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Robert Burns: 1759-1796

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A Bicentenary Exhibition from the
G. Ross Roy Collection at the Thomas Cooper Library

University of South Carolina Libraries  March–May 1996
FOREWORD

The University of South Carolina is marking the bicentenary of Robert Burns's death in 1796, not only with an international research conference on "Robert Burns and Literary Nationalism," but with a major exhibition of works by and about the poet, showing selected highlights from the G. Ross Roy Collection of Burns, Burnsiana and Scottish Poetry.

This extensive collection, acquired from Professor Roy through a generous gift-purchase agreement in 1989, is now widely recognized as among the best Burns collections anywhere in North America, and it regularly attracts to the University researchers from around the world. It is a special pleasure to me to see the Roy Collection displayed for the bicentenary, as its acquisition was one of the first goals to be realized after I became director of the University of South Carolina Libraries.

The present exhibition, curated by Prof. Roy himself, represents of course only a very small part of the whole collection, which covers Scottish poetry from the 18th to the 20th centuries, with some earlier items. On-line entries for items in the collection are available through the University's USCAN catalogue, and through the World Wide Web, and a full printed catalogue of the Burns items is now also in preparation, with Prof. Roy's help. This exhibit catalogue gives a sample of what is to come and provides an informative commemoration of the University's Robert Burns bicentenary celebrations.

—George D. Terry,
Vice Provost and Dean for Libraries and Information Systems
A NOTE ON THE EXHIBIT AND CATALOGUE

The items chosen for the University’s Robert Burns bicentenary exhibit have been selected from over 4,000 items in the Roy Collection on Burns alone. In making the selection, the aim has been not only to display some of the outstanding high points and the rarest items (the Kilmarnock edition, the 1799 *Merry Muses*, the letter to Clarinda), but also to represent some of the different strengths of the collection, as for instance in sections on the early editions, on the development of Burns scholarship in the 19th century, on Burns chapbooks, on Burns and Scottish song, and on Burns translations. For the display, but not in this catalogue, I also included some items, such as postcards, banknotes and postage stamps, to illustrate the poet’s popular reputation. The great majority of items have now been transferred with the Roy Collection to the University of South Carolina Libraries; a few items on display, notably manuscripts and artifacts, are from my personal collection, and the postcards were from the collection of Thomas E. Keith. The items on Burns in America, originally displayed as part of a small separate exhibit in South Caroliniana Library, have here been integrated with the main exhibit sequence.

While I have selected the items and provided the descriptions, I should like to thank Jamie S. Hansen, who coordinated the exhibit for Special Collections, my wife Lucie who helped with the exhibit planning and with this catalogue, and Patrick Scott who helped in mounting the exhibit and in editing. Thanks are due to the South Carolina Humanities Council, a state-level agency of the National Endowment for the Humanities, for support of the Burns bicentenary project, and to the Thomas Cooper Society, for generously funding this exhibit catalogue.

—G. Ross Roy
IN THE LOBBY

Robert Burns

This handsome full-length statue of Burns, in bronzed plaster, is based on the most familiar image of the poet, Alexander Nasmyth's late full-length oil portrait, painted in 1828.

THE EARLY EDITIONS OF BURNS


Although he had never published anything before, Burns decided in 1786 to publish a volume of his poems. Subscription bills were circulated and the printer John Wilson of Kilmarnock engaged to produce the volume. This appeared late in July in an edition of 612 copies. They evidently sold well, because on November 15 Burns was able to send Mrs. Frances Dunlop only five of the six copies she had requested. The volume has now become a high spot in the world of books, listed in the Grolier Club's One hundred books famous in English literature (1902). An informal census has located fewer than 70 extant complete copies. Egerer 1.

An act for rebuilding the bridge across the river of Ayr, at the town of Ayr. London: Eyre and Strahan, 1785. “The Brigs of Ayr” first appeared in the 1786 edition of Burns. This is the act that authorized the construction of the New Brig.

Unsigned review, in English review [London], 9:2 (February 1787), 89-93. There were six reviews of the Kilmarnock edition. This review was probably written by John Logan.

Robert Burns: Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect. Kilmarnock: printed by D. Brown under the supervision of D. M'Naught, 1909. Inscribed by M'Naught “To Mr. W. Ormiston Roy,” July 18, 1912. Almost no copies of the Kilmarnock edition exist in the original wrappers. This facsimile reproduces the volume as it would have come from the press of John Wilson. Egerer 948.

Miniature books have always fascinated collectors. This facsimile of the Kilmarnock edition is an exact replica of the original. It was issued separately and also as part of the set called the Midget Library. *Set loaned by Dr. Madeleine Roy.*


Among the facsimiles of the Kilmarnock edition, all except this one bear a statement on the verso of the title-page giving the name of the printer and the real date of printing of the edition. Furthermore, this edition bears a bookplate which suggests that the volume at one time belonged to Burns. Nothing, in fact, is farther from the truth, because this book was printed in 1913. Nevertheless, there have been copies of it sold to the unwary as an original Kilmarnock edition. *Not in Egerer.*


Encouraged by the success of his Kilmarnock edition, and especially by a letter from an Edinburgh minister, Dr. Thomas Blacklock, Burns gave up his planned emigration to Jamaica and set off for Edinburgh on November 27, 1786. A review of his poems had already appeared in the October issue of the *Edinburgh magazine*, but it was Henry Mackenzie's review in *The Lounger* of December 9 which made Burns a celebrity. A new edition was agreed upon and William Creech issued proposals for it. Initially the printing was to be 1,500 copies, but when the proposals came in, it was discovered that a larger printing would be necessary, so the book was reset. Numerous differences are to be seen in the two states; most notably the word "skinking" (watery) in "Address to a Haggis" became "stinking," to the amusement of subsequent generations.

Using the same title as for the Kilmarnock volume, *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect*, the Edinburgh edition appeared on April 17, 1787. To it Burns added 17 poems, and also five new songs, pointing the way in which the poet's genius was to be directed for the remaining nine years of his life. *Egerer 2 ("stinking" issue).*


A copy of the Edinburgh edition exactly as it was issued on April 17, 1787. Few such remain because most owners had the book rebound, usually in leather. *Egerer 2 ("skinking" issue).*

Burns had remained in Edinburgh for 10 months after the publication of his poems without getting a settlement from Creech. The figures Burns jotted down on the letter, it can be argued, represent his calculation of the number of volumes printed, accounted for in the following manner: 1,000—copies printed for the additional names which came in on the subscription list (obviously an approximation); 500—the copies subscribed for by Creech; 1,500—initial printing; 250—copies sent to London, the relatively small number accounted for by the fact that A. Strahan and T. Cadell were to publish a third edition, which probably appeared in November. If this surmise is correct, then the printing of the Edinburgh edition was 3,250.


The London (3rd) edition of 1787 was copied from the “stinking” state, suggesting that the copies of the Edinburgh (2nd), which were used as copy text for the London edition, were from the end of the print run. *Egerer 5.*


Piracies, works published without the authority of or payment to the author or legitimate publisher, flourished in the 18th century in Ireland and the United States. We are not surprised that publishers lost little time in producing a piracy of such a bestseller as *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect*. The earliest of these came from the press of James Magee and appeared on September 24, 1787. Magee also pirated the expanded 1793 edition of Burns. *Egerer 3.*


William Gilbert of Dublin had an arrangement with Magee who shipped printed sheets of the text to him. Things went well for the two publishers, and they reissued their piracies in 1789 and 1790; when the 1793 edition of Burns’s poems appeared in Edinburgh, Magee soon followed suit. While there was not a specific 1793 edition published in Dublin, copies of the second volume of the Belfast edition were sent to Dublin where they were bound with the first volume of the Dublin 1790 imprint, thus making the full text of the 1793 edition available in Dublin. *Egerer 4.*

In the 18th and 19th centuries the United States did not recognize copyright for books published in other countries and so American publishers had no difficulty printing editions of Burns’s works. The success of the Edinburgh and London editions made it almost certain that an American firm would follow suit. The first of these appeared on July 7, 1788, from the Philadelphia partners Peter Stewart and George Hyde. The book was printed on American paper which was of poor quality, hence the yellowing now visible. The printing must have been a small one because the book is now rare. *Egerer 10.*


The second American edition appeared in mid-December 1788, issued by J. and A. M’Lean of New York. The paper in this edition is much superior to that of Philadelphia; it may have been imported from Great Britain. At the time of publication there was a brisk trade in imported British books, and this may account for the apparently poor sales of the New York edition. In 1799 there were still unsold sheets of the edition, which was issued with a new title-page. Some copies of the 1788 edition have an engraved frontispiece of Burns, which was probably copied from the 1787 Edinburgh portrait, with the result that the poet looks the opposite way (inwards) to the Edinburgh likeness. *Egerer 11.*


In April 1792 Burns answered a letter from William Creech who suggested a new edition of poems in two volumes. To those poems already published by Creech, Burns said he could add “about fifty pages” and would also “correct & retrench a good deal.” All he requested in return were books to a value to be determined by Alexander Fraser Tytler, as well as a few copies of the published works for gifts. In his letter Burns asked that he be sent proofs in order that he could correct them himself, but in the end it was apparently Tytler who did so. The two-volume set was published on February 18, 1793, and consisted of the contents of the 1787 volume and 18 poems published for the first time in book form. The best-known poem to join the Burns canon in the 1793 edition was, of course, “Tam o’Shanter,” a work written for Francis Grose’s *Antiquities of Scotland* of 1791. *Egerer 25.*

This is a reprint of the 1793 edition. Burns corrected a set of sheets of the 1793 edition for use in setting the 1794 edition, but does not appear to have proofread this edition, with the result that new errors crept in. *Egerer 29.*


The first posthumous edition. *Egerer 34.*


Creech published two further editions of Burns’s poems in this format: in 1798 and 1800. Creech was subsequently involved with Currie’s four-volume *Works.* It is interesting to note how the likeness of Burns changed with successive editions. The frontispiece of the 1798 edition has been touched up, and we have a Burns who looks quite different to the one of 1793. As copyists redrew the poet in subsequent years, the likeness which emerges is almost unrecognizable as Burns. *Egerer 35, 48.*


Soon after Burns’s death it was decided that a collected edition of his works should be undertaken, but it was difficult to find anyone to shoulder the task, which eventually fell to Dr. James Currie, a native of Dumfriesshire who practiced medicine in Liverpool. His main objective was to raise money for the poet’s family and so he felt he must not offend any of the people whom Burns had known or met. For this reason Currie deliberately omitted material from his biography which
would have resulted in a more rounded portrait of his subject. The edition immediately became the standard biography and text for the poems and letters of the poet. This inaccurate biography and mangled text gave the world a woefully biased picture of Burns (for instance that he was a drunkard, when his letters and contemporary reports about him shed quite a different light on him), a picture which persisted well into this century. Egerer 50.


Although Currie’s first edition of Burns lists Liverpool as its primary place of publication, the firm of Cadell and Davies of London played an important role in selling and distributing the set. Burns’s Edinburgh publisher, William Creech, was also active in promoting the work. In this letter of June 30, 1800, Creech is complaining to the London firm that he has not received the 300 copies he had ordered. The work sold so well that the 2,000 copies printed were soon exhausted, and new editions were published in 1801, 1802, and 1803—a total of 10 editions by 1823.


Robert D. Thornton has made an exhaustive study of the production and marketing of the Currie edition. Unfortunately this work remains unpublished. This copy is one of two typescripts. Gift of Robert D. Thornton.


When James Currie published his four-volume Works of Robert Burns in 1800 it was not long before an American publisher followed suit. This first American collected edition was produced by Thomas Dobson of Philadelphia. It will be noted that Nasmyth’s portrait of Burns is now facing outwards, as it was in the original Edinburgh edition, suggesting that this is a copy of a copy. As this copying continued, the likeness to the original became less and less accurate. In later editions one can barely, if at all, recognize the subject. Egerer 64.


Robert Hartley Cromek’s Reliques of Robert Burns: consisting chiefly of original letters, poems, and critical observations on Scottish songs (1808) added a
large number of poems and letters to the canon as established by Currie in 1800. Next to Currie, Cromek's is the most important early edition of Burns. The Roy Collection contains fine copies of the 1808 London Cromek, including one inscribed by Cromek to William Creech. This edition of Cromek was published in Philadelphia the following year. The front cover has an inlaid full-length likeness of the poet, and there is a fore-edge painting of the cottage in which Burns was born. Egerer 123.


The octavo edition of 1820 is called the eighth edition, when in fact it is the ninth, because Cadell and Davies had published the true eighth edition, a duodecimo, in 1814. Some time later yet another “eighth” edition appeared, this time with numerous plates dated 1814 or 1823, drawn by T. Stothard. Even later the “1820” edition was bound up in publisher's cloth in five volumes by the addition of R. H. Cromek's *Reliques of Robert Burns*, originally published in 1808 as a supplement to Currie. These sets can only be identified when in the original remainder binding. Judging from the cloth, the set exhibited here would appear to have been bound between 1830 and 1840. Egerer 242.

**Robert Burns**

Bronze model of a statue of Burns in Cheyenne, Wyoming, by H. S. Gamley, RSA.

**BURNS, CHAPBOOKS, AND POPULAR CULTURE**

Burns's poems and songs were widely distributed through Scotland and beyond as simple chapbooks, often a single sheet folded to form eight pages, heavily represented in the Roy Collection. The exhibit included a selection of chapbooks containing Burns material, from Stirling, Glasgow, and Newcastle; with the items given individual description here are also grouped the items relating to “Tam o’ Shanter.”


The rare chapbook form of Burns's poem celebrating the drinking contest at Friar’s Carse in 1789, won by Alexander Fergusson of Craigparoch. Egerer 22, variant.
Burns enclosed for Cleghorn one of his 12 proof-copies of “The Whistle.”


Robert Burns and others: Four funny tales: Alloway Kirk, or Tam o’ Shanter, Watty and Meg, or the wife reformed, The loss o’ the pack, and The monk and the miller’s wife. Air: printed by J. & P. Wilson, 1802. Modern quarter-calf, marbled boards, contemporary leather label.
The other poets represented were Allan Ramsay and Alexander Wilson.

“The sodier’s return” was popular in Great Britain during the Napoleonic Wars, but it is more likely that the occasion of this American broadside, printed in Boston between 1810 and 1816, was the war between the United States and Britain of 1812-1814. This broadside with illustrative woodcut appears to be unique.

Pottery jug
This jug depicts two scenes from “Tam o’Shanter.” It was manufactured by W. Ridgeway & Co., Hanley, October 1, 1835.

Captain Francis Grose was already well known for his six-volume Antiquities of England and Wales (1773-1787) when he came to Scotland to work on a like project. Burns persuaded him to include a drawing of Alloway Kirk, which Grose
promised to do if Burns would supply him with a ghost story to go with it. Burns sent him three stories of diablerie, one a prose precursor of “Tam o’Shanter.” On December 1, 1790, he sent Grose the poem. It first appeared in The Edinburgh Herald for March 18, 1791, and somewhat later in volume II of Grose’s Antiquities of Scotland. The poem as printed here contains four lines at the bottom of the right-hand column of page 200, beginning “Three Lawyers’ tongues, turn’d inside out,” but when Burns submitted the poem to Alexander Fraser Tytler before his poems were published by Creech in 1793, Tytler suggested that these lines might give offense, and the poem appeared in Creech’s edition without them.

In this copy, the pages with the illustration of Alloway Kirk and “Tam o’Shanter” itself have been removed from Antiquities of Scotland and separately bound. The item belonged to the great ballad collector William MacMath, who collaborated with Francis James Child. The Roy Collection also includes a copy of the full Grose volume.


The first appearance of “Tam o’Shanter” in an edition of Burns’s poems was in 1793. The poem contains the epigraph from Gavin Douglas’s translation into Scots of the Aeneid, which he called Eneados. This had been omitted from the version in the Antiquities of Scotland.


Gavin Douglas’s Eneados was the first complete translation of Virgil in Scots or English and was published in 1553, although completed in 1513, nine years before his death. Burns took the epigraph to “Tam o’Shanter” from the Eneados: “Of Brownyis and of Bogillis full is this buke.” The Oxford English Dictionary lists the earliest known use of the word “brownie” as that of Gavin Douglas in this work.


The popularity of “Tam o’Shanter” was immediate. The well-known firm Brash and Reid of Glasgow brought it out as the third of a series of 99 chapbooks in 1795 and within a few years there were at least six printings of the tale. Egerer 32.
MEMOIRS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF BURNS SCHOLARSHIP


The first obituary of Burns was written by his friend Maria Riddell for the Dumfries Weekly Journal; unfortunately no copy of it is known. She revised her text for inclusion in Currie’s edition of 1800, and again revised it for the second edition of 1801. It remains one of the most important assessments of the poet. In addition to his poetry, Mrs. Riddell says, Burns should be remembered for, “the charm—the sorcery I would almost call it—of fascinating conversation; the spontaneous eloquence of social argument, or the unstudied poignancy of brilliant repartee.” The edition displayed is no. 61 of 100 copies printed by Tom Rae.


To Robert Heron goes the distinction of having produced the first booklet about Burns; Maria Riddell’s essay appeared in a newspaper. Heron knew Burns, so why he chose to write about the poet as he did is puzzling. In his memoir we find such statements as the “disgrace and wretchedness into which he saw himself rapidly sinking,” or “poor Burns did not escape suffering by the general contamination”—even as his end approached, Heron says that Burns yielded “readily to any temptation that offered.” Thus began the legend of Burns the debauchee. Defenders of the poet may perhaps take comfort in the knowledge that Heron spent the end of his life in Newgate Prison.


When James Hogg and William Motherwell began work on an edition of Burns in five volumes (1834-1836), of which one volume is a biography of the poet by Hogg, a set of Currie’s Works of Robert Burns was used as copy-text. Representative of the annotations is a page in Hogg’s hand showing a long note to Burns’s “Logan Water,” most of which appeared in the Hogg and Motherwell edition. Although their edition was successful, and several times reissued, the work was overshadowed by Allan Cunningham’s edition, which also appeared in 1834. Egerer 151.

When J.G. Lockhart published his study of Burns for *Constable’s Miscellany*, it was reviewed by Thomas Carlyle in the *Edinburgh Review* (1828). Because of the fame of both author and subject the essay was frequently reprinted. This example was the first separate printing of this work. *Tarr A24.1.*


William Wallace’s edition was considered very important in its day, containing as it did both the poetry and correspondence. This copy is one of 250 on large paper. The set belonged to James Barke, author of six novels based on the life of Burns, with extensive annotations in Barke’s hand. The Roy Collection also includes first editions of Barke’s novels, in original jackets. *Egerer 893.*


Henley and Henderson’s four-volume edition of the poems and songs of Burns remained the standard until James Kinsley’s definitive edition of 1968. Even so, Thomas F. Henderson’s meticulous and knowledgeable footnotes make this edition indispensable to the scholar. Henley’s life, on the whole a judicious one, infuriated many Scots and even provoked a book-length reply from John D. Ross, *Henley and Burns; or, The critic censured*. There were a number of issues of the Henley and Henderson edition. This set, presented by the publishers and dated March 14, 1896, may be a pre-publication copy. *Egerer 896.*


The single most important Burns manuscript collection is the two-volume *Glenriddell manuscripts* which were prepared by the poet for Robert Riddell. After Burns’s death they were sent to Dr. Currie, who used them extensively in preparing his edition of 1800. After the death of Currie’s son in 1853 the volumes were given to the Liverpool Athenaeum. In 1913 they were sold to John Gribbel, a great Burns collector. When this became known a question was raised in Scotland as to the legality of the Currie family’s gift of the manuscript to the Athenaeum, the claim being made that the volumes had always been the property of
the Burns family. In a gesture of unanticipated benevolence Gribbel gave the volumes to the Scottish nation, and they are now permanently housed in the National Library of Scotland. Before doing so he had 150 facsimiles privately printed, not to be sold, and all the known copies are presentations from this philanthropist. The present copy is inscribed to John Howell, the San Francisco book dealer. Egerer 956.


Burns met John Geddes, Roman Catholic Bishop of Dunkeld, in 1787, and the two became fast friends. The bishop had a copy of the Edinburgh edition of Burns's poems bound with several blank leaves at the front and back of the volume before returning it to the poet. Burns carried it with him on his Highland tour (August-September 1787) and then took it with him to Ellisland, returning it only in February 1789. Burns wrote several poems on the blank leaves, making the volume one of the most desirable of Burns items. In 1908 the Bibliophile Society reproduced it in facsimile, including the poems and Burns's letter to Geddes returning the book. 473 copies were printed for members of the Society. To complete the American connection, the original is in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Egerer 944.

**BURNS’S READING**


Dr. John Moore was introduced to Burns's poetry when Mrs. Frances Dunlop sent him a copy of the Kilmarnock edition. The two men opened a correspondence, and one of Burns's letters was the famous long autobiographical one of August 2, 1787, which supplies important details about the poet's early life and reading. In his letters to the poet, Moore comes across as a bit pompous; he suggested to Burns that he use English rather than Scots, but as deferential as Burns was to Moore he wisely ignored this advice. The doctor sent him a copy of his novel *Zeluco*, and on Christmas morning 1793, Burns wrote to Mrs. Dunlop exchanging copies of the work, with these words, “Tell me, how you like my marks & notes through the Book. I would not give a farthing for a book, unless I
were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.” At one point Burns has written, “A glorious story!” The inscription to his friend reads: “My much esteemed Friend Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop—Robert Burns.”


An avid reader of contemporary newspapers and collections of essays, Burns wrote to Mrs. Dunlop, “I had often read & admired the *Spectator, Adventurer, Rambler, & World*. . .” although he regretted that they were “so thoroughly & entirely English.” In this volume of *The world*, Burns has written in the names of the authors of various entries. The Roy Collection has only one volume of the set. In another volume Burns wrote an eight-line poem on Robert Fergusson, which opens: “Ill-fated genius! Heaven-taught Fergusson!” echoing, perhaps unconsciously, the lines Henry Mackenzie used to describe Burns in *The loungers*, when he called him “this Heaven-taught ploughman.”


Allan Ramsay’s *The gentle shepherd*, although not frequently produced on stage during the 18th century because of church opposition to the theater, was a bestseller for a century. Burns was particularly taken with the Foulis edition of the play which he called a “noble edit[io]n of the noblest Pastoral in the world.”


Burns was very fond of Robert Blair’s poem “The grave,” which he quoted several times in his letters. More than once he cited the lines beginning “Dark as was Chaos” and elsewhere used the expression.


Burns read widely as we know from his correspondence and from the fragmentary list which was published when his library was sold after his death. Robert Fergusson played an important role in Burns’s development as a poet. The elder poet’s poem “Hallow-fair” no doubt influenced Burns’s “The holy fair,” as Fergusson’s “The farmer’s ingle” influenced “The cotter’s Saturday night.”
1787 Burns gave Rebeccah Carmichael a copy of Fergusson's poems, inscribing the volume with an eight-line poem, two lines of which read: "O thou, my elder brother in misfortune, / By far my elder brother in the Muse."

BURNS AND RELIGION


The Bible in which the 18th-century Scottish family kept its records was usually a folio-sized book, and not suitable for taking to services on Sunday. While it was not obligatory to do so, families often did. These Bibles were frequently nicely bound. On display is a mid-18th-century Bible with a rather simple Scottish wheel binding. The fact that the tooling on the two volumes is different, as are the endpapers inside the volume, suggests that this set probably belonged to a family of modest means, which could only afford to have one volume bound at a time.


That Burns knew his Bible very well is evidenced in the number of references there are to it in his poems; his correspondence, too, is filled with references to and quotations from the Bible.

The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments. Glasgow: David Bryce, [?1900].

In Scotland, as in the United States, it was the custom for a couple to purchase a Bible when married and to enter the date of this marriage. As children were born, their names were entered, and when they died, this too was noted. The page bearing these entries was accepted as a legal document. The Bible passed by tradition to the eldest son, and if the father was already dead by the time of the son's marriage might be used as a family record for a second generation. Burns was writing of an event which took place daily in his father's house when he wrote of "the priest-like father" who leads family worship, after the evening meal, from "the big ha'-Bible, ance his Father's pride." This miniature Bible contains a facsimile of a page from Burns's own Bible.
Fergus Ferguson, 1824-1897: *Should Christians commemorate the birthday of Robert Burns?* Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1869. *Late 19th-century calf:*

Because of poems such as “Holy Willie’s prayer” the ultra-religious formed the opinion that Burns was an atheist or at best a deist, which latter is a possibility, although it would not have been possible to openly admit this in the Scotland of his day. To Mrs. Dunlop he was equivocal: “Religion ... has not only been all my life my chief dependence, but my dearest enjoyment. ... A Mathematician without Religion, is a probable character; an irreligious Poet, is a Monster.” As late as 1869 the Rev. Fergus Ferguson preached a sermon about celebrating the birthday of Robert Burns, which he then published in pamphlet form. The thrust of the sermon and the pamphlet, entitled *Should Christians commemorate the birthday of Robert Burns?*, was that we should not do so. We cannot, Ferguson said, extract from the poet’s works, “the sweet and wholesome from the poisonous. ... They have one influence, and that influence we believe to be evil.” This statement, of course, opened a lively debate in various Scottish newspapers. Uncharacteristically even Queen Victoria voiced an opinion on the topic. As reported in the *North British Mail* the Queen expressed “at considerable length to her fondness for Burns ... [and] also alluded with some force of words to the bad taste and folly of the attack made upon the memory of the poet by the Rev. Fergus Ferguson.” Bound in with the pamphlet are several newspaper cuttings concerning the controversy.


The Bible and the Church of Scotland played very important roles in the life of Robert Burns. He grew up at a time when the “New Lichts” (new lights, more liberal) were becoming more powerful in the cities, but the “Auld Lichts” (old lights, very conservative) still held sway elsewhere. William Burnes, the poet’s father, while more tolerant than most in his area, deeply resented his son attending dancing classes, this pastime being considered the work of the Devil. To further the Christian education of his family William composed a short catechism which was taken down by the children’s tutor, John Murdoch, but passed to Gilbert Burns. The manual was not published until 1875. It shows Burnes to have been a moderate. This copy is inscribed from Burnes’s two nieces, Agnes and Isabella Begg, to their nephew John Begg. Tipped in is a fragment containing accounts for the year 1772 in the hand of William Burnes.

From its first publication in the Kilmarnock edition of 1786, “The cotter’s Saturday night” has been a favorite, frequently separately published or anthologized. The Bibliophile Society of Boston published this finely produced edition in 1915, limited to the number of members of the society, in this instance 475 copies. The book is unusual in that it is engraved throughout, from copper plates, designed and engraved by Arthur N. MacDonald.

Bowl and spoon

“The halesome parritch, chief o’ Scotia’s food” (“The cotter’s Saturday night”). This wooden bowl was displayed at the great Glasgow centenary exhibition of 1896 as Burns’s own porridge bowl. The horn spoon has also been claimed as the Bard’s. *Caveat emptor.*

**BURNS AND CLARINDA**


During his stay in Edinburgh Burns met Mrs. Agnes Craig M’Lehose in December 1787. It was love at first sight for both of them. In addition to numerous visits, the couple carried on what has been termed a “hothouse romance” by correspondence. The two soon decided to use “Arcadian names” as Burns called them: she was Clarinda, he Sylvander. Marriage was of course impossible, and the correspondence dwindled once Burns left Edinburgh. Mrs. M’Lehose loaned John Findley, who claimed to be writing a biography of the poet (which was apparently never written), Burns’s letters. Some of them were published without her permission in 1802. *Egerer 68.*


A letter of January 12, 1788, from Sylvander to Clarinda, the second that day. Note the suspicious-looking mark on the paper where the poet has written, “I have read yours again: it has blotted my paper.” It is left to the viewer to decide whether or not he or she is looking at the dried remains of a teardrop.
Agnes Craig M’Lehose, 1759-1841: Autograph letter, signed, to Allan Cunningham, Edinburgh, 18 October 1834.

When Allan Cunningham was preparing an edition of Burns, he asked Mrs. M’Lehose for permission to use Burns’s letters to her. In this letter she reiterates her unwillingness to give Cunningham access to them, mentioning that some of them were previously published without her permission, and in an inaccurate transcription. The letter is dated October 18, 1834; Cunningham’s edition appeared in eight volumes in 1834. Agnes M’Lehose died in 1841 and two years later her grandson, W.C. M’Lehose, republished the 25 letters which had appeared in 1802 and added 23 more. The edition also included letters from his grandmother to Burns. An earlier owner has combined this letter with a copy of the edition of 1843 in a sumptuous tooled binding.

Silhouette of Agnes Craig M’Lehose (“Clarinda”)

John Miers, an Edinburgh silhouettist, cut likenesses of both Burns and Agnes M’Lehose. On February 7, 1788, Burns wrote, thanking Agnes M’Lehose for going to him for a silhouette, saying: “I want it for a breast-pin, to wear next my heart.” Though they parted, and Burns happily married his Bonny Jean, the lovers never forgot each other. Three years after they had parted Burns wrote a song which contained these words:

Had we never lov’d sae kindly,
Had we never lov’d so blindly!
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne’er been broken-hearted.

Forty years after they parted, Clarinda wrote in her diary on the anniversary of their last meeting, “This day I can never forget. Parted with Burns ... never more to meet in this world. Oh, may we meet in Heaven!”


This Beerbohm cartoon is inspired by the Scriptural injunction, “And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke, 9: 62). Hart-Davis 206.
BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG


In his work for Johnson and Thomson, Burns scoured earlier books for songs which he felt should be included in the two works. One of his principal sources was Allan Ramsay’s *Tea-table miscellany* which had appeared in four volumes between 1723 and 1737. The 10th was the first collected edition of the *Miscellany. Burns Martin 122.*


William Thomson’s *Orpheus caledonius* supplied Burns with words and music for several selections. He owned the two-volume set (1725-1733). This copy has a letter from the scholar C.K. Sharpe concerning the work.


One of the sources which Burns used for Scottish airs was James Oswald’s *Caledonian pocket companion*. He wrote to Johnson, “I was so lucky lately as to pick an entire copy of Oswald’s Scots Music, & I think I shall make glorious work out of it.”


David Herd, following a not unusual practice of his time, issued *Ancient and modern Scots songs* in one volume in 1769 and expanded the set to two volumes in 1776.


Although Burns included three songs in his 1786 edition, he became seriously involved in writing, collecting and editing Scottish songs in the spring of 1787 when he met James Johnson, who was busy printing and editing *The Scots musi-
The first volume, consisting of 100 songs, contained only three by Burns, but the next five volumes contained another 174 known to be by Burns; there may be others. In addition he touched up and collected songs taken from the oral tradition, chapbooks and earlier collections. There were several published 18th-century Scottish song collections, and Burns wrote words for many of these airs. From the second volume Burns was the de facto editor of the Museum, although he did not see the fifth volume, published in 1796, some time after the poet's death. Without Burns's enthusiasm it took Johnson until 1803 to issue the final volume of the set. Burns knew how important a work the two of them had produced, and less than a month before his death he wrote to Johnson, "Your Work is a great one ... I will venture to prophesy, that to future ages your Publication will be the text book & standard of Scottish Song & Music." He was unerring in this judgement. This copy is one of the three Johnson first editions in the Roy Collection. In 1803 when Volume six was published, it and the earlier five volumes had completely redesigned title-pages. Egerer 8.


Despite his involvement with Johnson's Scots musical museum, in September of 1792 Burns agreed to collaborate with George Thomson in another musical undertaking, A select collection of original Scottish airs which appeared in five volumes between 1793 and 1818. Thomson's collection was aimed at a middle-class audience; it had accompaniments by Ignaz Joseph Pleyel, Johann Anton Kozeluch and eventually Haydn and Beethoven. Thomson fancied himself as both poet and musician, with the result that there were arguments with both Burns and Beethoven; it must be said, however, that in challenging Burns, Thomson forced him to examine his song-writing in a way which Johnson did not do. Egerer 28, and appendix II.

George Thomson: Autograph letter, signed, from Antigua St. [?Edinburgh], to an unknown correspondent.

Thomson mentions that he has one set of his Select collection remaining.


Although Burns made no secret of his interest in bawdy poetry and song, most editors of his works have sought to hide this from readers. To a friend, Rob-

This edition was first published in 1823 as *The songs and ballads of Robert Burns*, edited by J. Barwick, who took some of the poems from *The merry muses*. Probably because of its pornographic content, the sheets were reissued two years later with a false imprint. No trace of Joseph White as printer or publisher can be found.


Because it remained illegal to publish the material in *The merry muses* until 1964 in the United States and 1965 in Great Britain, publishers resorted to various subterfuges in producing editions. Since it was a more serious offence to publish such a work than it was to sell it, one enterprising dealer, John Camden Hotten, apparently switched the last two digits in the date when he produced this edition (1872) and dated it 1827. This idea gave rise to a numerous progeny. *Egerer 311.*


The spuriously dated “1827” editions of *The merry muses* were not the only bawdy verses of Burns to be published. *The fornicator’s court* first appeared c.1810. This edition was probably published in 1823. *Egerer 273, variant issue.*

Ernst Cleghorn, the poet wrote, “there must be some truth in original sin.—My violent propensity to B[aw]dy convinces me of it.” Three years after his death a collection that contained six of Burns’s erotic poems along with other material was published as *The merry muses of Caledonia*. From then on the collection was always associated with Burns—although he was the author of but a small portion of the contents—and most subsequent editions bear the words “By Robert Burns,” implying that he wrote the entire contents of the volume.

This original edition of *The merry muses* is of great rarity; only one other copy is known. Though the title-page date is 1799, some sheets are watermarked 1800. When acquired in 1965 the volume included a number of obscene illustrations by Thomas Rowlandson, but as they bore no relationship to the poetry of *The merry muses*, they were removed and bound separately. *Egerer 51.*

This calligraphic edition of *The merry muses* was limited to 50 copies. Although the editor, John S. Farmer, claims it to be an exact copy of the edition of 1799, there are, in fact, numerous differences.

**TRANSLATIONS OF BURNS**

The Roy Collection contains translations of Burns’s poems in a variety of languages. In addition to the items separately described here, the exhibit displayed translations into Norwegian, Spanish, Polish, Italian, and English; a poster from the Moscow 1975 Burns conference, with Samuil Marshak’s translation of “For a’ that;” and a broadsheet with a French translation of “Auld lang syne,” by the French-Canadian Benjamin Sulte.


Apparently the earliest translation of a poem by Burns into another language was made by James Grahame, who included in his *Poems in English, Scotch, and Latin* a Latin version in parallel text of “To a mouse.”


The Victorian taste for Latin was exemplified by three translations of Burns into that language. The present one is, however, the only book-length collection. *Egerer 1225.*


Interest in Burns was high in France during the 19th century, and there were a number of translations by various hands published in journals. In 1826 a slim volume of translations appeared, but it was not until Léon de Wailly’s edition of 1843 that a substantial number of poems appeared in one volume in French. *Egerer 1187.*
Robert Burns: *Burns traduit de l'Écossais*. Rouen: E. Cagniard, 1874. *Original blue-gray printed wrappers; inscribed by the translator to Adam Wilson.*

Richard de la Madelaine's translation into French underlines the difficulty of creating the rhymed poetry of one language in another language retaining the rhyme; de la Madelaine's prose version attempted to retain the essence of the poem, but at the price of sacrificing its lyric quality. *Egerer 1188."


Translations of Burns into German abounded in the second half of the 19th century. The earliest book of translation appeared in 1839, and was followed a year later by this collection, the work of Heinrich Julius Heintze. *Egerer 1194.*


The Leipzig publisher Philipp Reclam specialized in producing inexpensive editions of standard works of literature. L.G. Silbergleit's translation of Burns was one of this series, first in 1875, and then frequently reprinted. *Egerer 1202.*


Samuil Marshak's was the most notable of the Russian translations of Burns. Of this first edition, although published in 15,000 copies, almost no copies made their way outside Russia. Marshak increased the number of translated poems, eventually producing a two-volume edition.

When this copy was presented, the translator's son Immanuel was Curator of the Marshak Museum, set up in Marshak's apartment after his death in 1964. *Cf. Egerer 1231.*


Although not the only person to translate Burns into Japanese, Toshio Namba devoted most of his academic career to the task of producing several volumes of translations. He also published *The life of the poet Robert Burns* (1977).


This is the first translation into any language of the complete works of Robert Burns. The reason that it took so long for this to occur is that no earlier transla-
tion could legally print the bawdy material; after 1964 this could be included, and Roderick Macdonald’s translation into Gaelic did so. The initial edition was 25 copies, of which this is no. 10. Further copies have since been produced.


To Luiza Lobo, who holds her doctorate from the University of South Carolina, belongs the honor of producing this first book of translations of Burns into Portuguese. In Brazil the edition was ingeniously packaged with a small bottle of whiskey.

* * * * *


Tom Sutherland was taken hostage in Beirut on June 9, 1985, by members of the Islamic Jihad, and was held captive for 2,354 days. Upon his release he said that reciting and singing the poems and songs of Robert Burns helped him to sustain the six-and-a-half years of captivity. During this period his wife, Jean, remained in Beirut. The book has chapters by Tom and Jean which chronicle the same periods as seen from their separate points of view. Publication date: March 31, 1996.
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Exhibit Catalogues from the Department of Special Collections
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Front cover: crayon drawing by Archibald Skirving (c. 1796), from Seymour Eaton, Robert Burns: Rare Print Collection. Philadelphia: R.G. Kennedy, 1900.


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