

FIFTEEN SONGS OF ROBERT BURNS

by

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B. A., University of California, 1963

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A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1966

Approved by:

Ed Thornton  
Major Professor

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The great fascination with folk song which began in the eighteenth century and grew to gigantic proportions in the twentieth constantly seeks new avenues of interest. Eighteenth-century collectors and editors amassed large collections of songs. Although the collector was concerned with the antiquity of a song, he was inclined to edit elements of "barbarism." Collectors of the twentieth century, on the other hand, have been concerned with tracing the genealogies of songs, with establishing the "authenticity" of words or tune. As everyone knows, a folk song must be very old, must betray no polished literary skill, and must certainly be anonymous. Contemporary collectors would probably disregard the songs of Robert Burns, since, after all, they are not really old, are not works of an unskilled literary hand, and are not even sanctified by anonymity.

A song has two equally important elements: words and music. Until recently, song collectors have been primarily interested in words because of the difficulties in tracing old tunes which are caused by notational problems and absence of historical records. In the divorce of these two elements, as Gavin Greig points out, both have suffered:

Taken apart from the music the words have come to be judged mainly by literary standards. But 'good is good for what it suits'; and the words of a song being intended for singing cannot fairly be judged apart from the music. Some lyrics read well and yet do not or would not sing well; while verses may be quite effective when sung and yet appear to have no particular merit when looked on simply as literature.<sup>1</sup>

Burns realized the importance of both elements. He had intimate knowledge of hundreds of Scots tunes and an abiding respect for the integrity of

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<sup>1</sup>Gavin Greig, Folk-Song in Buchan (Hatboro, Pa., 1963: a Folklore Associates reprint from Transactions of the Buchan Field Club, IX, 1906-1907 [hereafter cited as Grieg]), p. 50.

each. His habit was to compose words for an already-existing tune, keeping the melody well in mind by humming it over and over as he wrote. This practice produced an art neither music nor literature, but uniquely both.

Sir Walter Scott says:

Let no one suppose that we undervalue the songs of Burns. When his soul was intent on suiting a favourite air with words humorous or tender, as the subject demanded, no poet of our tongue ever displayed higher skill in marrying melody to immortal verse.<sup>2</sup>

Since our first consideration is with the actual work of Burns, we need not be concerned with establishing the antiquity of the tunes or the authenticity of the words. We have the words as Burns wrote them, and it is very likely that we have the tunes as Burns hummed them. Burns worked directly on two important collections of Scots songs: James Johnson's Scots Musical Museum<sup>3</sup> and George Thomson's A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs.<sup>4</sup> Thomson enlisted Burns's assistance for a collection of twenty-five Scottish airs; but before the poet died, he had contributed some one-hundred. In a preface Thomson explains, "... the Scottish melodies have ever been admired for their originality, sweetness, and pathos; and many of them for their exhilarating gaiety and spirit." Thomson's editorial attitude is betrayed, however, by his statement that previous song collections have been "more or less defective and exceptionable," largely because they have trifling and inferior tunes with no accompaniments. Too many of the verses which are joined to airs "debase the music." Thomson declares his first object is

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<sup>2</sup>Quarterly Review, I, 30.

<sup>3</sup>James Johnson, ed., Scots Musical Museum (Hatboro, Pa., 1962: a Folklore Associates reprint of the 1853 ed. in 4 vols [hereafter cited as SMM]).

<sup>4</sup>George Thomson, ed., A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs (Edinburgh, 4 vols., 1803-1808 [hereafter cited as Thomson]).

to procure airs in the best form (since the original form cannot be determined), so as to free them from "vulgar errors" and "redundant graces." After praising Burns's poetic talent, Thomson notes that "a few of these have been united to airs different from the tunes which the Poet had first in view."<sup>5</sup> Thomson wished to Anglicize the Scots songs and to cleanse them of vulgarity; he was willing to use his editorial power to make these "improvements." Dick indicates that only five of Burns's songs were printed in Thomson's Select Collection during the poet's lifetime; "For the rest, Thomson was under no control, and without compunction altered the text when it suited him, added stanzas, and adapted them for unauthorized airs." Dick concludes:

Thus Scottish Airs, in five sumptuous folio volumes completed in 1818, came to contain much of the text of Burns in an untrustworthy form. Its airs, too, with their many editorial improvements, are to be disregarded as too artificial.<sup>6</sup>

Thomson's collection is interesting primarily because of the settings by Pleyel, Kozeluch, Haydn, and Beethoven. Modern guide lines for understanding Classical music derive from the practices of these great musicians, but this very Classicism drives them far from the spirit of Scottish folk song.

For the most authentic presentation of the songs of Burns, then, we turn to the Scots Musical Museum. The title page of the sixth volume of the Museum reads:

The Scots / Musical Museum / in Six volumes. / Consisting of Six Hundred Scots Songs / with proper Bases for the / Piano Forte &c. / Humbly Dedicated / To the Society / of / Antiquaries of Scotland / By James Johnson. / In this publication the original

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<sup>5</sup>Thomson, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>James C. Dick, The Songs of Robert Burns (Hatboro, Pa., 1962: a Folklore Associates reprint of the original ed. of 1903 [hereafter cited as Dick]), xviii.

simplicity of our / Ancient National Airs is retained unincumbered / with useless Accompaniments & graces depriving the / hearers of the sweet simplicity of their native melodies.

H. G. Farmer believes these comments to be directed against Thomson's practices in the Select Collection; at any rate, Johnson and Burns are closer in their attitudes toward folk song publication than are Thomson and Burns. Farmer states:

Burns was in high dudgeon that those composers had dared to alter the melody of Scottish national songs, simply to satisfy their own harmonic preferences. The poet could not stomach such liberties and promptly wrote George Thomson:--"Whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him not alter one iota of the original Scots airs. Let our national airs preserve their native features."<sup>7</sup>

Johnson, in the preface to the last volume, says:

Without wishing to over rate this publication, the Editor may be permitted to observe, that it unquestionably contains the greatest Collection of Scottish Vocal Music ever published, including many excellent Songs written for it by BURNS. He therefore flatters himself with the hope that the prediction of our celebrated BARD respecting it will be verified: and that "To future ages the Scots Musical Museum will be the Text Book and Standard of Scottish Song and Music."

The Scots Musical Museum would appear to be the most reliable source available for a Burns song. Johnson obtained the songs directly from Burns, who either notated them himself or sang them for Stephen Clarke, the Edinburgh organist who supplied a pedal bass. Johnson specifically adheres to the folk idiom, relying on Burns's direct experience with folk song; he rejects the art song type. To increase the acceptability of these songs and to facilitate performance, he asked Clarke for a pedal bass. The current rage for the new pianoforte probably increased the demand for skeletal harmonizations. Dr. Burney's famous General History of Music notes that "the year 1768 saw the first use of the Pianoforte as a solo instrument in

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<sup>7</sup>H. G. Farmer, Foreword to SM, xviii.

England. .... This was not the first use of the Pianoforte in public, however, as, on May 16, 1767, Mr. Dibdin had accompanied Miss Brickler at her Benefit Concert at Covent Garden 'on a new Instrument call'd a Piano Forte.'<sup>8</sup> The new instrument acquired immediate popularity such that training at the pianoforte became a necessary part of a young lady's education. Johnson in his preface to the fifth volume of the Scots Musical Museum states his intention to publish a sixth using the remaining songs in his possession. "As these however will not fill up a Volume, the Editor means to insert a number of tunes adapted to the Flute, which he is confident many of the Subscribers will approve of. Those Ladies who Sing and perform upon the Piano Forte, shall be furnished with the Songs and Music for their use, at a reduced price, upon application to the Editor."



Fifteen songs have been selected from Burns's work for presentation here. Though there has been no particular attempt to select representative songs, the selection does encompass a variety of subject matters and musical types. Of these fifteen songs, at least one is to be found in each of seven of Dick's eight subject matter classifications: Love: Personal; Love: General; Love: Humorous; Connubial; Bacchanalian and Social; Patriotic and Political; Jacobite; Miscellaneous. Connubial, such a song as "John Anderson," is the only type not represented here. Eight of these songs fall into one or another of the Love categories. Greig indicates that although Burns's work shows a greater percentage of patriotic and of convivial songs than is to be found in the songs of the common folk, the

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<sup>8</sup>Charles Burney, A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period (1789) (New York, 1935. First published: Vol. 1, 1776; Vol. 2, 1782; Vols. 3 and 4, 1789), p. 874 n.

greatest part of both Burns and the common folk songs are love songs.<sup>9</sup>  
Of the some 354 Burns songs, 225 are love songs.

Since Burns did not write the actual tunes, but knew them from his background of association with folk music, it must be assumed that these tunes are characteristic of Scottish folk song as Burns knew it in his own lifetime. Several generalizations on these fifteen songs can be made. The tunes are short, ranging from four to twenty-four bars, thirteen of the fifteen being eight or sixteen bars. They are constructed symmetrically in either two- or four-bar phrases grouped in a highly regular formal structure, most commonly an AABA form or a variant, such as AABB, or AABC. The forms ABA, ABAB, ABCB, and ABCD are also to be found.

Only two of the fifteen (Tam Glen, 9/8 meter, and Afton Water, 3/4 meter) are in triple rhythm; common-time predominates among the duple rhythms, but 6/8 and 2/4 meters are also present. Dotted rhythms are highly characteristic of these tunes, especially an alternation of  and . (see Comin thro' the Eye, The Banks o' Doon, Ca' the Yowes).

The melodies are characterized by broad range and angular leaps. Treatment of the words is largely syllabic, as is normally the case in folk song. Syllabic writing would also be expected when words are composed to already existing tunes, as was Burns's practice. This syllabic treatment is in striking contrast, however, to the contemporary melismatic style of art song or operatic aria.

One of the most important melodic considerations is the question of the modal nature of these tunes. Dick notes that:

The Burns tunes are chiefly anonymous, originating from the beginning of the sixteenth up to the close of the eighteenth century.

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<sup>9</sup>Greig, p. 34.

They illustrate Scottish music from the wild erratic airs peculiar to the country, framed on scales and movements so regardless of the scholastic rules of musical composition that no satisfactory accompaniments have yet been written for them as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

What are these "scales and movements so regardless of the scholastic rules of musical composition"? The general answer is that these tunes are grounded in a modal system, rather than a tonal system of music.

The seven modes, often called "ecclesiastical," are sets of seven notes each in stepwise arrangement. These modes, which were explained by the Greeks and used for centuries by the Christian Church, form a diatonic system which can be expressed in terms of the white keys on a piano. Each of the seven white key notes can be the tonic or beginning note of a mode. A series of eight ascending notes will give an arrangement of whole and half steps which varies with each different tonic. It is this peculiar arrangement of intervals which gives each mode its distinctive character. The mode beginning on C is the Ionian, on D the Dorian, on E the Phrygian, on F the Lydian, on G the Mixolydian, on A the Aeolian, on B the Locrian. The Lydian and the Locrian are exceedingly rare because of their exposure of the tritone interval (F-B, or the augmented fourth), which is regarded as the most strident dissonance possible. The Phrygian does occur in Scots folk music, though also rarely. The Ionian mode corresponds in intervallic arrangement with our modern major scale; the Dorian, Mixolydian, and Aeolian, though each with distinct character, have a minor sound to the modern ear.

Ralph Vaughn Williams has pointed out that, although the modes may sound like the major and minor scales, they are very different. He states: "Folk-music, at all events European folk-music, and I believe it is true

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<sup>10</sup>Dick, p. 1.



of all genuine folk-music, is purely melodic."<sup>11</sup> Further,

Modern music has so accustomed us to harmony that we find it difficult to realize that there can be such a thing as pure melody built up without any reference to harmony. . . . Harmonic music, at all events during the 18th and 19th Centuries, presupposed the existence of two modes only, the major and the minor, with all their harmonic implications of the perfect cadence, the half close, the leading note and so on, so as to give points of repose, points of departure and the like. But in purely melodic music an entirely new set of considerations came into being. The major and minor modes hardly ever appear in true melodic music, but it must be referred to other systems, chiefly the Dorian mode, the Mixolydian mode and the Ionian mode, this last having of course the same intervals as the major mode, but otherwise quite distinct.<sup>12</sup>

For centuries, the modes dominated musical composition, even through the time of the amazingly complex polyphony of Palestrina. Eventually, however, in the last half of the seventeenth century, our systems of major and minor scales began to evolve. Cecil Sharp in an extremely incisive chapter on the Modes says:

This change originated from the difficulty, which contrapuntists experienced in providing satisfactory harmonies to modal melodies. Musicians found that in certain passages, particularly in the cadences, the ear demanded the introduction of certain notes foreign to the mode. This led to the occasional use of accidentals, which were, however, strictly confined to the subordinate parts, their introduction into the melody itself, or Cantus Firmus, being resolutely forbidden.<sup>13</sup>

Probably the most important change from modal to tonal is in the use of an ascending semitone between the last two notes. This "leading" tone was felt to enhance the sense of cadence, of repose, beyond the whole-tone movement common in modal cadences. Sharp explains how the modes were

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<sup>11</sup>Ralph Vaughn Williams, National Music (New York, 1935 [hereafter cited as Vaughn Williams]), p. 42.

<sup>12</sup>Vaughn Williams, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup>Cecil J. Sharp, English Folk Song, Some Conclusions (London, 1907, revised by Maud Karples, 1936 [hereafter cited as Sharp]), pp. 45 f.

altered to include the all-important leading tone:

The Ionian and Lydian modes each possessed a leading note. It was only necessary to flatten the 4th note of the latter for both modes to become major scales. Raising the seventh of the Mixolydian mode reduced that scale also to the major pattern. The remaining three, viz., the Dorian, Phrygian and Aeolian, needed but little alteration, beyond the sharpening of their sevenths, to make them conform to the minor mode. Thus, three of the ancient modes lost their identity in the major scale, while the remaining three became merged in the minor.<sup>14</sup>

Modal music is purely melodic. In tonal music the melody is determined by the bass line and represents a series of harmonic progressions. Tonality involves a whole set of harmonic considerations including the use of the dominant seventh chord to define the tonal center; importance of firm establishment of one tonal area, modulation to a new area, and return to the primary tonal center; implications on the formal structure which involve beginning and ending in the same "key;" melodies which imply harmonic accompaniment by outlining chords, accenting tones important to the key, modulating, etc.

Though tonality ruled composed "art" music for two centuries, "the seven-tone scales, with their modal arrangements, are a hallmark of European folk music."<sup>15</sup> With regard to Scottish folk music, Greig says that "our folk-tunes arose before the days of harmony, and have been evolved independently of it. Many of them are in the ancient modes. . . . The modes most frequently used in ancient Scottish melody are the Dorian, founded on D; the Mixolydian on G; and the Aeolian on A. . . . The final note of the tune guides us in determining the mode."<sup>16</sup> Nettl finds that, although British

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<sup>14</sup>Sharp, p. 46.

<sup>15</sup>Bruno Nettl, Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continent (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1965 [hereafter cited as Nettl]), p. 41.

<sup>16</sup>Greig, p. 55.

folk song is frequently said to be modal, the great majority of the songs fall into major or Ionian mode."<sup>17</sup> It does seem to be true that the majority of songs are in the Ionian mode (eight of the fifteen presented here); however, a sizeable minority cannot be explained in terms of simple minor tonality. The modal "feeling" occurs with varying intensity in the tunes presented here. There are several factors which contribute to this feeling of modality. The tunes are almost entirely diatonic; only in two songs, Tam Glen and Afton Water, do accidentals occur. The leading tone, such an important element of tonal melody, is conspicuously absent here, appearing melodically only once in There Was a Lad. In some songs there is a very strong mixture of major and minor sounds which would be highly unusual in simple tonal music, but entirely characteristic of modal. In each case, these "mixtures" can be explained in terms of a single mode, with no instance of mixing of modes. Green Grow the Rashers is a good example: the tune begins in a strong D major attitude, but this is almost immediately undermined by a minor cadence on "e." The third bar again emphasizes "G" and "D" chords, but the final and important cadence is on "b" minor. The "key" is not D major, or b minor, but Aeolian mode. The same mixture is seen in one of the loveliest of all the tunes, The Birks of Aberfeldy. These instances cannot be logically explained in terms of tonality; they are modal tunes.

If modal music is purely melodic, the question might be asked whether it be proper to harmonize it at all. Greig states: "We need not trouble to point out how difficult it is to write accompaniments for modal tunes--difficult in the case of Dorians and Aeolians, almost impossible in the

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<sup>17</sup>Nettl, p. 43.

case of Mixolydians; nor need we stay to pity the plight of our poor Pentatonics as the pianoforte pelts them with the notes which they have forsworn."<sup>18</sup> But if the modal melody is allowed to determine the harmony according to modal rules, the result can be music of a freshness and vitality which tonal music finds difficult to match. Vaughn Williams points to the nineteenth-century Russian Nationalists, especially Moussorgsky in Boris, to Debussy, and to Modern Italians and Englishmen, as examples of composers who prefer to build their harmony "from the melody downwards."<sup>19</sup> Sharp talks of the ideal folk-lorist musician who will strip himself of his harmonic associations insofar as is possible, and go to the pure tune, from which he would derive "a definite musical impression, fundamentally different from any that he had hitherto experienced. He would, assuredly, yield to its fascination and realize that the modes really offered a new channel of musical expression, and an escape from the present restricted tonality."<sup>20</sup> After this experience, when he came to harmonize the modal folk tune,

he would instinctively strive, by carefully chosen harmonies, to preserve and translate into terms of polyphony that peculiar modal quality which had so impressed him. And this he would find to be quite possible; but only so long as he eschewed modulations to major and minor scales, and kept rigidly within the tonality of its mode.<sup>21</sup>

It is not surprising that Stephen Clarke, organist for an Anglican Church in Edinburgh, living in the height of the Classical influence in

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<sup>18</sup>Greig, p. 75.

<sup>19</sup>Vaughn Williams, p. 46.

<sup>20</sup>Sharp, p. 47.

<sup>21</sup>Sharp, p. 48.

music, should harmonize in a restricted tonal framework the tunes which Burns gave him. Much was at that time known about the modal system, as a glance through Dr. Burney's history will show. But the modes were considered the language of the ancient Greeks and of the Romish church, surely not appropriate for Scots young ladies who "sing and perform upon the Piano Forte."

The twentieth century has a better vantage point from which to view folk song. Much research has been done on the antiquity of folk songs, demonstrating that many are older than previously realized. Classical harmonies, though still influential, are from the twentieth-century perspective a historical phenomenon, rather than a ruling force. Tonality began to disintegrate at its very height; musicians such as Wagner and Richard Strauss were beginning to stretch it beyond its limits. Composers such as Vaughn Williams, Bela Bartok, and Benjamin Britten, in seeking a middle ground between traditional music and "anti"-music, have begun to draw on the wealth of material in folk song. Their use of the modal systems has had a definite influence on the modern ear; modal music is not "barbarous," but charming and new.

In harmonizing these fifteen tunes, the general practice has been to remain true to the Musical Museum. The tunes have been maintained as given in the Museum; some harmonic changes, however, have been found necessary because of the modal considerations discussed above. Since half the tunes are in the Ionian mode, for all practical purposes the same as our major mode, the pedal bass given for these in the Museum is entirely satisfactory and has been maintained throughout (see Songs 1-8). Greig has said that "the final note of the tune guides us in determining the

mode."<sup>22</sup> Sharp is in agreement with this principle; he finds very few folk tunes which do not end on the tonic of the mode.<sup>23</sup> In three songs, For A' That, The De'il's Awa wi' th' Exciseman, and Scots Wha Hae, acceptance of the final note as the tonic of the mode involves an important change from the Scots Musical Museum in the final chord. For example, For A' That, apparently in the key of G major, has a final note of D, indicating Mixolydian mode. Modally, therefore, the final chord must be D major, which gives to the tonality-tuned ear an incomplete sound; the song has ended on the "dominant" chord rather than the "tonic" chord. Realizing that there may be a difference of opinion as to the propriety of the final chord in these three songs, I have tried to stay entirely within the mode as defined by the final note in all cases.

Tam Glen is the only tune which has strong elements both of tonality and modality. The sharped sixth and seventh notes of the mode are characteristic of the more modern minor scale; but the tune ends in a fine modal cadence. The last three tunes, Ca' the Xowes, The Birks of Aberfeldy, and Green Grow the Rashies, are modal tunes, definitely inexplicable in terms of tonality. Some will surely find these the most refreshing of the fifteen.

Harmonizations presented here take into account first the melody. Pedal basses as given in the Scots Musical Museum have been followed where possible. Departures from the given bass have resulted from considerations of modality, in turn governed by the given melody. Simplicity has been a primary aim; four-part harmony is used throughout. Some tunes have

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<sup>22</sup>Greig, p. 55.

<sup>23</sup>Sharp, pp. 57-64.

been transposed to lower keys so as to bring them into a more comfortable singing range.

The growing receptivity of the modern ear to modal sounds and a harmonization in keeping with modality will surely enhance the appeal of a Burns song. With this sensitivity, we are better prepared to appreciate the full impact of Burns's songs--words and music--than perhaps anyone since 1800.

## SONG 1

## THERE WAS A LAD

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 64)

## 1

There was a lad was born in Kyle,  
 But whatna day o' whatna style,  
 I doubt it's hardly worth the while  
 To be sae nice wi' Robin.

Our monarch's hindmost year but ane  
 Was five-and-twenty days begun,  
 'Twas then a blast o' Janwar' win'  
 Blew hansel in on Robin.

## CHORUS

Robin was a rovin boy,  
 Rantin, rovin, rantin, rovin,  
 Robin was a rovin boy,  
 Rantin, rovin Robin!

## 2

The gossip keekit in his loof,  
 Quo' scho:--'Wha lives will see the proof,  
 This waly boy will be nae coof:  
 I think we'll ca' him Robin.

'He'll hae misfortunes great an' sma',  
 But ay a heart aboon them a'.  
 He'll be a credit till us a':  
 We'll a' be proud o' Robin!

## 3

'But sure as three times three mak nine,  
 I see by ilka score and line,  
 This chap will dearly like our kin',  
 So leeze me on thee, Robin!

'Guid faith,' quo' scho, 'I doubt you, stir,  
 Ye gar the lesses lie aspar;  
 But twenty fauts ye may hae waur--  
 So blessins on thee, Robin!'



## THERE WAS A LAD.

Lively

Tune: Dainty Davie.

There was a lad was born in Kyle, but what-na day o' what - na style, I

doubt it's hard - ly worth the while To be sae nice wi' Ro - bin. Our

mon-arch's hind-most year but ane was five-and - twenty days be - gun, 'Twas

then a blast o' Jan - war' win' Blew han - sel in on Ro - bin.

Chorus.

Ro - bin was a ro - vin boy, Ran - tin, ro - vin, ran - tin, ro - vin,

Ro - bin was a ro - vin boy, Ran - tin, ro - vin Ro - bin!

SMM I (1787), 34, No. 34.

SONG 1

## SONG 2

DUNCAN GRAY

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 29)

1

Weary fa' you, Duncan Gray,  
 Ha, ha the girdin o't;  
 Wae gae by you, Duncan Gray,  
 Ha, ha the girdin o't;  
 When a' the lave gae to their play,  
 Then I maun sit the lee lang day,  
 And jeeg the cradle wi' my tae,  
 And a' for the girdin o't.

2.

Bonie was the Lamma moon,  
 Ha, ha the girdin o't;  
 Glowrin a' the hills aboon,  
 Ha, ha the girdin o't;  
 The girdin brak, the beast cam down,  
 I tint my curch and baith my shoon,  
 and Duncan, ye're an unco loun,  
 Wae on the bad girdin o't.

3

But Duncan, gin ye'll keep your aith,  
 Ha, ha the girdin o't;  
 I'se bless you wi' my hindmost breath,  
 Ha, ha the girdin o't;  
 Duncan, gin ye'll keep your aith,  
 The beast again can bear us baith,  
 And suld Mess John will mend the skaith,  
 And clout the bad girdin o't.

# DUNCAN GRAY.

**Lively** Tune: Duncan Gray

Hea - ry fa' you, Dun - can Gray, Ha, ha the gird - in o't;

Wae gae by you, Dun-can Gray, Ha, ha the gird - in o't; When

a' the lave gae to their play, Then I maun sit the lee lang day, And

jeeg the cra - dle wi' my tae, And a' for the gird - in o't.

## SONG 3

## COMIN THRO' THE RYE

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 26)

1

Comin thro' the rye, poor body,  
 Comin thro' the rye,  
 She draigl't a' her petticoatie,  
 Comin thro' the rye.

## CHORUS

Oh Jenny's a' weest, poor body,  
 Jenny's seldom dry;  
 She draigl't a' her petticoatie,  
 Comin thro' the rye.

2

Gin a body meet a body  
 Comin thro' the rye,  
 Gin a body kiss a body  
 Need a body cry!

3

Gin a body meet a body  
 Comin thro' the glen,  
 Gin a body kiss a body  
 Need the world ken!

## COMIN THRO' THE RYE.

Tune: Miller's wedding.Slowly

Com - in thro' the rye, poor bo - dy, She  
Com - in thro' the rye, She

draigl't a' her pet - ti - coa - tie, Oh  
Com - in thro' the rye.

Chorus.

Jen - ny's a' weel, poor bo - dy, Jen - ny's sel - dom dry; She  
Jen - ny's a' weel, poor bo - dy, Jen - ny's sel - dom dry; She

draigl't a' her pet - ti - coa - tie, Com - in thro' the rye.  
draigl't a' her pet - ti - coa - tie, Com - in thro' the rye.

## SONG 4

## ELIBANKS AND ELIBRAES

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 31)

1

O, Elibanks and Elibraes,  
 It was but since I saw ye,  
 But a' my days I'll sing your praise  
 Whatever may misca' ye.  
 Your trees were in their freshest bloom,  
 Your birds were singin' cheery,  
 When through your wavin' yellow broom,  
 I wander'd wi' my dearie!

2

How sweet the siller morning' sped  
 In cheerful contemplation!  
 How fast the gowden gloamin' fled  
 In loving conversation!  
 Now doon the bank and up the brae,  
 How could I ever weary,  
 In sic a place on sic a day  
 Wi' sic a bonnie dearie!

3

O, Elibanks and Elibraes,  
 Aye pleasant be your waters!  
 May a' your sons hae winning ways,  
 And lovely be your daughters!  
 My life to me maun surely be  
 Existence dull and dreary,  
 If I forget the day we met  
 When I was wi' my dearie.

# ELIBANKS AND ELIBRAES.

Moderately

Tune: Killicrankie.

O, El - i - banks and El - i - braes, It was but since I saw ye, But

a' my days I'll sing your praise What - ev - er may mis - ca' ye. Your

trees were in their fresh - est bloom, Your birds were sing - in' cheery, When

through your wav - in' yel - low broom, I wan - der'd wi' my dear - ie!

## SONG 5

## THE BANKS O' DOON

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 57)

1

Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon,  
 How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair;  
 How can ye chant, ye little birds,  
 And I see weary fu' o' care!  
 Thou'll break my heart thou warbling bird,  
 That wantons thro' the flowering thorn:  
 Thou minds me o' departed joys,  
 Departed never to return.

2

Oft has I rov'd by bonie Doon,  
 To see the rose and woodbine twine;  
 And ilka bird sang o' its love,  
 And fondly see did I o' mine.  
 Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,  
 Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;  
 And my fause lover stae my rose,  
 But, ah! he left the thorn wi' me.



## THE BANKS O' DOON.

Slowly

Tune: Caledonian Hunt's delight.

Ye banks and braes o' bon - ie Doon, How can ye bloom sae  
 fresh and fair; How can ye chant, ye lit - tle birds, And I sae wea - ry,  
 fu' o' care! Thou'll break my heart thou warb - ling bird, That  
 wan - tons thro' the flower - ing thorn: Thou minds me o' de -  
 part - ed joys, De - part - ed nev - er to re - turn.

SMM IV (1792), 387, No. 374.

SONG 5

## SONG 6

## O'ER THE WATER TO CHARLIE

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 43)

1

Come boat me o'er, come row me o'er,  
 Come boat me o'er to Charlie;  
 I'll gie John Ross another bawbee,  
 To boat me o'er to Charlie.

## CHORUS

We'll o'er the water, we'll o'er the sea,  
 We'll o'er the water to Charlie;  
 Come weal, come woe, we'll gather and go,  
 And live or die wi' Charlie.

2

I lo'e weel my Charlie's name,  
 Tho' some there be abhor him:  
 But O, to see auld Nick gaun hame,  
 And Charlie's faes before him!

3

I swear and vow by moon and stars,  
 And sun that shines so early!  
 If I had twenty thousand lives,  
 I'd die as aft for Charlie.

## O'ER THE WATER TO CHARLIE.

Lively

Tune: O'er the water to Charlie.

Come boat me o'er, come row me o'er, Come boat me o'er to

Char - lie; I'll gie John Ross a - noth-er baw - bee, To boat me o'er to

Chorus.

Char - lie. We'll o'er the wa - ter, we'll o'er the sea, We'll

o'er the wa - ter to Char - lie; Come weal, come woe, we'll

ga - ther and go, And live or die wi' Char - lie.

SMM II (1788), 195, No. 187.

SONG 6

## SONG 7

## AULD LANG SYNE

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 23)

1

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
 And never brought to mind?  
 Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
 And auld lang syne!

## CHORUS

For auld lang syne, my jo,  
 For auld lang syne,  
 We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,  
 For auld lang syne.

2

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp!  
 And surely I'll be mine!  
 And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,  
 For auld lang syne.

3

We twa hae run about the braes,  
 And pou'd the gowans fine;  
 But we've wander'd mony a weary fit,  
 Sin auld lang syne.

4

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,  
 Frae morning sun till dine;  
 But seas between us braid hae roar'd,  
 Sin auld lang syne.

5

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere!  
 And gie's a hand o' thine!  
 And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught,  
 For auld lang syne.

## AULD LANG SYNE.

Moderately

Tune: Auld lang syne.

Should auld ac - quaint-ance be for - got And nev - er brought to mind? Should

Chorus.

auld ac - quaint - ance be for - got, And auld lang syne. For

auld lang syne, my jo, For auld lang syne, We'll

tak a cup o' kind - nesses yet, For auld lang syne.

## SONG 8

## AFTON WATER

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 15)

1

Flow gently sweet Afton among thy green braes,  
 Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;  
 My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,  
 Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

2

Thou stock dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,  
 Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,  
 Thou green crested lapping thy screaming forbear,  
 I charge you disturb not my slumbering Fair.

3

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,  
 Far mar'k with the courses of clear, winding rills;  
 There daily I wander as noon rises high,  
 My flocks and my Mary's sweet Cot in my eye.

4

How pleasant thy banks and green vallies below,  
 Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;  
 There oft as mild ev'ning weeps over the lea,  
 The sweet scented birk shades my Mary and me.

5

Thy chrystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,  
 And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;  
 How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,  
 As gathering sweet flowerets she stems thy clear wave.

6

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,  
 Flow gently, sweet River, the theme of my lays;  
 My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,  
 Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

# AFTON WATER.

Slowly

Tune: Afton Water.

Flow gent - ly sweet Af - ton a - mong thy green braes, Flow gent - ly, I'll  
sing thee a song in thy praise; My Ma - ry's a - sleep by thy  
mur - mur - ing stream, Flow gent - ly, sweet Af - ton, dis - turb not her dream.

## SONG 9

## FOR A' THAT

(Oxford Burns, pp. 328-9)

## 1

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

## 2

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,  
 Wear hodden-gray, and a' that;  
 Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,  
 A man's a man for a' that.  
 For a' that, and a' that,  
 Their tinsel show, and a' that;  
 The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,  
 Is King o' men for a' that.

## 3

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,  
 Wha scruts, and stares, and a' that;  
 Tho' hundreds worship at his word,  
 He's but a coof for a' that:  
 For a' that, and a' that,  
 His riband, star, and a' that,  
 The man of independent mind,  
 He looks and laughs at a' that.

## 4

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

## 5

Then let us pray that come it may,  
 As come it will for a' that;  
 That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,  
 May bear the gree, and a' that.  
 For a' that and a' that,  
 It's coming yet, for a' that,  
 That man to man the warld o'er  
 Shall brothers be for a' that.



# FOR A' THAT.

Slowly

Tune: For a' that.

Is there, for hon - est pov - er - ty That hangs his head, and a' that? The

Detailed description: This system contains the first two staves of the musical score. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The lyrics are written between the staves. The melody begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bass line starts with a quarter note G2, followed by a quarter note F2, and then a half note E2.

cow - ard - slave, we pass him by We dare be poor for a' that! For

Detailed description: This system contains the third and fourth staves. The top staff continues the melody from the first system, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bottom staff continues the bass line, starting with a quarter note G2, followed by a quarter note F2, and then a half note E2. The lyrics are written between the staves.

a' that, and a' that. Our toils ob - scure and a' that. The

Detailed description: This system contains the fifth and sixth staves. The top staff continues the melody, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bottom staff continues the bass line, starting with a quarter note G2, followed by a quarter note F2, and then a half note E2. The lyrics are written between the staves.

rank is but the guin - ea's stamp, The man's the good for a' that.

Detailed description: This system contains the seventh and eighth staves. The top staff continues the melody, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bottom staff continues the bass line, starting with a quarter note G2, followed by a quarter note F2, and then a half note E2. The lyrics are written between the staves.

## SONG 10

## THE DE'IL'S AWA WI' TH' EXCISEMAN

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 59)

1

The de'il cam fiddlin thro' the town,  
 And danc'd awa wi' th' Exciseman;  
 And ilka wife cries, 'Auld Mahoun,  
 I wish you luck o' the prize, man.'

## CHORUS

The de'il's awa, the de'il's awa,  
 The de'il's awa wi' th' Exciseman,  
 He's danc'd awa, he's danc'd awa,  
 He's danc'd awa wi' th' Exciseman.

2

We'll mak our maut and we'll brew our drink,  
 We'll laugh, sing, and rejoice, man;  
 And mony braw thanks to the meikle black de'il,  
 That danc'd awa wi' th' Exciseman.

3

There's threesome reels, there's foursome reels,  
 There's hornpipes and strathspeys, man,  
 But the ae best dance e'er cam to the Land  
 Was The De'il's Awa wi' th' Exciseman.

## THE DE'IL'S AWA WI' TH' EXCISEMAN.

Lively

Tune: The Hemp-dresser.

The de'il cam fid-dlin thro' the town, And danc'd a - wa wi' th' Ex -

cise - man; And il - ka wife cries, 'Auld Ma - houn, I wish you luck o' the

Chorus.

prize, man. The de'il's a - wa, the de'il's a - wa, The

de'il's a - wa wi' th' Ex - cise - man, He's danc'd a - wa, he's

danc'd a - wa, He's danc'd a - wa wi' th' Ex - cise - man.

SMM IV (1792), 412, No. 399.

SONG 10

## SONG 11

## SCOTS, WHA HAE

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 51)

1

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,  
 Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,  
 Welcome to your gory bed  
 Or to victory.

2

Now's the day and now's the hour;  
 See the front of battle lour,  
 See approach proud Edward's pow'r,  
 Chains and slavery.

3

Wha will be a traitor knave?  
 Wha can fill a coward's grave?  
 Wha see base as be a slave?  
 Let him turn and flee!

4

Wha for Scotland's king and law  
 Freedom's sword will strongly draw,  
 Free-man stand, or free-man fa',  
 Let him follow me!

5

By oppression's woes and pains!  
 By your sons in servile chains!  
 We will drain our dearest veins,  
 But they shall be free!

6

Lay the proud usurpers low!  
 Tyrants fall in every foe!  
 Liberty's in every blow!  
 Let us do, or die!

# SCOTS, WHA HAE.

Boldly

Tune: Hey, Tutti taitie.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wal-lace bled,  
Scots, wham Bruce has af-ten led,

Wel-come to your go-ry bed  
Or to vic-to-ry! Now's the day, and

now's the hour: See the front o' bat-tle lour,  
See ap-proach proud

Ed-ward's pow'r -- Chains and sia-ver-y!

## SONG 12

## TAM GLEN

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 55)

1

My heart is a-breaking, dear Tittie,  
 Some counsel unto me come len',  
 To anger them a' is a pity,  
 But what will I do wi' Tam Glen.

2

I'm thinking, wi' sic a braw fellow,  
 In poortith I might mak a fen:  
 What care I in riches to wallow,  
 If I mauna marry Tam Glen.

3

There's Lowrie the laird o' Dumeller,  
 'Gude day to you,' --brute! he comes ben:  
 He brags and he blows o' his siller,  
 But when will he dance like Tam Glen.

4

My Minnie does constantly deave me,  
 And bids me beware o' young men:  
 They flatter, she says, to deceive me,  
 But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen.

5

My Daddie says, gin I'll forsake him,  
 He'll gie me gude hunder marks ten:  
 But, if it's ordain'd I maun take him,  
 O wha will I get but Tam Glen.

6

Yestreen at the Valentine's dealing,  
 My heart to my mou gied a steu:  
 For thrice I drew sne without failing,  
 And thrice it was written, Tam Glen.

7

The last Halloween I was waukin  
 My droukit sark-sleeve, as ye ken:  
 His likeness cam up the house staukin,  
 And the very grey breeks o' Tam Glen!

8

Come counsel, dear Tittie, don't tarry;  
 I'll gie you my bonie black hen,  
 Gif ye will advise me to Marry  
 The lad I lo'e dearly, Tam Glen.

# TAM GLEN.

Lively

Tune: Tam Glen.

My heart is a break-ing, dear Tit - tie, Some coun-sel un - to me come len', To

The first system of musical notation for the song 'Tam Glen'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains the melody with lyrics underneath. The bass staff contains the accompaniment. The lyrics for this system are: 'My heart is a break-ing, dear Tit - tie, Some coun-sel un - to me come len', To'. The music is in 2/4 time and has a lively character.

an - ger them a' is a pi - ty, But what will I do wi' Tam Glen.

The second system of musical notation for the song 'Tam Glen'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains the melody with lyrics underneath. The bass staff contains the accompaniment. The lyrics for this system are: 'an - ger them a' is a pi - ty, But what will I do wi' Tam Glen.'. The music continues in 2/4 time.

SMM III (1790), 306, No. 296.

SONG 12

## SONG 13

## CA' THE YOWES

(Oxford Burns, p. 334)

1

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,  
 Ca' them where the heather grows,  
 Ca' them where the burnie rows,  
 My bonnie dearie.

2

Hark! the mavis' evening sang  
 Sounding Clouden's woods amang;  
 Then a-faulding let us gang,  
 My bonnie dearie.

3

We'll gae down by Clouden side,  
 Thro' the hazels spreading wide  
 O'er the waves that sweetly glide  
 To the moon sae clearly.

4

Yonder's Clouden's silent towers,  
 Where at moonshine midnight hours,  
 O'er the dewy-bending flowers,  
 Fairies dance sae cheery.

5

Ghaist nor bogle shalt thou fear;  
 Thou'rt to love and Heaven sae dear,  
 Nocht of ill may come thee near,  
 My bonnie dearie.

6

Fair and lovely as thou art,  
 Thou hast stown my very heart;  
 I can die--but canna part,  
 My bonnie dearie.



# CA' THE YOWES.

Slowly

Tune: Ca' the yowes.

Ca' the yowes to the Knowes, Ca' them where the hea - ther grows,

Ca' them where the bur - nie rows, My bbn - nie dear - ie.

Chorus.

Hark the ma - vis e'en - ing sang Sound - ing Cloud - en's woods a - mang;

Then a - fauld - ing let us gang, My bon - ie dear - ie.

## SONG 14

## THE BIRKS OF ABERFELDY

(Dick, 104, No. 113)

## CHORUS

Bonie lassie, will ye go,  
 Will ye go, will ye go?  
 Bonie lassie, will ye go  
 To the birks of Aberfeldy?

## 1

Now simmer blinks on flow'ry braes,  
 And o'er the crystal streamlets plays,  
 Come, let us spend the lightsome days  
 In the birks of Aberfeldy.

## 2

The little birdies blythely sing,  
 While o'er their heads the hazels hing,  
 Or lightly flit on wanton wing  
 In the birks of Aberfeldy.

## 3

The braes ascend like lofty wa's,  
 The foaming stream, deep-roaring, fa's  
 O'erhung wi' fragrant spreading shaws,  
 The birks of Aberfeldy.

## 4

The hoary cliffs are crown'd wi' flowers,  
 White o'er the linns the burnie pours,  
 And, rising, weets wi' misty showers  
 The birks of Aberfeldy.

## 5

Let Fortune's gifts at random flee,  
 They ne'er shall draw a wish frae me,  
 Supremely blest wi' love and thee,  
 In the birks of Aberfeldy.

## THE BIRKS OF ABERFELDY.

Lively

Chorus.

Tune: The Birks of Aberfeldie.

Bon - ny las - sie, will ye go, Will ye go, will ye go?

Bon - ny las - sie, will ye go To the birks of A - ber - feld - y? Now

Sim - mer blinks on flow'ry braes, And o'er the chry - sal stream - lets plays; Come

let us spend the light - some days in the birks of A - ber - feld - y.

## SONG 15

## GREEN GROW THE RASHES

(The Tuneful Flame, p. 33)

1

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',  
 In ev'ry hour that passes, 0;  
 What signifies the life o' man,  
 An' 'twere not for the lasses, 0.

CHORUS

Green grow the rashes, 0;  
 Green grow the rashes, 0;  
 The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,  
 Are spent among the lasses, 0.

2

The warly race may riches chase,  
 An' riches still may fly them, 0;  
 An' tho' at last they catch them fast,  
 Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, 0.

3

But gie me a canny hour at e'en,  
 My arms about my Dearie, 0;  
 An' warly cares, an' warly men,  
 May a' gae tapsalteerie, 0!

4

For you sae douse! ye sneer at this,  
 Ye'er nought but senseless asses, 0;  
 The wisest Man the warl' saw,  
 He dearly lov'd the lasses, 0.

5

Auld Nature swears, the lovely Dears  
 Her noblest work she classes, 0;  
 Her prentice han' she try'd on man,  
 An' then she made the lasses, 0.

## GREEN GROW THE RASHES.

Tune: Green grow the rashes, O.

Lively

There's nought but care on ev'-ry han', In ev' - ry hour that pas - ses, O: What

sig - ni - fies the life o' man, An' 'twere na for the lads - sgs, O.

Chorus.

Green grow the rash - es, O; Green grow the rash - es, O; The

sweet - est hours that e'er I spend, Are spent a - mong the lads - ses, O.

(1787), 78, No. 77.

SONG 15

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FIFTEEN SONGS OF ROBERT BURNS

by

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B. A., University of California, 1963

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1966

The great fascination with folk song which began in the eighteenth century and grew to gigantic proportions in the twentieth constantly seeks new avenues of interest. The songs of Robert Burns are a logical object of such interest. A song has two equally important elements: words and music. Burns, who had intimate knowledge of hundreds of Scots tunes, realized the importance of both elements. His habit of composing words to an already-existing tune produced an art neither music nor literature, but uniquely both. Burns worked directly on two important collections of Scots songs: James Johnson's Scots Musical Museum and George Thomson's A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs. Thomson used his editorial power to Anglicize the Scots songs and to cleanse them of vulgarity; his collection is interesting primarily because of its settings by famous Classical composers whose very Classicism drives them far from the spirit of Scottish folk song. The Scots Musical Museum is the most authentic presentation of the songs of Burns, since Johnson obtained the songs directly from Burns and since Johnson adhered specifically to the folk idiom. Fifteen Burns songs encompassing a variety of subjects are presented here. The tunes are short and are constructed symmetrically in a highly regular formal structure. The melodies are characterized by broad range and angular leaps; treatment of the words is largely syllabic. These tunes are grounded in a modal, rather than a tonal, system of music. The seven "ecclesiastical" modes, although related to the major and minor scales, function very differently. Probably the most important change from modal to tonal structure is in the use of an ascending semitone, or "leading" tone between the last two notes. Modal music is purely melodic; the tonal melody represents a series of harmonic progressions. The majority of songs presented here are in the Ionian mode, which corresponds intervallically with our major scale;



the modal "feeling" occurs with varying intensity in all of the tunes. Though modal music is melodic, it is proper and rewarding to harmonize these tunes if the melody is allowed to determine the harmony according to modal rules. Stephen Clarke, living in the height of the Classical influence, harmonized these tunes in a restricted tonal framework. The twentieth century has a better vantage point from which to view folk song, since Classical tonality is no longer a ruling force. Here, the tune is as given in the Scots Musical Museum; in the eight tunes in Ionian mode, the given pedal bass is satisfactory. Departures from the Museum harmonies in the remaining tunes have resulted from considerations of modality, in turn governed by the melody. With the growing sensitivity of the modern ear to modal sounds, we are better prepared to appreciate the full impact of Burns's songs--words and music--than perhaps anyone since 1800.