

James Hogg (1770-1835)

5 *The Gude Greye Katt*

There wase ane katt, and ane gude greye katt,  
That duallit in the tour of Blain;  
And mony haif hearit of that gude katt,  
That neuir shall heare agayn.

Scho had ane brynd upon her backe, 5  
And ane brent abone hir bree;  
Hir culoris war the merilit heuis  
That dappil the krene berrye.

But scho had that withyn hir ee  
That man may neuir declaire, 10  
For scho had that withyn hir ee  
Quhich mortyl docht na beare.

Sumtymis ane ladye sochte the tour,  
Of ryche and fayre beautye;  
Sumtymis ane maukyn cam therin, 15  
Hytchyng ryche wistfullye.

But quhan they serchit the tour of Blain,  
And socht it sayre and lang,  
They fand nocht but the gude greye katt  
Sittyng thrummyng at hir sang; 20

And up scho rase aud pacit hir wayis  
Full stetlye ower the stene,  
And streikit out hir braw hint-leg,  
As nocht at all had bene.

Weil mocht the wyfis in that kintrye 25  
Rayse up ane grefous stir,  
For neuir ane katt in all the lande  
Durst moop or melle wyth hir.

Quhaneuir theye lukit in her fece,  
Their fearis greue se ryfe, 30  
Theye snirtit and theye yollit throu frychte,  
And rann for dethe and lyfe.

The Lairde of Blain he had ane spouis,  
Beth cumlye, gude, and kynde;  
But scho had gane to the landis of pece, 35  
And left him sad behynde;

He had seuin dochteris all se fayre,  
Of mayre than yerdlye grece,  
Seuin bonnyer babyis neuir braithit ayre,  
Or smylit in parentis fece. 40

Ane daye, quhan theye war all alane,  
He sayde with hevye mene;  
“Quhat will cum of ye, my deire babyis,  
Now quhan your moderis gene?

“O quha will leide your tendyr myndis 45  
The pethe of ladyhoode,  
To thynke as ladye ocht to thynke,  
And feele as mayden sholde?

“Weil mot it kythe in maydenis mynde,  
And maydenis modestye, 50  
The want of hir that weil wase fit  
For taske unmeite for me!”

But up then spak the gude greye katt  
That satt on the herthe stene,  
“O hald yer tung, my deire maister, 55  
Nor mak se sayre ane mene:

“For I will breide your seuin dochteris,  
To winsum ladyhoode;  
To thynke as ladyis ocht to thynke,  
And feile as maydenis sholde. 60

“I’ll breide them fayre, I’ll breide them free

From every seye of syn,  
Fayre as the blumyng roz withoute,  
And pure in herte withyn.”

Rychte sayre astoundit wase the lairde, 65  
Ane frychtenit man wase he;  
But the sueite babyis war full faine,  
And chicklit joifullye.

May Ella tooke the gude greye katt  
Rychte fondlye on hir knee; 70  
“And hethe my pussye lernit to speike?  
I troue scho lernit of me.”

The katt, scho thrummyt at hir sang,  
And turnit hir haffet sleike,  
And drewe hir bonnye bassenyt side 75  
Againste the babyis cheike.

But the lairde he was ane cunnyng lairde,  
And he saide with spechis fayre,  
“I haif a feste in hall to nychte,  
Sueite pussye, be you there.” 80

The katt scho set ane luke on him,  
That turnit his herte til stene;  
“If you haif feste in hall to nychte,  
I shall be there for ane.”

The feste wase laide, the tabil spread 85  
With rych and nobil store,  
And there wase set the byschope of Blain,  
With all his holy kore;

He wase ane wyce and wylie wychte  
Of wytch and warlockrye, 90  
And mony ane wyfe had byrnit to coome,  
Or hangit on ane tre.

He kenit their merkis and molis of hell,  
And made them joifully

Ryde on the reid-het gad of ern, 95  
Ane plesaunt sycht to se.

The byschope said ane holye grace,  
Unpatiente to begyn,  
But nathyng of the gude greye katt  
Was funde the tour withyn; 100

But in there cam ane fayre ladye  
Cledd in the sylken sheene,  
Ane winsumer and bonnyer may  
On yerde was neur seene.

Scho tuke her sete at tabil heide, 105  
With courtlye modestye,  
Quhill ilken bosome byrnit with lufe,  
And waulit ilken ee.

Sueite was hir voyce to all the ryng,  
Unlesse the Lairde of Blain, 110  
For he had hearit that very voyce  
From off his own herthe stene.

He barrit the doris and windois fast,  
He barrit them to the jynne;  
“Now in the grece of Heuin,” said he, 115  
“Your excercyse begyn;

“There is ne grece nor happynesse  
For my poor babyis soulis,  
Until you trye that weirdlye wytch,  
And rost hir on the colis.” 120

“If this be scho,” the byschope saide,  
“This beauteous cumlye May,  
It is meite I try hir all alone  
To heire quhat scho will saye.”

“No,” quod the lairde, “I suthely sweire 125  
None shall from this proceide,  
Until I see that wycked wytch



The katt went throu withouten stop  
Lyke schado throu the daye,  
But the great byschopis fleschlye forme  
Made all the rofe gif waye;

The silyng faldit lyke ane buke, 165  
The serker crashit amayne,  
And shredis and flenis of brokyn stenis  
Fell to the grunde lyke rayne.

The braide ful mone wase up the lyft,  
The nychte wase lyke ane daye, 170  
As the greate byschope tuke his jante  
Up throu the milkye-waye;

He cryit se loude and lustilye  
The hillis and skyis war riuen;  
Och sicken cryis war neur hearit 175  
Atweine the yerde and heuin!

They sawe him spurryng in the ayre,  
And flynging horredlye,  
And than he prayit and sang ane saum,  
For ane fearit wychte was he; 180

But aye his waylingis fainter greue  
As the braide lyft he crossit,  
Quhill sum saide that theye hearit them still,  
And sum saide all wase loste.

There was ane herd on Dollar-Lawe, 185  
Turnyng his flockis by nychte,  
Or stealyng in ane gude haggysse  
Before the mornyng lychte.

He hearit the cryis cum yont the heuin,  
And sawe them bethe passe bye; 190  
The katt scho skreuit up hir taile  
As sayrlye pinchit to flye.

