Is, *weis*, *ʒeis* for *I sall*, *we sall*, *ʒe sall* and *Ile*, *ʒele* for *I will*, *ʒe will*

appear to be confined to dialogue. (For a fuller list of all of these forms, and others like them which are not similarly stylistically restricted, see Aitken (1971: 195–7; 2015) and for specific examples in context, see the various entries in DOST.)

When the Older Scots poems were written these forms were comparatively recent innovations in speech. They remained unacceptable – presumably as colloquial modernisms – in written usage generally, and certainly for the most formal and dignified styles of verse and prose, throughout the Older Scots period. Indeed they failed to emerge into regular written use until the appearance of the Modern Scots dialect verse of Allan Ramsay and his followers (including Robert Burns) in the eighteenth century. In written Older Scots they are largely restricted to overtly colloquial verse, to certain narrative poems, and to more or less 'illiterate' prose (such as some ill-spelled private letters of the sixteenth-century and other irregularly spelled Older Scots writings). Blind Hary's *Wallace*, the Asloan MS *Sevyne Sagis* (full listings are given in van Buuren-Veenenbos, 1982: 98–101 and 123), Gavin Douglas's *Æneid* translation, William Stewart's *Chronicle* and Rolland's *Sevin Seages*, which I classed in section 1 in the simple or the elaborative narrative kinds, share with low-life verse the practice of employing l-vocalised and other reduced forms for rhyming purposes, but in their case do so even in quite serious and dignified passages. The few rhymes requiring reduced forms of this sort in Douglas's *The* [45] *Palice of Honour*, however, all occur in what we might accept as appropriate contexts:

of fear (*my sell*, line 306),
of irritation and contempt (*stupefak*, line 1460),
and in a list of low-life and fantastic poems (*fow*, line 1714).

The same explanation does not seem to apply to the substantially larger number of such rhymes in John Rolland's *The Court of Venus*, no doubt inspired by and imitated from *The Palice of Honour*:

haid (have it, I. 122),
kend (ken (know) it, III. 611),
dude (do it, IV. 121),
ʒour sell (yourself, III. 352),
twell (twelve, III. 660),
thame sell (themselves, IV. 514),

stupefact (rhyming with *bak*, *slak*, *wndertak*, *lak*, III. 152).

Perhaps we should regard this as an extension by Rolland of a licence which he imagined he had observed in Douglas's poem.

In the low-life poetry generally these forms occur fairly frequently, albeit optionally, as spellings and in rhymes. Sometimes the copyist presents us with a full-form spelling where the rhyme demands the reduced form – there are examples in *Kynd Kittok* line 13 (Chepman and Myllar) and *The Wyf of Awchtirmwchty* lines 9, 10, 33, 50 (Bannatyne). Six of *The Wyf of Awchtirmwchty*'s 60 rhymes, indeed, are reduced forms. They were evidently regarded as typical of "flytingis and invectives" by King James VI, who in his *Reulis and cautelis* specifies for that sort of writing words which are "cuttit short and hurland ouer heuch" (cut short and hurtling over precipice) (Craigie ed., 1955: I. 75).

10 Stylistic opposites

We have now noted several striking stylistic contrasts between the extremes in the gamut of Older Scots verse kinds – the courtly and the low-life: the one kind favours some phonological anglicisation, a prevailingly complex syntax, a plethora of rhetorical colours, an avoidance of northernisms of vocabulary, a profusion of Latinity generally and of consecrated Latinate diction in particular, as well as a body of amene poetic diction of native etymology; the other is in general syntactically direct and uninvolved and practises much asyndeton, is virtually free of the prescribed rhetoric so profuse in courtly verse, has a densely vernacular word-choice, including some vulgarisms, and uses (in spelling and rhyme) colloquial reduced forms. The two kinds stem from widely separate traditions, the one highly literary, the other with evident colloquial and oral reference. We have noted in section 1 that the two kinds also contrast quite strikingly in the metrical forms which each favours.

It is naturally possible also to compile a list of pairs or sets of synonym alternatives in Middle Scots, one or more of each set being favoured by serious prose and dignified verse, and another favoured by the more vernacular kinds of writing or in more vernacular passages. The dignified alternatives are in some cases Latinate, but in other cases of native etymology, opposed to a more vernacular or vulgar, though equally native, synonym. In pairs like the latter, for example, the first appears to have had more solemn overtones:

> *knaw* and [46] *ken*,
> *ere* and *lug*,
> *fox* and *tod*,
> *hound* and *dog* (or, more abusively, *tyke*).

Old French supplies the more dignified alternative in the sets:

> *pas* and *gang* ('to go'),
> *promise* and *hecht* and *requeist*,
> *ask* and *speir*.

A particularly revealing set already encountered is that of the synonyms for 'face':

> the dignified (and Latinate) *visage* (e.g. in Dunbar's *The Thrissill and the Rois* lines 11, 148) or *countenance* (ibid. 89, 93);

> the common core item (of Old French origin) *face* (ibid. 55);

> and the vernacular (and more or less abusive) *front*, *gane*, *gruntill*, *grunʒe*, *snout* (in Dunbar and Kennedy's *Flyting* and similar works)

(for references to and derivations of these, see section 8). The *amene redolence*, *odour sweit* or *dulce odour* of courtly poetry has its low-life verse opposite in such expressions as *foul stink*.

11 Style-switching and -drifting and phonaesthetics

Style-switching was hardly an invention of the Middle Scots poets. Their English and Scottish predecessors and some English contemporaries knew something of this, especially the Northern English. Well-known noisy passages interrupt calmer narrative or dialogue in *Purity*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Destruction of Troy*, *The Awnturs of Arthur*, many of the Northern miracle plays and many other narrative and, especially, alliterative poems in English. In Scots, Wyntoun has a number of violent and noisy passages, including a highly alliterative flood (following the Northern Middle English *Cursor Mundi*) at I. 397–409. But since they enjoyed an even more extreme range between the diction of ugsome and violently abusive Northern and Scottish vocabulary and the neutral or 'British' or literary-Latinate vocabulary of the courtly and instructive passages, as well as the peculiarly Scottish formal contrasts between the reduced forms of low-life verse and the full forms of the more dignified kinds of verse, it is especially in the Middle Scots poets, from Holland on, that the distance between the stylistic poles is greatest and the stylistic contrasts accordingly potentially most striking. Furthermore, to these contrasts there is added contrast in onomatopoeic effect between 'ugsome' and amene passages. In Holland's opening six stanzas, the first three stanzas are in amene style, with some native courtly and a little Latinate vocabulary, displaying complex interlinkings of alliteration on liquid consonants, rhyming in *-ene*, *-ede*, and other 'calm or gentle' phonaesthemes, whereas the second three stanzas on the Howlat's repulsiveness contrast in all these respects (Mackay, 1975: 250–7). Holland may have learned this technique from the opening lines (lines 1 to 5 versus 6 to 11) of *The Quatrefoil of Love*, a North Midland Middle English antecedent and, in part, model for his own poem (see Mackay, 1975: 49–51).

   Passages featuring tight clusters of northernisms of vocabulary and 'ugsome' sound-effects, such as those which characterise the low-life and abusive poetry, also occur, usually quite briefly, in most poems of the courtly and the elaborate narrative classes. These are the passages which introduce unpleasant or noisy [47] characters and episodes like the incident of the bard and the fools in the *Howlat* (stanzas 62–5); Cresseid's leprosy and the descriptions of Mars and Saturn in Henryson's *Cresseid*; the terrible desert and "grisly flood" in Part I and the "loch of cair" and the shipwreck in Part III of Douglas's *The Palace of Honour* (lines 136–62 and 1315–77); the noisy departure of the ladies in Dunbar's *The Goldyn Targe* (see below); mentions of Hell (as at *Eneados* VI Prol., stanza 3, or Lyndsay's *Monarche* 5998 If.) or descriptions of fearsome Underworld episodes or characters in *Eneados* VI; Lyndsay's version of Noah's flood in the *Monarche*, lines 1406 ff.; reproaches to the Empress and reproachful parts of the *moralitates* of Rolland's *Sevin Seages*; and the poets' descriptions of their own alleged barbarousness of language in the modesty *envois* or other *captationes benevolentiae*. Alliteration is rarely absent for long from any kind of Older Scots verse; but passages of these sorts are among the most heavily alliterated.

   As well as anti-aureate passages like these embedded in what are mainly courtly or elaborate narrative poems, there are a few examples also of courtly or spoof-courtly passages in mainly comic or low-life settings: for example, when the three minions in Lyndsay's *Satyre*, whose talk is normally in the full colloquial manner, break into courtly diction to describe the attractions of Dame Sensuality (lines 331 ff.).

An unusually effective and highly revealing example of this kind of thing is the startlingly sudden departure of the allegorical ladies at lines 235–52 of Dunbar's *The Goldyn Targe*, that archetypal specimen of the courtly love allegory.

The passage is worth actual quotation here:

> In twynkling of ane eye to schip thai went,
> And swyth up saile unto the top thai stent
> And with swift course atour the flude they frak;
> Thay fyrit gunnis wyth powder violent
> Till that the reke raise to the firmament;
> The rochis all resownyt wyth the rak,
> For rerde it semyt that the raynbow brak;
> Wyth spirit affrayde apon my fete I sprent
> Amang the clewis, so carefull was the crak.
>
> And as I did awake of my sueving,
> The joyfull birdis merily did syng
> For myrth of Phebus tendir bemes schene;
> Suete war the vapouris, soft the morowing,
> Halesum the vale depaynt wyth flouris ying,
> The air attemperit, sobir and amene;
> In quhite and rede was all the felde besene
> Throu Naturis nobil fresch anamalyng,
> In mirthfull May, of eviry moneth Quene.

The first of these two stanzas, much the most violent of the poem, contains nine Northern words (out of a total of about 25 in the entire poem of 31 [48] stanzas). In the second stanza we return to the languorous dream-world of the *locus amoenus* of courtly poetry, with its own very poetic diction free of northernisms.

Furthermore, the first stanza is dominated by voiceless plosives, notably /k/, in word-initial and word-final position, in rhyme and alliteration, and is heavily alliterated for effect of movement (*swift course*), action and violent noise. The second stanza, conversely, features front vowels, continuant consonants (nasals, liquids, sibilants), fewer consonant clusters (none obstruent), much less alliteration, and then only on the phonaesthetically amene consonants /m/, /n/ and /s/, and constant variation in vowel quality. From these passages and others it is evident that there were quite different sets of sound-sequences favoured in, on the one hand, passages which aimed at noisy, violent or generally unpleasant effects, which are also typically anti-aureate in their diction, and on the other those in the calm and melodious mood which predominates in the courtly poetry. Some others of the noisy and anti-aureate sets appear in the passage from Dunbar's *Flyting* cited in Section 8 above (among many others in that and similar works), as well, of course, as in the 'ugsome' passages listed above.

The question of what specific features of the phonology of words and sentences constituted the sound-sequences appropriate for one or another purpose – for example, the fact, for such it apparently was, that the phonaestheme *-ene* was highly appropriate in rhymes in melodious passages, whereas the constituents of the word *skrumple* (see above) were evidently the reverse – would take us into what are for me difficult and complex problems of historical semantics and literary history. But for aspiring theorists of such phenomena, Middle Scots poetry would serve as an excellent testing-ground. A useful beginning is Bawcutt's account of the techniques in this respect practised by Gavin Douglas in his *Eneados* (Bawcutt, 1976: 155–8).

12 Conclusion

It is evident that the theory of three levels of style of classical and Medieval poetic and rhetoric is quite inadequate to account for the modal variety we have just considered. But it may be that, as was suggested in section 4, the practice of rhetorical 'colours' for elegant amplification does owe something to the precepts of the theorists of poetic as well as to imitation of admired predecessors.

Evidently, however, convention and imitation exerted far more potent control of the practice of the medieval Scottish poets. Whereas the earlier of the Middle Scots poets, such as Holland, must have depended on models from furth of Scotland, a later poet such as Lyndsay could well have learned all of his conventions (whether or not he in fact did so) from the considerable body of native Scots performance which by his time was available.

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[11] Now replaced by the Revised Register of Titles in vol. XII. Online, the searchable Bibliography does not currently (2015) allow searching by the abbreviated references. For the reader's convenience, I have expanded some of the abbreviations.

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