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WILLIAM REID AND THE FIRST NEWSPAPER AND CHAPBOOK PUBLICATION OF ROBERT BURNS'S "WRITTEN IN FRIAR'S CARSE HERMITAGE"

Patrick Scott

The earliest drafts of Burns's poem "Written in Friar's Carse Hermitage" date from June 1788.¹ Burns revised it significantly in December that year, expanding from the original 32 lines to 55 lines. Both before and after that revision he circulated it quite widely to friends in manuscript form, but he did not publish it himself till his two-volume *Poems* (1793).² It has long been known, however, that by then it had already been printed in a newspaper. This first newspaper appearance of the poem illustrates the difficulties of in-depth research on Burns's newspaper presence and the way that minor errors and speculations can survive unquestioned even in respected works of modern scholarship. The newspaper evidence also casts light on the poem's first appearance in chapbook form, which is unrecorded in J. W. Egerer's bibliography, and the newspaper paratext helps pin down the date that the chapbook was printed. The links documented here between the poem's first publication in newspaper and chapbook form suggest the special role played in disseminating Burns's work by the Glasgow bookseller William Reid.

In an important article in 1932, Anna M. Painter drew attention to the role of newspapers in establishing Burns's reputation. The rapid spread of his popularity, she suggested, came not only from his books, but from

¹ James Kinsley, ed., *Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), I: 414-415; W.E. Henley and T.F. Henderson, eds., *The Poetry of Robert Burns* [The Centenary Edition], 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T.C and E.C. Jack, 1896), I: 258-259 [the 1793 text] and II:57-58 [the A version]; Nigel Leask, ed. *Commonplace Books, Tour Journal, and Miscellaneous Prose* [The Oxford Edition of the Works of Robert Burns, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 90-91, 93-94, 178-179, 183-184.

² Margaret M. Smith and Penny Boumelha, comps., "Robert Burns," in *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, vol. III, Part I (London and New York: Mansell, 1986), 189, list an extraordinary sixteen MS. sources, including copies in letters to Mrs. Dunlop, William Dunbar, Robert Cleghorn, and David Blair, and in the Glenriddell MS, the Don MS, and the Geddes Burns.

"the poems which were reprinted in magazines and newspapers."³ We often think of literary reputation being created by reviewers, but it is also greatly influenced by the wider availability and accessibility of the author's work, and Burns's reputation, particularly, benefitted from the widespread if piratical reprinting of his poems at full length in contemporary newspapers. Readers in the late 1780s and early 1790s were much more likely to have first encountered a Burns poem reprinted in a newspaper than in book form.

Despite some important specific studies, newspaper publication remains an aspect of Burns's publishing history that is relatively underresearched. The general topic was briefly discussed by Henley and Henderson, in their Centenary Edition (1896), but their many discoveries about specific poems were scattered through hundreds of pages in the endnotes to four volumes.⁴ J.W. Egerer's still-standard bibliography, now more than fifty years old, provided a partial list of poems and other Burns items that were first published in periodicals or newspapers, but his list was limited only to their first appearances.⁵ James Kinsley's still-standard edition of the *Poems and Songs*, almost as old, provides occasional information and collations. More recent studies generally focus on specific poems or newspapers.⁶ There is as yet no

³ Anna M. Painter, "American Editions of the *Poems* of Burns before 1800," *The Library*, 4th ser., 12:4 (March 1932): 434-456 (434).

⁴ Henley and Henderson, II: 280-283.

⁵ J.W. Egerer, *A Bibliography of Robert Burns* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964; Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), 333-356.

⁶ See, e.g., Henley and Henderson, *passim*; Davidson Cook, "Burns and the *Scots Magazine*," *Scots Magazine*, 20 (Jan.-March, 1934): 255-264, 361-370, 453-462; Painter, as in n. 3 above, especially on the reprinting of Burns's Kilmarnock poems in the *Pennsylvania Packet*; J.C. Ewing, "Burns and the *Edinburgh Gazetteer*," *Burns Chronicle*, 2nd ser., 19 (1944): 8-13; Lucyle Werkmeister, "Some Account of Burns and the London Newspapers with Special Reference to the Spurious Star (1789)," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 65 (Oct. 1961): 483-504, and "Robert Burns and the London Daily Press," *Modern Philology*, 63: 4 (May 1966): 322-335; G. Ross Roy, "Burns and the *Aberdeen Magazine*," *The Bibliothek*, 5:3 (1968): 102-105; Hamish Mathison, "'Gude black prent': How the Edinburgh Book Trade Dealt with Burns's Poems," *The Bibliothek*, 20 (1995), 70-87; P. S. Hogg, *Robert Burns: the Lost Poems* (n.p.: n.p., 1997); Gerard Carruthers, "The Problem of Pseudonyms in the Burns 'Lost Poems,'" and "Robert Burns's Epigram on Edmund Burke published in *Politics for the People*," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 33-34 (2004): 97-106 and 469-471; John Erskine, "Scotia's Jewel: Robert Burns and Ulster, 1786-c.1830," on the *Belfast News-letter* and *Northern Star*, in Frank Ferguson and Andrew R. Holmes, eds., *Revising Robert Burns and Ulster* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2008), 15-36;

comprehensive list from which to assess how widely Burns’s work was disseminated in this way. Unsurprisingly, even the data we do have about first appearances is frequently derivative and unreliable, and when additional information has surfaced it is often overlooked by subsequent editors and researchers.

For the newspaper publication of “Written in Friar’s Carse Hermitage,” both Egerer and Kinsley relied on the earlier research by Henley and Henderson. In 1896, Henley and Henderson had reported that the poem was first published in *The Weekly Miscellany* (Glasgow), on November 31, 1791.⁷ They also noted “a dateless printed copy published some time before the issue of the ’93 edition,” and Egerer’s entry paraphrases this as “there was probably an earlier printing of it in some other publication.” In Kinsley’s collation of the poem, in his first volume, the only reference to a possible periodical appearance comes from a transcript by Professor Robert Dewar: “an undated print of Version B c. 1791 (91; collated Dewar)” (Kinsley, I: 214). Later, in annotating the poem in his third volume, Kinsley adds a reference to the *Weekly Miscellany*, noting the group of fair copy manuscripts that Burns made for friends in early 1789, and commenting that “One of these was probably the source for the ?1791 print, and the publication in the Glasgow *Weekly Miscellany*, 31 November 1789” (Kinsley III: 1275).⁸ Critics predisposed to disparage editors and bibliographers as mindless drudges will no doubt savour the scrupulous repetition from scholar to scholar of the publication date November 31.

Very soon after the Henley and Henderson edition, however, a diligent reader had reported an earlier newspaper appearance, in a different Glasgow newspaper, a couple of months before the *Weekly Miscellany* printing that was cited by Henley and Henderson, Egerer, and

Rhona Brown, “‘Guid black prent’: Robert Burns and the Contemporary Scottish and American Periodical Press,” in Sharon Alker, Leith Davis, and Holly Faith Nelson, eds., *Robert Burns and Transatlantic Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 71-83; Nigel Leask, “‘The Pith o’ Sense, and Pride o’ Worth’: Robert Burns and the *Glasgow Magazine* (1795),” in Alex Benchimol, Rhona Brown, and David Shuttleton, eds., *Before Blackwood’s: Scottish Journalism in the Age of the Enlightenment* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2015), 75-89.

⁷ Henley and Henderson, IV: 107; in his listing of periodical appearances (p. 344) Egerer repeats this date, but in a footnote to a book appearance (p. 39, n. 74) corrects it to November 30.

⁸ Nothing further has been added by editors since Kinsley: the poem is not included in the selections by McGuirk and Irvine, and the Canongate editors simply state: “First published in the Edinburgh edition, 1793” (Canongate, 237).

The following POEM was given to us as the production of Mr. BURNS, of Ayrshire—as a proof of judgment and feeling, doing equal honour to his head and to his heart, we wish to render it as generally useful as we can.

[Written in Carse Hermitage, by Nith-side, 1788.]

THOU, whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deck'd in silken stole,
'Grave these counsels on thy soul.

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost.
Hope not sunshine every hour,
Fear not clouds: will always loar.

When youth, and love, with sprightly dance
Beneath thy morning-star advance,
Pleasure, with her siren air,
May delude the thoughtless pair;
Let prudence bless enjoyment's cup,
Then raptur'd sip, and sip it up.

As thy day grows warm, and high,
Life's meridian flaming nigh,
Dost thou spurn the humble vale?
Life's proud summit wouldst thou scale?
Check thy climbing steps elate,
Evils lurk in felon-wait,
Dangers, eagle-pinion'd, bold,
Soar around each cliffy hold;
While cheerful peace with linnets-song,
Chants the lowly dale among.

When thy shades of evening close,
Beckoning thee to long repose,
As life itself becomes disease,
Seek the chimney-nook of ease.
There ruminat, with sober thought,
On all thou'st seen, and heard, and wrought;
And teach the sportive youngsters round
Laws of experience sage, and found.

Say—The criterion of their fate,
Th' important query of their state
Is not—Art thou high, or low?
Did thy fortune ebb, or flow?
Wast thou Cottager or King?
Peer, or Peasant?—no such thing.—
Tell them—Prescribe it on their mind,—
(As thou thyself must shortly find.)
The smile, or frown of awful heaven
To virtue, or to vice, is given.
Say to be just, and kind, and wise,
There solid self-enjoyment lies.
That foolish, selfish, faithless ways,
Lead to be wretched, vile, and base.
Thus resign'd, and quiet creep,
To thy bed of lasting sleep;
Sleep, whence thou shalt ne'er awake;
Night where dawn shall never break;
Till future life—future no more,
To light and joy the good restore, }
To light and joy, unknown before, }
Stranger, go! Heaven be thy guide,
Quod the Bedfman on Nid—Side

Fig. 1: Robert Burns, "Written in Carse Hermitage, by Nith-side, 1788,"
Glasgow Courier (Saturday September 17, 1791), p. 3.
Reproduced from *Burns Chronicle*, 1st ser. 10 (1901), p. 37.

Kinsley. Though it seems to have lain unnoticed by later researchers, well over a hundred years ago, in 1901, W. Innes Anderson reported that the poem had been printed in the *Glasgow Courier* for Saturday, September 17, 1791.⁹ Anderson helpfully reprinted the whole *Courier* version in facsimile (see Fig. 1). Anderson also corrected the date for the more commonly-cited newspaper printing, in the *Weekly Miscellany*, to a less-unbelievable Wednesday, November 30, 1789. The *Courier* text is that of Burns’s December 1788 revision, Kinsley’s B version, with 55 lines, and it is clear from the *Courier* headnote (“given to us as a production of MR. BURNS, of Ayrshire”) that the poem had not been sent in directly by Burns himself.

The *Courier* text also matches the distinctive variants reported in Dewar’s transcript from the “undated printed copy” (Kinsley’s 91, collated below as *Dewar*) and most of those reported by Henley and Henderson (collated below as *H-H periodicals* and *H-H printed copy*). Some of these variants are unique to the *Courier* and printed copy text (lines 18, 24, 39), while some of them are shared by those texts and Burns’s manuscripts, but are then replaced before Burns’s own first printed text in 1793. The collation below also makes clear that these variants preceded the last layer of corrections to version B in the Second Commonplace Book and Burns’s fair copy of the poem in the Glenriddell Manuscript. In the following collation of the relevant variants, the line number and first reading are from the Kinsley B text:

- 9 As] When some MSS, *H-H periodicals*, *Dewar*
- 18 summits] summit only in *Courier*, *Dewar*; no variant noted in *H-H*
- 24 dells] dales only in *Courier*, *Dewar*; no variant noted in *H-H*
- 25 As] When MSS, *Courier*, *H-H periodicals* and *printed copy*, *Dewar*
- 33 Man’s true, genuine estimate] the criterion of their fate some MSS, *Courier*, *H-H periodicals* and *printed copy*, *Dewar*
- 34 The grand criterion *corr* in 2CPB, Glenriddell] Th’important query some MSS, *Courier*, *H-H periodicals* and *printed copy*, *Dewar*
his fate] their state some MSS, *Courier*, *H-H periodicals* and *printed copy*, *Dewar*; their ~~state~~ fate 2CPB; their fate Glenriddell
- 37-38 Did ... one? *corr* in 2CPB] Wast thou Cottager or King? / Peer or Peasant? No such thing! some MSS, *Courier*, *H-H periodicals* and *printed copy*, *Dewar*
- 39 and] omitted only in *Courier*, *H-H periodicals* and *printed copy*, *Dewar*

⁹ W. Innes Anderson, “The Centenary Edition: A Correction,” *Burns Chronicle*, 1st ser., 10 (1901), 38-39. The poem and headnote appear in the *Courier* on p. 3 (vol. 1, issue 8). The only later reference I have noticed is in Smith and Penny Boumelha, as in n. 2 above.

These variants, of course, confirm Kinsley's suggested date of ?1791 for the sourceless printed copy that Dewar had transcribed, as well as fitting the Henley and Henderson description of their "dateless printed copy" as "published some time before the issue of the '93 edition." The absence of the distinctive revisions made for the Glenriddell Manuscript argue that the *Courier* text and the "undated" and "dateless" printed copies must derive from one or another of the manuscript copies Burns had circulated before April 1791.

Both Egerer and Kinsley suggest that the 1791 newspaper appearance in the *Courier* may not be the poem's first publication, based on one of Burns's own letters. Two years before the *Courier* publication, a correspondent had sent Burns a magazine that had recently printed one of his poems, and Egerer and Kinsley take this as referring to "Written in Friar's Carse Hermitage." Writing from Ellisland on August 27, 1789, to David Blair, a Birmingham gun-maker, Burns wrote:

I am much obliged to you for the Magazine you sent me; of which, though the most elegant of that species of Publications that I have ever seen, I had never so much as heard the Name.—Never mind the bagatelle of a Poem.—I know nothing how the Publishers could get it, but as I had given several copies to my friends, it has found its way I suppose thro' the well-meant but blamable officiousness of some of them.—I have now a little altered, and I think improved that Poem, and would now transcribe to you, but for that cursed tax of Postage.—That, and another Poem I have written since, I shall make the contents of another epistle which expect to be troubled with soon (Roy I:436-437, based on MS at Burns Birthplace; cf. Ferguson, I: 356-357).

This is the second of three letters Burns wrote to Blair, in January, August, and (probably) October or December, 1789 (Roy, I: 360-361). Neither Egerer nor Kinsley give any reason for their supposition that the magazine poem was in fact "Written in Friar's Carse." The identification apparently originated with J.C. Ewing in 1930, whose annotation when the letter was first published, in the *Burns Chronicle*, had stated summarily and without documentary support that the poem in the letter was "probably the lines 'Written in Friars' Carse Hermitage.'"¹⁰ The editors of Burns's *Letters*, Ferguson and Roy, were more cautious, making no attempt at identification of the poem, but noting that Burns had already sent Blair a copy of the Friar's Carse poem in his January letter (Roy, I: 360-361; Ferguson, I: 293), and that in the third letter, in December 1789, the poem Burns sent Blair was not "Written in Friar's Carse Hermitage," but "The Five Carlins" (Roy, I: 460). There is nothing

¹⁰ *Burns Chronicle*, 2nd series, 5, 1930, 1-2, 9.

on the manuscript of the second letter, now at the Birthplace Museum, to identify which poem Blair had seen reprinted in the magazine.¹¹ Furthermore, by January 1789, Burns was sending his friends copies of his revised (B) version of “Written in Friar’s Carse,” so would have no reason to promise in August to send Blair an “altered” and “improved” version if that had been the poem the magazine had just reprinted. There may indeed have been newspaper or periodical printings of “Written in Friar’s Carse” before September 1791, but it seems unlikely that Burns was referring to one in the letter to Blair.

There is, however, one further early printed version of the text that seems to have been overlooked by editors, perhaps because it has been misdated and misdescribed in the major on-line library databases. “Written in Friar’s Carse Hermitage” was included in the first chapbook version of Burns’s “Address to the Shade of Thomson.” Burns’s “Address” had been written for the Earl of Buchan’s ceremony at Ednam on September 22, 1791, and was first published before the ceremony, as a kind of press release for the event, in the *Edinburgh Advertiser* for September 13. Later that year the Address was reprinted, along with the Earl’s Eulogy or commemorative oration, in several monthly magazines,¹² and the following year it was included in the Earl of Buchan’s *Essays*. Kinsley notes this chapbook in his collation for the Thomson poem (Kinsley II: 577), but not in connection with “Written in Friar’s Carse,” and since it is not listed in Egerer, and its title is abbreviated in standard cataloguing, it is perhaps worth describing more fully:

Title: VERSES | TO THE MEMORY | OF | JAMES THOMSON, |
AUTHOR OF THE SEASONS, | BY | ROBERT BURNS | THE
AYRSHIRE POET. | [diamond rule] | To which is added, | A POEM, |
Written in Carse Hermitage, by Nithside; | BY | THE SAME AUTHOR. |
[short heavy straight rule] | And an EPITAPH | ON | SIR ISAAC
NEWTON.

Imprint: none.

Size: 15 cm. (Roy copy).

Collation: pp. 8 pp.; [A]⁴.

Contents: p. [1], title; p. [2], prefatory note; p. [3], Burns’s Address to Thomson [without header or title]; p. 4, another short prose note and a

¹¹ Digitized as RBBM Object No. 3.6063:

http://www.burnsmuseum.org.uk/collections/object_detail/3.6063.

¹² *European Magazine*, 20 (November 1791): 384; *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 61:2 (December 1791): 1085; *Scots Magazine*, 53 (December 1791): 577; *Lady’s Magazine, or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex*, 22 (Supplement for 1791): 795; Buchan, *Essays on the Lives and Writings of Fletcher of Saltoun and the Poet Thomson* (London: Debrett, 1792), 244; cf. Egerer, 37-38 (Egerer 24).

poem To Mr. JAMES THOMSON by William Thomson; pp. 5-7, headnote and Burns's *Written in Carse Hermitage, by Nithside.*; p. 8, EPITAPH Intended for the Monument OF SIR ISAAC NEWTON.

Locations: British Library, University of South Carolina (Roy Collection), University College, London.

The two minor items that bulk out the chapbook are both non-Burnsian, and neither was being published for the first time. The shorter poem to Thomson, by William Thomson, Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford, a kinsman of Thomson, was included like Burns's poem in the periodical printings of Buchan's Eulogy, but it had been written much earlier, "in a blank leaf before Thomson's Seasons," and had been published in the *Annual Register* more than a decade before its reuse in Buchan's ceremony.¹³ Like Burns's Carse Hermitage poem, it had also recently been printed in the *Glasgow Courier*, on September 20, but without mentioning the Ednam ceremony scheduled for September 22.¹⁴ The final non-Burnsian item, the Epitaph for Sir Isaac Newton, was by the 1790s at least sixty years old and had been widely anthologized in the intervening period.¹⁵

While the chapbook is undated, without any indication of place or printer, the interrelated entries in WorldCat, COPAC, ESTC, ECCO, and the British Library, assign a date of 1795 or 1796, sometimes with a parenthetical note in the title "[Both extracted from the 1793 edition of 'Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect']". ESTC and the WorldCat entry for the microform add the comment "Possibly printed for and sold by Brash and Reid, Glasgow," a conjecture dating back to Craibe Angus's bibliography of 1899.¹⁶

This dating is certainly wrong. For both major poems in the chapbook, the text does not derive from Burns's own 1793 edition, but instead is an exact match for the newspaper versions published in September 1791. The prefatory note to the Address, with its reference to Burns as "the Ayrshire Bard, now settled in the Honourable, and useful occupation of his ancestors, in the neighbourhood of Dumfries," comes from the headnote in the *Edinburgh Advertiser*, while the distinctive title and prefatory note to the longer poem (Fig. 2) are clearly edited from the

¹³ Edmund Burke, ed., *Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the year 1780* [vol. 23], 2nd ed. (1788): 199.

¹⁴ *Glasgow Courier*, I:9 (Tuesday, September 20, 1791): 3; it is also worth noting that the *Courier* headnote matches that in the chapbook, rather than that in the magazine reports of Buchan's ceremony.

¹⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1 (April 1731): 169.

¹⁶ Cf. W. Craibe Angus, *The Printed Works of Robert Burns, A Bibliography in Outline* (Glasgow: privately printed, 1899), 112.

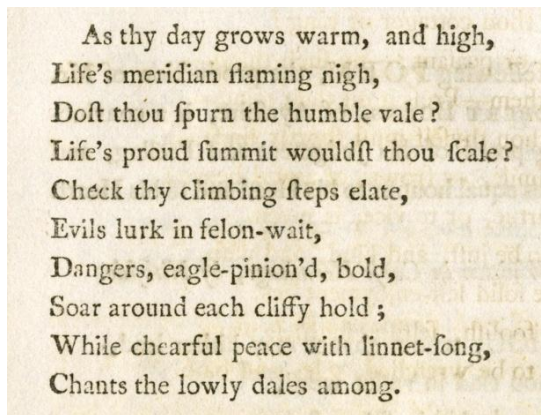
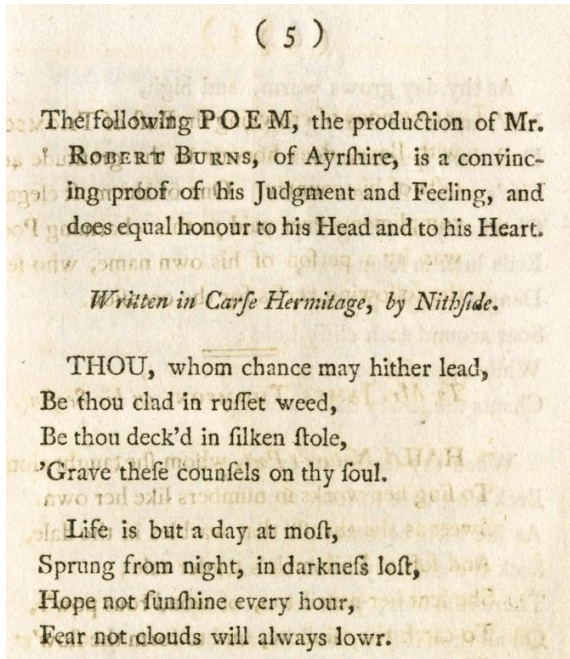


Fig. 2 and 3: from pp. 5 and 6 of *Verses in Memory of James Thomson, Author of the Seasons*, by Robert Burns, the Ayrshire Poet (N.p.: n.p., [1791]), showing headnote and textual variants in lines 18 (*summit*) and 24 (*dales*).
 G. Ross Roy Collection, University of South Carolina

version in the *Courier*. The chapbook also has the distinctive textual variants for “Written in Friar’s Carse Hermitage” that appear only in the 1791 newspaper and the undated printed versions reported by Henley-Henderson and Dewar. For editorial purposes, therefore, the chapbook does not derive from an authorial manuscript or other transcript and need not be treated as an independent source. The chapbook’s reliance on both newspaper versions and their paratexts suggests that it was printed soon after they had appeared, and so should be dated 1791, as in Elizabeth Sudduth’s Roy Collection catalogue, rather than 1795.¹⁷

On the face of it, this earlier date might seem to rule out the other cataloguing conjecture about the chapbook, that it was published by the Glasgow booksellers James Brash and William Reid. The first titles in their well-known chapbook series *Poetry, Original and Selected*, began to appear only in late 1795, and even then there is relatively little Burns in the first volume.¹⁸ But Brash and Reid had been in partnership in the Trongate since 1790, and they seem to have printed chapbooks from the beginning.¹⁹ While Burns collectors and bibliographers are used to treating Brash and Reid chapbooks as part of the series, this is a

¹⁷ Elizabeth A. Sudduth, *The G. Ross Roy Collection of Robert Burns, An Illustrated Catalogue* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 26-27.

¹⁸ See Egerer, 52-55 (Egerer 32 a, b, c, d); J. C. Ewing, *Brash and Reid: Booksellers in Glasgow, and their collection of Poetry, Original and Selected* (Glasgow: Robert Maclehose, 1934), and in *Records of the Glasgow Bibliographical Society*, 21 (1936): 1-20; G. Ross Roy, “Robert Burns and the Brash and Reid Chapbooks of Glasgow,” in *Literatur-im-Kontext-Literature in Context: Festschrift für Horst W. Drescher*, ed. Joachim Schwend, Suzanne Hagemann, and Hermann Völkel (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 53-69; Sandro Jung, “The Glasgow Poetry Chapbook, 1796-1799: Brash and Reid’s ‘Small Selections,’ Cameron and Murdoch’s ‘most celebrated Pieces, both Scots and English,’ Murdoch’s *The Polyhymnia* and the Stewart and Meikle Burns Chapbooks,” *Journal of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society*, 10 (2015): 87-107 (esp. pp. 90-92). The 1791 Burns *Verses to the Memory of James Thomson* should not be confused with a quite different Brash and Reid chapbook with the same main title, sometimes wrongly attributed to Burns, item 18 in *Poetry, Original and Selected*, vol. IV (Glasgow: Brash and Reid, 1798) (Ewing, 20), which reprinted the Westmorland writer Charles Graham’s long poem beginning “‘Bard of the Seasons, hail!’” from his *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse* (Liverpool: T. Schofield for the Author, 1793), 58-70. Graham’s poem had also appeared more recently in *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 80 (1796): 80.

¹⁹ Jung, 91. For information on the partnership, see s.v. “Brash and Reid;” “Brash, James;” and “Reid, William,” in *Scottish Book Trade Index* (National Library of Scotland), online at: <http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/scottish-book-trade-index>; Ewing, as in n. 14; and Arthur Sherbo, “Reid, William,” in *ODNB*.

convenient simplification, and bibliographical information is really quite sketchy. There were multiple reprintings, usually ignored in cataloguing. One of the most popular titles, for example, *Aloway* or *Alloway Kirk*, which was included in the series as vol. 1, no. 4, has been recorded with at least eight variant title-pages.²⁰ Only one of the eight identifies Brash and Reid on its title-page. It appears that Brash and Reid were selling *Aloway Kirk* in chapbook form well before the series was named or even thought of, and went on selling it as a separate item alongside its inclusion in the series. Sandro Jung has recently described the series itself as largely a repackaging of the chapbooks they had been publishing since since first starting out in that publishing genre (Jung, as in n. 18, 91). Indeed, most Brash and Reid chapbooks seem to have been distributed as individual items, separate from the series through chapmen, other booksellers, or direct sale, and a publication date for the series cannot be taken as setting boundaries for dating this separate publication. Craibe Angus’s attribution of the chapbook to Brash and Reid remains plausible.

The final piece of the jigsaw, however, is human, rather than bibliographical. It has long been recognized that the second Brash and Reid partner, William Reid (1764-1831) played a special role in Burns’s early publication history. Reid included many Burns poems in *Poetry, Original and Selected*, revising some poems and songs; he notoriously added stanzas to Burns’s “Of a’ the airts the winds can blaw” and “John Anderson, my Jo;” and he wrote one of the earliest poetic tributes, his “Monody on the Death of Robert Burns.” A few years ago, Arthur Sherbo suggested that Reid was the mysterious “WR” who had made marginal annotations in Burns’s First Commonplace Book, and renewed attention has since been given to anecdotal 19th century evidence that Reid, then working for another Glasgow publisher, may have advised Burns before the publication of his first book, the Kilmarnock edition of 1786.²¹

The emphasis given to *Poems, Original and Selected* from 1795 onwards has tended to deflect attention away from Reid’s possible

²⁰ G. Ross Roy recorded and illustrated seven variants from various libraries in his “The Brash and Reid Editions of *Tam o’ Shanter*,” *Burns Chronicle*, 98 (1989): 38-44, subsequently acquiring an eighth (see Sudduth, facing p. 33). Roy rated six of the eight as definitely Brash and Reids, with two possibly from other publishers.

²¹ Arthur Sherbo, “W.R. in Robert Burns’s Commonplace Book 1783-1785,” *Notes & Queries*, 246:2 (June 2001): 117-118; Patrick Scott, “The mysterious ‘W.R.’ in the First Commonplace Book: A Mid-Victorian Reminiscence,” *Burns Chronicle*, 125 (2016): 8-14, on which see also Nigel Leask’s response, at <http://burnsc21.glasgow.ac.uk/guest-blog-by-professor-patrick-scott-the-mysterious-wr-once-more-a-mid-victorian-reminiscence/>.

involvement with Burns in the earlier 1790s. In particular, it does not seem to have registered that William Reid was not only a bookseller and chapbook publisher, but also the printer, and probably major proprietor, of a newspaper, the *Glasgow Courier*.²² September 1791 was the *Courier*'s very first month of publication. The front page of the first number commented that newspapers "are, indeed, the Literature of the bulk of the People," promised news from London before it could reach the Edinburgh printers, and asserted in a revealing phrase that

Productions of genius, on subjects of Literature and Science, whether original or selected from books of distinguished merit; Remarks on Life and Mann; Biographical Sketches; Anecdotes, and Poetry, may also be reckoned within the range of a News-Paper.²³

It was to be published three times a week, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, providing four pages an issue for 3½ d., as against the regular price for a chapbook of one penny, and the publisher was given as "William Reid and Co., Trongate, Second Entry East from Kingstreet" (*ibid.*, p. 4).

It should not be surprising that Reid's newly-founded *Courier* would print Burns's poem "Written at Carse Hermitage," then apparently previously unpublished, nor that the newspaper text and paratext of the poem should be replicated almost immediately in the previously misdated chapbook that has also been linked to Reid, *Verses to the Memory of James Thomson*. The connection suggests that, even after more than a century of bibliographical research, there is still much to be uncovered about the publication of Burns's poetry during his lifetime, especially in newspaper and chapbook form.

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²² See W. J. Couper, "The Glasgow periodical press in the eighteenth century," *Records of the Glasgow Bibliographical Society*, 8:1 (1930): 99-125 (128-131); and cf. also Mary Elizabeth Craig, *The Scottish Periodical Press 1750-1789* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1931), 100. Couper (p. 130), based on the initial *Courier* prospectus gives Reid and Co only as printer, with Brash and Reid among the distributors, but then, based on a later source, names Dr. James McNayr as editor and owner; Reid's is the only name or imprint given on the paper itself in the relevant period.

²³ *Glasgow Courier*, 1:1 (Thursday September 1, 1791): 1. Runs of the early *Glasgow Courier* are exceedingly rare, and it does not yet seem to have been digitized. I am extremely grateful to Samantha Gilchrist, of Glasgow University Library's Special Collections, for answering my inquiry about the library's holdings of early issues, and to Dr. Craig Lamont for examining the September issues for me at short notice.