

ANNALS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Hume passes
into the absolute,
brace-girdled, without
concern.

James,
laird of Auchinleck,
as this transpires, lays
boisterous breath along
his doxy's shoulder,

elevates the skirt,
and takes her on the dust
of a stonemason's table,
some way below
the Castle hill.

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In or out
of armour, which
would you rather –

cool release
of the *bon philosophe*
or Boswell's perturbation?

Much to be endured,
and little to be enjoyed?

or what mix in between?

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At ten, a drum
for clart and creesh
on close and vennel.

The wind
in a shift lifts
leaves along old
Calton wall.

PEA AND HAM

Like they were baith hunkert
in Hungrie Mary's kitchy,
someplace in Dundee –
suppin deid man's face soup
wi lang drappin jaas.

COUP DE FOUDRE

There once were some people
who lived in a wood. And they
were shiny, shiny, shiny.
And the wood was special too.

Piece by piece they would
have the wood for themselves.
Only shiny ones could enter,
and shiny is for sure as shiny does.

One day each bole and crown
was ash – each branch and bud
(*tsk tsk*) – and all from a smidgen
of durable fire lobbed
in from the dusty beyond.

INCANTATION

– beginning with a couplet from *Carmina Gadelica*
and with grace notes from the same source.

I have a charm for the bruising
a charm for the blackening
a charm for cheats and impostors.

I summon from the cold clear air
from the bare branches of the trees
from worms coiling under the ground –

charm against cruel intent
charm for neglect
charm against wicked indifference:

may it lie on the white backs of the breakers of the sea
may it lie on the furthest reaches of the wind.

A salve for those who would grudge against the poor
a salve for those who would harry the innocent
a salve for those who would murder children:

may it lie in the stoniest stretches of the hills
may it lie in the darkest shelving along the shore.

A salve for those that would cram
whatever life they have with possession –
for the rage of owning without entitlement
for the desperate murderous possession of things:

may it lie on the cloud-banks that range across the sky
may it lie on the face of Rannoch Moor in its remoteness.

A charm against mystification by doctors
a charm against deception by the self-appointed
a charm against horrific insistence:

from the breeze that stirs the last of the yellowing leaves
from the slanting of the sun as it falls through the window.

A salve against grasping
a salve against preaching
a salve against promises exacted by threat.

Grace of form
grace of voice
grace of virtue
grace of sea
grace of land and air
grace of music
grace of dancing.

A salve against the uselessness of envy
a salve against denial of our own best nature
a salve against bitter enmity and silence.

Grace of beauty
grace of spirit
grace of laughter
grace of the fullness of life itself.

A salve to bind us
a salve to strengthen heart and happiness:

may it lie in the star-blanket there to spread over us
may it lie in the first light at the waking of day.